



February 11, 2023

**Committee: Environment and Transportation**

**Testimony on: Maryland the Beautiful Act**

**Position: Support: HB631**

We are now witnessing a human-induced mass extinction of many animal and plant species. A large number of other species are suffering severe declines. This calls for urgent action. The International 30x30 Conservation Agenda and a Federal Executive Order aim to encourage such action. Specifically, they urge the US to preserve 30% of its lands and waters by 2030. HB631 is Maryland's opportunity to do its bit towards meeting this ambitious goal by conserving 30% of its land area by 2030 and 40% by 2040.

The Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS) supports HB631 as it would help preserve biodiversity and habitat for native plants and prevent loss of agricultural and other land to development in our state. This would greatly benefit Maryland's birds. The threat to the birds of North America was highlighted by a 2019 study by Rosenberg et al<sup>1</sup>, that documented the loss of approximately 3 billion birds from 1970 to 2019 (29% loss).

Maryland The Beautiful (as HB631 is known) would achieve its goals by creating multiple funding categories to permanently protect lands of cultural, historical, ecological and agricultural lands from being developed. Among these would be a \$10 million Local Land Trust Revolving Loan Fund to assist small and mid-sized land trusts to rapidly obtain land and conservation easements as they become available. Grant programs would encourage better land stewardship of protected lands and public participation in reaching the 40x40 goal.

MOS asks that the Environment and Transportation Committee give a favorable report on HB631.

MOS is a Maryland-based volunteer organization, founded in 1945, and now with some 1800 members divided among 15 chapters throughout Maryland. We are devoted to the study, conservation and enjoyment of birds and their habitats.

<sup>1</sup>Rosenberg *et al.*, 2019, Decline of North American Avifauna, *Science*, 366, pp. 120-124

(signature on page 2)

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robin G. Todd". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'R' and a distinct 'G'.

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