



Maryland Chapter
P.O. Box 278
Riverdale, MD 20738

Committee: Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee

Testimony on: SB 128 – Charles County - Program Open Space - Waldorf Core Zone

Position: Favorable with Amendments

Hearing Date: January 25, 2022

The Maryland Sierra Club urges a favorable report on SB 128. The bill establishes a requirement of equity in distribution of Program Open Space Funds and the definition of the term "Waldorf Core Zone."

Natural spaces have been proven to provide physical, mental, and emotional benefits. SB 128 is a Charles County local bill that seeks to redress the inequity in distribution of Program Open Space funds to the major urban centers of Charles County. Waldorf, Maryland is a sprawling urban center that is bifurcated by Route 301.

There are few parks and playgrounds within the highly paved town center and of that small number, most have limited public access. The most recent designated Program Open Space park/playground within the Waldorf zip code is Robert Stethem Memorial Sports Complex, which was created in 2006. This is primarily a sports facility which is not open to the general public in all seasons; it is only open when there are games and is managed through a permit process.

There are a variety of underutilized green areas that could be enhanced in the urban core zone of Waldorf to create greenways, pocket parks, and walking and bike paths around restored waterways. We support the creation of the designation of Waldorf Core Zone for the purposes of equitably distributing Program Open Space funds.

Furthermore, we encourage Program Open Space funds to be used for creating true natural play spaces for children and families in the Waldorf urban center and generally in Charles County. As such, we support SB128 with amendments that ensure that full public access to natural play spaces is a necessary part of equity funding.

Access to nature is a human right, and we believe it is critical to equity that all jurisdictions enjoy the benefits of the Program Open Space with access to the outdoors and natural places to explore and enjoy.

We urge a favorable report on SB 128.

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Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America's oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.