



SCENIC RIVERS LAND TRUST  
PROTECTING ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY'S LAND AND WATER

February 28, 2022

The Honorable Kumar Barve  
Chair, Environment and Transportation  
Maryland House of Delegates  
251 Taylor House Office Building  
6 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Dana Stein  
Vice Chair, Environment and Transportation  
Maryland House of Delegates  
251 Taylor House Office Building  
6 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

On behalf of Scenic Rivers Land Trust, I write to urge your support for the Maryland the Beautiful Act (HB 1031 / SB 791).

HB 1031 would set a goal for Maryland to have 30% of its lands conserved by 2030 and 40% by 2040. Keeping a significant portion of our land wild and open allows nature to be resilient towards severe weather, our food systems to survive, and gives Maryland residents places of beauty, solace, and recreation.

Not only does it set a goal to measure our progress by, but it increases the pace at which land trusts can save vulnerable parcels. A \$10,000,000 revolving loan program will allow land trusts to access funds in the nick of time to save imperiled and important properties. This is critical to these nonprofits (Scenic Rivers Land Trust being one of them) who witness precious properties slip through their fingers because they couldn't get grant funding fast enough.

Even more importantly, HB 1031 would establish a new program called the "Greenspace Equity Program." This program would provide grants to complete greenspace projects in underserved communities such as new parks, community gardens, trails and more. Despite considerable investments in land conservation over the past decades, many Maryland communities still lack greenspace due to high cost per acre. This has significant costs for public health, local economies, and community well-being. In this way, we can help ensure that as Maryland pursues a 30% and 40% land conservation goal, it can do so in a way that is equitable and benefits underserved Maryland communities.

By passing the Maryland the Beautiful Act, we can ensure that nature and people will continue to thrive in Maryland today and long into the future. Thank you for considering my testimony, and I urge your support for HB 1031.

Sincerely,

Sarah Knebel  
Executive Director  
Scenic Rivers Land Trust

