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*Saving the Chesapeake's Great Rivers and Special Places*

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February 20, 2023

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

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

**RE: HB 631 – Maryland the Beautiful Act - Favorable**

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

On behalf of Chesapeake Conservancy, I would like offer our strong support for HB 631, the "Maryland the Beautiful Act." This important legislation would set a statewide goal for land conservation to ensure that we continue to protect open space for people and nature, and it would provide critically-needed support to land trusts in Maryland who are leading on the ground conservation efforts.

Protecting forestland, wetlands, agricultural lands and other open space is integral to Maryland's progress in protecting and restoring the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed. Land conservation is one of the key outcomes of the Chesapeake Bay restoration effort, whereby states in the watershed must collectively protect an additional two million acres of land from a baseline set in 2010. Setting a statewide goal of 30% by 2030 and 40% by 2040 ensures that Maryland will continue to be a leader in this outcome for the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

A significant part of what makes Maryland a beautiful place in which to live is our open space, our diverse natural landscape and our iconic wildlife. Climate change, adding pressure onto existing pressures like pollution and habitat loss due to development, will significantly impact habitats and ranges of wildlife that live in Maryland. By setting a statewide goal, this legislation would help to ensure that land conservation is an integral part of Maryland's efforts to mitigate impacts of climate change on fish and wildlife species in our state.

Thank you for considering this testimony. I fully support HB 631 and the provisions included to help Maryland achieve this conservation goal, and I urge a favorable report on this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joel Dunn".

Joel Dunn  
President and CEO  
Chesapeake Conservancy