



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

BILL: House Bill 503 - Natural Resources - Greenspace Equity Program - Establishment

SPONSOR: Delegates Stein, *et al.*

HEARING DATE: February 15, 2023

COMMITTEE: Environment and Transportation

CONTACT: Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS House Bill 503 - Natural Resources - Greenspace Equity Program - Establishment**, which establishes the Greenspace Equity Program and Greenspace Equity Advisory Board in the Department of Natural Resources to provide program consultation and advisement. This program will also provide grants to enhance the public health and livability of overburdened and underserved communities by implementing projects to preserve, create, and enhance community greenspaces.

The prioritization of enhancing public health and livability through nature-based solutions within overburdened and underserved communities is consistent with both the Adaptation and Mitigation goals of the Prince George's County Climate Action Plan (CAP). Specifically, preserving, strengthening, and expanding natural resource areas and urban green spaces is critical to achieving the environmental justice and climate resilience goals of the CAP. This Bill could help Prince George's County achieve this overarching climate adaption goal by providing opportunity for grant funding dedicated to the preservation of natural resource and creating more green space within underserved urban communities of the County.

Per the County's CAP, there is also a strong emphasis to build community-wide climate resiliency by supporting local food production through community gardens and urban farming. Through dedicated green spaces serving as placemaking spaces with environmental education and stewardship opportunities to encourage residents to interact with nature, these green spaces could also provide equitable access to land dedicated to community-scale local food production. By increasing local climate preparedness through promoting community gardens, urban farming, and environmental stewardship within our underserved communities, this Bill supports

the County's vision of climate resiliency. This Bill's also proposes ongoing grant funding to aid both nonprofits and local governments in the creation and acquisition of green spaces. The County expects there to be no negative financial impacts from the legislation.

Further, financial savings for the County may be achieved through cost avoidance. Natural resource conservation attenuates stormwater runoff and sequesters carbon. Increased tree canopy can reduce energy consumption and cost, an additional cost benefit for residents of overburdened and underserved communities. These natural mitigative properties decrease flood risks and remove GHGs from the atmosphere.

For the reasons stated above, the Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS House Bill 0503** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report.