

'24 DGS HB 228 DNR MD State Parks Funds & Alterati

Uploaded by: Ellen Robertson

Position: FAV



Wes Moore, Governor | Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor | Atif Chaudhry, Secretary

BILL: **House Bill 228**
Natural Resources-Maryland State Parks-Funds and Plan Alterations

COMMITTEE: House Environment and Transportation

DATE: February 22, 2024

POSITION: Support

Upon review of House Bill 228 - Natural Resources - Maryland State Parks - Funds and Plan Alterations, the Maryland Department of General Services (DGS) provides these comments for your consideration.

The Park System Critical Maintenance Fund is used for State projects on lands managed by the Department of Natural Resources and are for public benefit and use by promoting outdoor environmental education in Maryland and addressing state park maintenance needs. The Great Maryland Outdoors Act, Chapter 39 of 2022, provided an additional \$70 million to address state park maintenance needs. These funds and the work they enable will positively impact the outdoor recreation industry across the state by updating infrastructure in and around recreation amenities. Passage of House Bill 228 will extend the date by which the funds must be spent from July 1, 2026 to July 1, 2029.

DGS supports passage of House Bill 228 and encourages a favorable report.

For additional information, contact Ellen Robertson at Ellen.Robertson@maryland.gov or 410-260-2908 or Lisa Nissley at Lisa.Nissley1@maryland.gov or 410-260-2922.

Maryland Catholic Conference_FAV_HB228.pdf

Uploaded by: Jenny Kraska

Position: FAV



**MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE**

February 22, 2024

HB 228

Natural Resources – Maryland State Parks – Funds and Plan Alterations

House Environment & Transportation Committee

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) offers this testimony in support of House Bill 228. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

House Bill 228 seeks to implement the recommendations of the Maryland Outdoor Recreation Economic Commission (MOREC); one recommendation being the promotion and growth of outdoor environmental education in the State.

The MOREC's recommendations present a valuable opportunity to enhance the recreational offerings within our state. Investing in outdoor education not only fosters physical health but also highlights the beauty of creation and allows for the appreciation of the wonders of the natural world.

The MCC appreciates the focus on promoting and growing outdoor environmental education in the state. Education, when coupled with an appreciation for the environment, becomes a powerful tool for cultivating responsible stewards of our environment. By allocating funds to support environmental educational initiatives, we contribute to the formation of a community that values and protects the natural world.

The Conference appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill 228.

HB0228_DNR_SUP_ENT_2-22-24.pdf

Uploaded by: Josh Kurtz

Position: FAV



Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor
Josh Kurtz, Secretary
David Goshorn, Deputy Secretary

January 24, 2024

BILL NUMBER: House Bill 228 – First Reader

SHORT TITLE: Natural Resources - Maryland State Parks - Funds and Plan Alterations

DEPARTMENT’S POSITION: SUPPORT

EXPLANATION OF DEPARTMENT’S POSITION

This Departmental makes a few strategic alterations to the Great Maryland Outdoors Act to ensure that DNR can implement the legislation to the greatest benefit possible to all Marylanders.

Firstly, this legislation provides additional flexibility in spending funds allocated to the “Park System Critical Maintenance Fund” and the “Park System Capital Improvements and Acquisition Fund” in order to meet the needs of the Department and better serve the public. The bill includes language that:

1. Gives the Department additional time to expend the funds allocated to the Park System Critical Maintenance Fund to align with project schedules.
2. Allows the Park System Capital Improvements and Acquisition Fund to be used on lands managed by the Department for public purposes instead of only state park projects.
3. Alters the language outlining how the first \$70 million received by the fund shall be used.
 - a. Adds “at least” before the following categories:
 - i. \$5 million for infrastructure projects that mitigate the effects of climate change.
 - ii. \$5 million for historic preservation
 - iii. \$20 million for transportation improvements
 - iv. \$10 million for increasing water access
 - b. Adds “up to” before \$30 million for land acquisition

Secondly, this legislation will expand the “Great Maryland Outdoors Fund” established in the GMOA to fund the Office of Outdoor Recreation. The proposed legislation will allow the fund to be used for environmental education purposes as well as outdoor recreation. The Department is excited at the opportunity to further develop environmental education opportunities for Marylanders and it is our hope that the Office of Outdoor Recreation will be able to lead on that effort at the Department.

