



PARTNERS for OPEN SPACE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Baltimore County Land
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**Chesapeake Bay
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Preservation Maryland
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**STATEWIDE MARYLAND POLL SHOWS IMMENSE BIPARTISAN SUPPORT
FOR PROGRAM OPEN SPACE**

Poll Follows Record-shattering Year of Park Attendance

(Annapolis, MD - February 11, 2021) The Partners for Open Space, a statewide coalition of recreation, environmental, agricultural, and historic preservation organizations, recently convened a statewide poll of likely Maryland voters to understand residents' views of Program Open Space – a state program that, among other things, funds the creation of local and state parks, helps protect important habitat, and supports local foods through the preservation of agricultural lands.

Organization co-chairs, Rural Maryland Council Executive Director Charlotte Davis and Chesapeake Conservancy President and CEO Joel Dunn, stated that poll results showed that a staggering **“90% of Maryland voters support Program Open Space”** and furthermore, **“more than three in five Maryland voters oppose diverting funding away from Program Open Space to unrelated programs.”**

Created in 1969, Maryland's Program Open Space is funded through a transfer tax of 0.5 percent of every real estate transaction in the state and has helped create parks and green space in every county across the state – which has become a vital asset during the COVID-19 pandemic. The current health crisis led to dramatic increases in local and state park visitation. According to Governor Hogan, 2020 was a record year with more than 17 million visitors by October, and in July alone, Maryland state parks more than doubled normal visitation with 3.4 million visitors.

“This January 2021 polling data shows how much residents not only cherish parks but how much they also value the preservation of agricultural lands and natural areas,” said Co-Chair Davis.

Every five years, the Partners for Open Space convenes a poll of likely Maryland voters. When comparing polling results from the same questions asked in 2016, results showed:

- 76% of Maryland residents think preserving natural areas is extremely or very important (up 8 points from 2016); and
- Nearly 80% of Maryland residents think protecting agricultural land for locally grown food is extremely or very important (up 7 points from 2016).

“After a year where residents went out of their way to immerse themselves in nature, to seek out locally grown foods, to explore historic sites, and to re-invest themselves in their own yards or community parks, it was quite impressive to see the poll results confirm how much individuals of all backgrounds really love Program Open Space and want to see it continue to do more good for their communities,” said Co-Chair Dunn.

The Partners for Open Space strongly supports the current full program funding under Governor Hogan's proposed budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2022. To see the full results of this poll and supporting documents, please visit the Forever Maryland Foundation's website at www.ForeverMaryland.org.

www.PartnersforOpenSpace.org