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*Saving the Chesapeake's Great Rivers and Special Places*

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February 15, 2023

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve  
Chair, Environment and Transportation  
Committee  
Maryland House of Delegates  
251 House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Dana Stein  
Vice Chair, Environment and Transportation  
Committee  
Maryland House of Delegates  
251 House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: HB 503 – Greenspace Equity Program - Favorable**

Dear Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

On behalf of Chesapeake Conservancy, I would like offer our strong support for HB 503, the proposed “Greenspace Equity Program.”

Thanks to Program Open Space, Maryland is a national leader on land conservation and the protection of open space for the benefit of people and nature. However, many communities across the state, particularly those that are underserved or overburdened, lack sufficient greenspace. The lack of greenspace in communities has negative implications for public health, for local economies, and for community well-being.

Using EPA’s Environmental Justice Screen Demographic Index, Chesapeake Conservancy found that there are as many as 1.1 million Maryland residents who fall within the 90<sup>th</sup> to 100<sup>th</sup> percentile of the index and who live further than a 5-minute walk to open greenspace.

Local governments, land trusts and non-profits have worked creatively, and often with very scarce resources, to meet this problem by acquiring and conserving land for pocket parks, urban farms, community gardens and other greenspaces. However, the current and future need for greenspace far exceeds the resources that these partners can deploy.

It’s time for Maryland to increase its conservation investments in Maryland’s underserved and overburdened communities, so that we can advance toward greenspace equity across the state. Thank you for considering our testimony, and I hope that you will work to advance and pass this important legislation in the 2023 General Assembly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joel Dunn".

Joel Dunn  
President and CEO  
Chesapeake Conservancy