



May 4, 2020

To: Members of the Pennsylvania House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee
Re: Opposition to House Bill 2004 (P.N. 2809)

Dear Representatives:

On behalf of the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, I urge you to protect Pennsylvania's dedicated funds for recreation and conservation by opposing House Bill 2004, which will be considered by the Environmental Resources and Energy Committee tomorrow. This legislation removes the automatic allocation of funds from the realty transfer tax to the Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund.

In 1993, the Pennsylvania General Assembly and the general public, in an overwhelming referendum vote, established the Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund. In establishing the Keystone Fund, the General Assembly sought to create a dedicated and permanent funding source for making investments in recreation, parks, conservation, libraries, historical preservation, and education. This fund has a 26 year legacy of success that has benefited all Pennsylvanians, sustained jobs, and leveraged private investment.

HB 2004 overturns this long-standing agreement with the citizens of the Commonwealth by removing automatic allocation of the funds. This despite the long-term track record of the program, the ever-increasing demand for funding, and the public's unwavering support for ensuring that their public spaces are taken care of. Penn State polling has found that 97% of Pennsylvanians think that state funds dedicated to protecting rivers and streams; conserving open space, forests, natural areas, and wildlife habitats; providing parks and trails; and preserving farmland should continue to be used for these purposes.

HB 2004 threatens the vitality of our outdoor economy by creating greater uncertainty regarding availability of funds. Outdoor recreation is one of Pennsylvania's largest industries, supporting more than 250,000 jobs, more than \$29 billion in consumer spending, and \$1.9 billion in tax revenues. Each public dollar of the Keystone Fund typically leverages \$3.13 in private investment for our parks, trails, community green spaces, and libraries.

Now, more than ever, we are seeing the important role our outdoor spaces provide for the citizens of the Commonwealth. Physical, mental, and emotional health all benefit from access to the outdoors, which in turn reduces health care costs and improves the lives of Pennsylvania families.

PEC urges you to protect the Keystone Fund so that Pennsylvania can continue to be a leader in outdoor recreation and quality of life. Please oppose House Bill 2004. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Walliser
Senior Vice President, Legal and Government Affairs