



February 22, 2023

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SUPPORT: HB 631 - Natural Resources - Land Conservation - Establishment of Goals and Programs (Maryland the Beautiful Act)

Chairman Barve and Members of the Committee:

Maryland LCV supports HB631, the Maryland the Beautiful Act, and we thank Delegate Stein for his leadership on this issue.

This bill advances Maryland's land conservation efforts with the establishment of the Local Land Trust Revolving Loan Program. It also affirms Maryland's commitment to conserve 40% of land in our state by 2040 and provides much needed support to land trusts and others maintaining these lands and making the connections between the land and Marylanders through grant-supported programs.

In January of 2021, President Biden announced plans to conserve 30% of America's land and waters by 2030. Since then, many states have taken initiative to follow this path by creating their own state-led plans for land conservation. We are urging Maryland to join this important goal, but to commit to go even further by looking to have 40% of land conserved by the year 2040.

The Maryland the Beautiful Act would:

1. Allocate a one-time expenditure of \$10 million to create a revolving loan, rapid-response fund land trusts would be able to borrow from to quickly act when important properties for conservation become available.
2. Increase popular grant programs to ensure greater success in habitat conservation, through funds for land stewardship capacity building and improvement, and the promotion of citizen stewardship through the popular Keep Maryland Beautiful grant program.
3. Ensure considerations for land conservation include – coordination with local communities and private landowners; improved access to nature for all people in Maryland; sequestering greenhouse gas emissions; and landscape scale conservation that promotes the continuance of important native species and/or stabilizes ecosystems.

Maryland LCV recognizes the importance of planning for and establishing bold conservation goals to protect biodiversity, support goals to mitigate the effects of climate change, and increase access to natural spaces in Maryland. For these reasons we support the enactment of the Maryland the Beautiful Act and urge a favorable report on HB631.