



House Bill 1031

*Natural Resources - Land Conservation - Establishment of Goals and Programs
(Maryland the Beautiful Act)*

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Environment and Transportation and
Appropriations Committees

Date: March 2, 2022

From: Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 1031. The bill would establish programs meant to accelerate and improve park land acquisition and encourage the development of community green spaces.

The State of Maryland and its counties have been immensely successful at expanding parks lands and developing those spaces into world-class recreation venues. Maryland's prioritization of public recreational spaces has advanced numerous health and economic benefits, a central element in our state's "quality of life" proposition.

The proposed Local Land Trust Revolving Loan Program (LLTRLP) and the Greenspace Equity Program (GEP) will provide local governments with new resources to make their communities more sustainable, livable, and healthy. The LLTRLP is designed to provide low-interest financing to local land trusts trying to acquire new space, while the GEP will provide technical assistance and grants to help develop greenspaces. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, both state and local greenspaces were filled, often to capacity, as residents sought some form of healthy and safe recreation - it has become abundantly clear that these spaces offer immense value to neighborhoods across the state.

The pandemic has highlighted how critical these spaces can be to a healthy and vibrant community. HB 1031 would provide county governments with additional resources to expand park sizes and greenspaces. Accordingly, MACo urges the Committee to give HB 1031 a **FAVORABLE** report.