



February 20, 2023

**HB631 Natural Resources - Land Conservation - Establishment of Goals and Programs
(Maryland the Beautiful Act)
FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Barve, Vice-Chair Stein and Honorable Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

The Green Towson Alliance writes in support of HB631, Maryland the Beautiful Act which sets new state conservation goals for 30% of Maryland lands permanently protected by 2030 and 40% of land by 2040. This goal aligns with and exceeds the nationwide land and water conservation goals of President Biden’s *Conserving and Restoring America the Beautiful Report*. The Green Towson Alliance advocates for a greener, healthier, more beautiful community at the local level monitoring development proposals and restoring habitat, among other work. We believe that development must be balanced with smart and strategic land conservation. We see pockets of green disappearing that could otherwise connect wildlife corridors, stabilize temperatures in urban heat islands, provide recreation and open space, and absorb stormwater - all problems our neighborhoods in Towson are increasingly experiencing.

This bill equips local land trusts to act quickly and balance development pressure when land becomes available. Our work in restoring habitat by removing invasive species on public and private land has taught us that conservation land must be managed to protect local biodiversity. This legislation will bolster and create new funding programs to help drive both acquisition and stewardship of new publicly owned greenspace.

As you know, species extinction is occurring at an alarming rate: current reports from the United