Lastly, the bill also delays the Comprehensive Long Term Strategic Plan that was required for the Park Service under the GMOA. This is to better align this planning effort with other ongoing planning projects related to recreation. As an example, the delay will allow the Comprehensive Long Term Strategic Plan to be better aligned with the Land Preservation and Recreation Plan planning process.

Contact: Dylan Behler, Director, Legislative and Constituent Services
dylan.behler@maryland.gov ♦ 410-260-8113 (office) ♦ 443-924-0891 (cell)

The bill does not alter total funding to any of the funds established in the GMOA so it will not have a specific fiscal impact; however, it will have an operational impact as it will provide greater flexibility to use the funding available.

The Department is also currently in the process of working with stakeholders to develop amendments to ensure clarity around the spending of funds from the Capital Improvement and Acquisition Fund.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Great Maryland Outdoor Act, Chapter 39 of 2022, addressed Department challenges with infrastructure, capacity, funding and accessibility needs within the Maryland Park Service and State Parks. The Act included establishing systems and processes for reviewing infrastructure, critical maintenance needs, staffing and required the Department to develop a capital improvement plan and a comprehensive long-range strategic plan.

BILL EXPLANATION

The bill provides the Department additional flexibility in spending funds allocated to the Park System Critical Maintenance Fund and the Park System Capital Improvements and Acquisition Fund in order to meet the needs of the Department and better serve the public. The bill allows the Office of Outdoor Recreation to provide for outdoor education, in addition to recreation. The bill better aligns ongoing planning projects related to recreation.

HB228_MDSierraClub_fav 22Feb2024_ENT.pdf

Uploaded by: Lily Fountain

Position: FAV



P.O. Box 278
Riverdale, MD 20738

Committee: Environment and Transportation

Testimony on: HB228 “Natural Resources - Maryland State Parks - Funds and Plan Alterations”

Position: Support

Hearing Date: February 22, 2024

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club strongly supports HB228. The bill improves the implementation of the Great Maryland Outdoors Act by extending the deadline for expending the Park System Critical Maintenance Fund to 2029 and allowing the funds to be used for capital improvements for state projects on lands managed by the Department for public purposes. It helps support funding of infrastructure projects that mitigate the effects of climate change and historic projects. The bill targets transportation improvements to allow access to Maryland public lands for all and supports boat, kayak, picnic and swimming access to Maryland waterfront lands. Importantly, it ensures the land acquisition needed to decrease overcrowding and improve access to public lands. The bill also promotes outdoor environmental education to satisfy public desire for more understanding of the role of public lands for public health and climate change protection. Finally, it extends the deadline for developing and publishing a Comprehensive Long-Range Strategic Plan by one year.

These improvements to the implementation of several critically important aspects of the Great Maryland Outdoors Act of 2022, which passed 46-0 in the Senate and 131-1 in the House, are necessary for several reasons. First, public land acquisition is a difficult and time-consuming process. Sometimes there are delays in lands becoming available. Expanding the types of public lands eligible for funds will ensure that some of the most exciting green spaces in Maryland are more accessible. Including public lands beyond state parks is a key part to solving climate and biodiversity problems. Including Wildlife Management Areas, Natural Environment Areas, Natural Resource Areas and Historic Areas will help more Marylanders get access to the green spaces they have demonstrated a great desire for and decrease population pressure on existing state parks.

Because HB228 would help properly implement an important parks management bill, expand natural area access for the health of all Marylanders, and mitigate further climate change using natural solutions, the Sierra Club Maryland Chapter requests your favorable report.

Lily Fountain
Natural Places Committee
Lily.Fountain@mdsierra.org

Josh Tulkin
Chapter Director
Josh.Tulkin@MDSierra.org

National Aquarium - HB228 - Favorable.pdf

Uploaded by: Maggie Ostdahl

Position: FAV



NATIONAL AQUARIUM®

Date: February 22, 2024

Bill: House Bill 228 – Natural Resources – Maryland State Parks – Funds and Plan Alterations

Position: Support

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee:

The National Aquarium respectfully requests a favorable report for **Senate Bill 259 – Natural Resources – Maryland State Parks – Funds and Plan Alterations** which, among other things, allows the Great Maryland Outdoors Fund to support outdoor environmental education opportunities in the state.

