



FOREVER
MARYLAND

Enhancing and Advancing Land Conservation

Board of Directors

Nick Dilks,
Chair

Will Cook,
Vice Chair

Adair Stifel,
Treasurer

John Griffin,
Secretary

Mark Conway
Francis (Joe) Hickman
Mitch Neitzey
Steve Quarles
Barry Salisbury

Gary Burnett,
MET Board Liaison

Wendy Stringfellow
President

Advisory Council

Rob Etgen
Ann H. Jones

Date: February 14, 2023
Bill Number: HB0503 - Natural Resources – Greenspace Equity
Program - Establishment
Committee: House – Environment & Transportation
Position: Support

Forever Maryland supports HB0503 - Natural Resources – Greenspace Equity Program – Establishment for the purpose of providing grants to land trusts or county/municipality for enhancing the public health and livability of overburdened communities and underserved communities by implementing projects to preserve, create, and enhance community greenspace.

The Greenspace Equity program seeks to allocate \$22M (over three years) and \$10M in year four and every year thereafter from Program Open Space (state-side) funds to create a grant program to acquire, improve and protect land aimed at increasing access to nature by creating community greenspaces to include – community gardens, woodlands, parks, trails, urban farms and other open space areas.

The Greenspace Equity Program will advance climate resilience, conservation, and equitable access to nature led by increasing resources available to overburdened and underserved communities. Acquisition and conservation of lands in areas with greater population density is often much more expensive, due to competing values for land.

Open, accessible spaces for passive recreation, nature connections, and community gathering provide valuable health benefits for Marylanders living in these communities in urban, suburban, and rural areas. Yet, many Maryland communities were developed without immediate greenspace.

Forever Maryland promotes and supports the land and water conservation community, through education, advocacy, and outreach, to permanently protect working landscapes and healthy ecosystems for all.

For further information, please contact the organization’s Program and Policy Director, Josh Hastings, at 410-251-5268 or Josh@ForeverMaryland.org.

We respectfully request a favorable report.