

Maryland Catholic Conference_FAV_SB259 HOUSE CROSS

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**MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE**

March 27, 2024

SB 259

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 Senate Bill 259. 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.

Senate Bill 259 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 Senate Bill 259.

SB 259 - CBF - FAV - ENT APP.pdf

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CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

Senate Bill 259

Natural Resources - Maryland State Parks - Funds and Plan Alterations

Date: March 27, 2024

To: Environment & Transportation Committee
Appropriations Committee

Position:

Favorable

From:

Matt Stegman
Maryland Staff Attorney

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** SB 259 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 SB 259.

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

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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.