

HOUSE BILL 735

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CF SB 729

By: **Delegates Healey, Carr, Charkoudian, Ebersole, Fraser-Hidalgo, Gilchrist, Korman, Lafferty, Qi, Shetty, Stein, and Stewart**

Introduced and read first time: February 8, 2019

Assigned to: Environment and Transportation

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Task Force on Forest Conservation in Maryland**

3 FOR the purpose of establishing the Task Force on Forest Conservation in Maryland;
4 providing for the composition, chair, and staffing of the Task Force; authorizing the
5 Task Force to establish subcommittees; prohibiting a member of the Task Force from
6 receiving certain compensation, but authorizing the reimbursement of certain
7 expenses; requiring the Task Force to study and make recommendations regarding
8 certain matters; requiring the Task Force to report its findings and
9 recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly on or before a certain
10 date; providing for the termination of this Act; and generally relating to the Task
11 Force on Forest Conservation in Maryland.

12 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,

13 That:

14 (a) There is a Task Force on Forest Conservation in Maryland.

15 (b) The Task Force consists of the following members:

16 (1) the State Forester;

17 (2) one member of the Senate of Maryland, appointed by the President of
18 the Senate;

19 (3) one member of the House of Delegates, appointed by the Speaker of the
20 House;

21 (4) two representatives of county government, designated by the Maryland
22 Association of Counties;

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 (5) two representatives of municipal government, designated by the
2 Maryland Municipal League; and

3 (6) the following members, appointed jointly by the President of the Senate
4 and the Speaker of the House:

5 (i) one representative of the Sustainable Forestry Council;

6 (ii) one representative of the Chesapeake Bay Program Office within
7 the University of Maryland College of Agriculture and Natural Resources;

8 (iii) one representative of the Department of Agricultural and
9 Resource Economics within the University of Maryland College of Agriculture and Natural
10 Resources;

11 (iv) one representative of the Chesapeake Bay Commission;

12 (v) two representatives from environmental organizations;

13 (vi) one representative from a land preservation organization;

14 (vii) two representatives from the commercial and residential
15 development industries;

16 (viii) one representative from an environmental restoration business
17 involved in forest mitigation banking;

18 (ix) one representative from a public utility; and

19 (x) one representative from a public health organization.

20 (c) The President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House shall jointly select
21 the chair or cochair of the Task Force.

22 (d) The Harry R. Hughes Center for Agro-Ecology shall:

23 (1) provide staff for the Task Force under contract with the Department of
24 Natural Resources; and

25 (2) facilitate the meetings of the Task Force and the preparation of its final
26 report with assistance, as required by the Task Force, from the Department of Legislative
27 Services, the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of the Environment, the
28 Department of Planning, and the Department of Agriculture.

29 (e) The Task Force may establish subcommittees as necessary to fulfill its duties.

30 (f) A member of the Task Force:

1 (1) may not receive compensation as a member of the Task Force; but

2 (2) is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard State
3 Travel Regulations, as provided in the State budget.

4 (g) The Task Force shall:

5 (1) undertake a technical review that includes, to the extent practicable:

6 (i) a survey and mapping of:

7 1. existing forest cover and tree canopy in the State; and

8 2. potential afforestation and reforestation locations in the
9 State;

10 (ii) an analysis of the health and quality of forests in the State;

11 (iii) an analysis of observed and projected changes in the amount of
12 forest cover in the State due to development or other causes, using the Chesapeake Bay
13 Phase 6 Model, Chesapeake Assessment Scenario Tool (CAST), and county and municipal
14 forest conservation annual reports and land use plans, including the extent and nature of:

15 1. mitigation activities involving tree planting, reforestation,
16 or afforestation under the Forest Conservation Act;

17 2. forest clearing and mitigation activity inside and outside
18 priority funding areas; and

19 3. the clearing and mitigation of forest considered to be a
20 priority for retention and protection under § 5–1607(c) of the Natural Resources Article and
21 in State-identified targeted ecological areas and greenways, hubs, and corridors; and

22 (iv) an analysis of observed and projected changes in the amount of
23 forest cover in the State based on:

24 1. relevant State or local programs involving tree planting,
25 reforestation, or afforestation; and

26 2. the amount of forest preserved through federal, State, and
27 local programs, including agricultural preservation, open space, conservation easement,
28 and other land preservation programs;

29 (2) consider the findings and recommendations of the Task Force to Study
30 a No Net Loss of Forest Policy's Final Report of 2009 and the Sustainable Forestry Council's
31 Report on Policies to Achieve a No Net Loss of Forests in Maryland in 2011;

1 (3) on or before October 1, 2019, conduct a public hearing to gather
2 information to assist in making recommendations; and

3 (4) draft a report on the findings of the technical review and make
4 recommendations regarding the statutory, regulatory, or policy changes needed to achieve
5 the policy goals established under § 5–102(b) of the Natural Resources Article.

6 (h) On or before December 1, 2019, the Task Force shall submit a final report of
7 its findings and recommendations to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2–1246 of the
8 State Government Article, the General Assembly.

9 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect June
10 1, 2019. It shall remain effective for a period of 1 year and 1 month and, at the end of June
11 30, 2020, this Act, with no further action required by the General Assembly, shall be
12 abrogated and of no further force and effect.