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PRESIDENT

February 28, 2022

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

The Honorable Dana Stein
Vice Chair, Environment and
Transportation Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
251 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD 2140

Dear Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein and members of the committee,

Eastern Shore Land Conservancy (ESLC) supports HB 1031- Land Conservation-
Establishment of Goals and Programs, also popularly known as the Maryland the
Beautiful Act, and urges a favorable report on the legislation sponsored by Delegate
Luedtke and Vice Chair Stein. Once passed, this legislation will set a state-wide
conservation goal, empower conservation efforts and make greenspace more equitable.

Maryland is often referred to as “America in miniature” due to its diverse
landscape, from the mountains in the western region to the Atlantic Ocean along the coast
of the Eastern Shore. Our state relies heavily on agriculture as it is the largest commercial
industry in the state and employs around 350,000 people and contributes \$8.25 billion
annually to the economy according to the Maryland Manual On-Line. To ensure that our
working lands will continue to operate far into the future, conservation is key.

As a result of conservation programs funded by the real estate transfer tax, we
have made great progress on land conservation and have conserved over 1,800,000 acres
state-wide. Yet, development remains a threat to our working lands, forests and open
space. Setting a state-wide conservation goal of 30 percent by 2030 and 40 percent by
2040 will better guide our state’s conservation efforts over the course of the next two
decades. This legislation outlines tools of how we are to accomplish this goal, including
the creation of a revolving loan fund appropriated at \$10 million. This revolving loan fund
enables conservation organizations to quickly access a large amount of capital they might
not have and then protect parcels of land that might otherwise have been developed.

Although there have been significant investments in land conservation over the
years, many communities still lack greenspace. This legislation establishes the Greenspace
Equity Program, which will provide funding to private land trusts and local governments
to complete greenspace projects in underserved communities. Creating this fund will
mitigate the negative effects caused to communities and local economies due to a lack of
greenspace.

Passing the Maryland the Beautiful Act will ensure our working lands and open
spaces will be preserved for the years to come and set our state as a leader in conservation.
If you have any questions, we are happy to provide support to members of the committee.
Please reach out to ESLC’s policy manager Sara Ramotnik at sramotnik@eslc.org.





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PRESIDENT

We request a favorable report on HB 1031 and thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Steven K. Kline
President
Eastern Shore Land Conservancy



STANDARDS FOR
EXCELLENCE