



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

House Bill 503

Natural Resources - Greenspace Equity Program – Establishment

Date: February 17, 2023	Position: Favorable
To: Environment & Transportation Committee	From: Matt Stegman Maryland Staff Attorney

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** HB 503 which establishes a “Greenspace Equity Program”. This legislation would provide annual state funding to land trusts, local governments and other community partners working in Maryland’s underserved and overburdened communities where the public need for greenspace is often greatest.

In addition to the health and well-being benefits green spaces confer on residents of older urban neighborhoods, nature and green spaces have proven environmental benefits. Green spaces aid in abating air pollution, mitigating heat desert effects, reduce stormwater loads, and can help communities be more resilient against the impacts of climate change.

Often with a higher cost to acquire, urban land trusts face an added financial burden to conserving greenspace in areas of larger population density. In addition to supporting property acquisition, HB503’s grant program would be an invaluable resource to communities maintaining existing green spaces or creating greenspace out of previously developed land. Additionally, HB 503 provides grant funding in a flexible way that offers underserved and overburdened communities enhanced self-determination in their greener future.

While CBF is supportive of HB 503 as introduced, we believe the bill would be even stronger with a technical, clarifying amendment to change proposed text in NR § 5-D9-02 (E)(1)(I) from "Greenspace Equity Projects" to "Community Greenspace Projects". Community Greenspace is adequately defined in the bill and this change ensures the uses of funds available under the Greenspace Equity Program are consistent with the program’s enumerated goals.

CBF urges the Committee’s FAVORABLE report on HB 503.

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at mstegman@cbf.org.

Maryland Office • Philip Merrill Environmental Center • 6 Herndon Avenue • Annapolis • Maryland • 21403

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 300,000 members and e-subscribers, including over 109,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.