The mission of the National Aquarium is to connect people with nature to inspire compassion and care for our ocean planet. The Aquarium engages more than 100,000 students annually and works with families, schools, and communities to build skills in science, technology, engineering, the arts, and math (STEAM) across a wide range of education programs. Numerous research studies find that time spent playing and learning in nature promotes health and wellness and increases student achievement. The Aquarium incorporates outdoor environmental education into many of our education programs, including a summer camp program that provides Baltimore City students hands-on experiences in different aquatic habitats throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed and beyond. The National Aquarium strongly supports additional resources to promote and grow outdoor environmental education in Maryland.

We also appreciate that this bill adds to earlier legislative efforts in recent years that increased state park staffing, addressed maintenance backlogs, and improved access to water recreation and amenities – all important and needed investment that will help to enable greater access to nature. Our state can and must build on existing conservation measures so that we can ensure all Marylanders are able to enjoy and benefit from nature with access to quality environmental education.

We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 228.

Contact:

Ryan Fredriksson

Vice President, Government Affairs

410-385-8276

rfredriksson@aqua.org

HB 228 - CBF - FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Matt Stegman

Position: FAV



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

House Bill 228

Natural Resources - Maryland State Parks - Funds and Plan Alterations

Date: February 22, 2024	Position: Favorable
To: Environment & Transportation Committee Appropriations Committee	From: Matt Stegman Maryland Staff Attorney

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** HB 228 which gives the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) the flexibility to expend vitally-needed supplemental maintenance funds on an extended timeline and expands the allowable uses of the Great Maryland Outdoors Fund to include the promotion of outdoor environmental education.

For over 50 years, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation has led outdoor education programs for students, teachers, citizens, and community leaders because the best way to learn about the importance of the Chesapeake Bay as a natural resource is to be on it. Likewise, the best way to ensure that students and the general public can act as stewards and defenders of Maryland's natural resources is to provide educational opportunities that connect people to the outdoors. At present, DNR does not have a dedicated fund available to support outdoor education within Maryland.

CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on HB 228.

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 200,000 members and e-subscribers, including 71,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.

HB228 PresMD FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Nicholas Redding

Position: FAV



PRESERVATION MARYLAND

February 20, 2024

Hon. Ben Barnes
Appropriations Committee
House Office Building, 6 Bladen St.
Annapolis, Maryland

Hon. Marc Korman
Environment and Transportation Committee
House Office Building, 6 Bladen St.
Annapolis, Maryland

RE: HB228 FAVORABLE

Chairperson Barnes and Chairperson Korman,

On behalf of the staff and Board of Directors of Preservation Maryland and our thousands of statewide supporters, I thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in **SUPPORT of HB228.**

Preservation Maryland is the nonprofit, statewide voice for historic preservation that harnesses the power of historic places by revitalizing and reinvesting in communities, advocating, and building the historic trades workforce for the benefit of all Marylanders. (Learn more at: presmd.org)

Why We Support This Legislation: The original intent of the Great Maryland Outdoors Act was to provide greater support for park operations, maintenance, and activation of new spaces for the growing number of park visitors. The simple amendments contained in this legislation will help the department address that intent more holistically by being provided with the ability to shift funds to address current critical needs while still permitting significant investment in land acquisition for new parkland.

Currently, the language of the act reads that a certain amount of funds will be expended on land acquisition – the amended language provides DNR with some flexibility by allowing up to that amount be expended on land acquisition, thus allowing the agency to potentially shift funds to park development or historic preservation, as opportunities arise.

HB228 is a simple but important piece of legislation, and we urge a favorable report.

Favorable

Sincerely,

Nicholas A. Redding, President & CEO

HB0228.pdf

Uploaded by: Suzanne Duffy

Position: UNF

HB0228 is **another government overreach**, and a UN AGENDA21 tactic, meaning
A push for socialist government, 15-min cities, Plan 2040. It's all totally UNAFFORDABLE.

Climate hustle and biodiversity or "natural resources" or planning part of UN Agenda21.

Say no to this dangerous and bad bill that will cost a fortune to create and will NEVER be
Actually used as it is unsustainable, unaffordable and unreliable.

Suzanne Price
AACo