

# HOUSE BILL 631

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3lr1856  
CF SB 470

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By: **Delegate Stein**

Introduced and read first time: February 3, 2023

Assigned to: Environment and Transportation

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## A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Natural Resources – Land Conservation – Establishment of Goals and Programs**  
3 **(Maryland the Beautiful Act)**

4 FOR the purpose of establishing certain goals and programs related to land conservation;  
5 establishing the Local Land Trust Revolving Loan Program to provide loans to  
6 certain land trusts to purchase land for conservation purposes; establishing the Local  
7 Land Trust Revolving Loan Fund as a special, nonlapsing fund; requiring interest  
8 earnings of the Fund to be credited to the Fund; requiring the Governor, beginning  
9 in a certain fiscal year, to include in the annual budget bill a certain appropriation  
10 to the Maryland Environmental Trust to be used to provide certain grants through  
11 the Keep Maryland Beautiful Program; establishing the 40 x 40 Land Conservation  
12 Implementation Grant Program to support implementation of land conservation  
13 goals; and generally relating to land conservation in the State.

14 BY adding to

15 Article – Natural Resources

16 New part designation “Part I. General Provisions” to immediately precede Section  
17 3–201; Section 3–214 through 3–216 to be under the new part “Part II. Local  
18 Land Trust Revolving Loan Program”; and 5–104

19 Annotated Code of Maryland

20 (2018 Replacement Volume and 2022 Supplement)

21 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

22 Article – Natural Resources

23 Section 3–210

24 Annotated Code of Maryland

25 (2018 Replacement Volume and 2022 Supplement)

26 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,

27 Article – State Finance and Procurement

28 Section 6–226(a)(2)(i)

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EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 Annotated Code of Maryland  
2 (2021 Replacement Volume and 2022 Supplement)

3 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,  
4 Article – State Finance and Procurement  
5 Section 6–226(a)(2)(ii)170. and 171.  
6 Annotated Code of Maryland  
7 (2021 Replacement Volume and 2022 Supplement)

8 BY adding to  
9 Article – State Finance and Procurement  
10 Section 6–226(a)(2)(ii)172.  
11 Annotated Code of Maryland  
12 (2021 Replacement Volume and 2022 Supplement)

13 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,  
14 That the new part designation “Part I. General Provisions” be added to immediately  
15 precede Section 3–201 of Article – Natural Resources of the Annotated Code of Maryland.

16 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the Laws of Maryland read  
17 as follows:

18 **Article – Natural Resources**

19 3–210.

20 **(A) (1)** Any function or activity of the Governor’s Committee to Keep Maryland  
21 Beautiful is transferred to the Trust.

22 **(2)** These functions and activities include, by way of enumeration and not  
23 limitation:

24 **[(1)] (I)** Educating Maryland citizens and visitors in their individual  
25 responsibility in litter prevention and care of the out-of-doors through a two-fold  
26 approach:

27 **[(i)] 1.** Awareness–publicity through radio, TV, newspapers, and  
28 other public media; and

29 **[(ii)] 2.** Action–cleanup and beautification projects carried out by  
30 civic organizations, county committees, and community groups in cooperation with public  
31 agencies;

32 **[(2)] (II)** Efficient use of public and private funds spent on cleaning up  
33 highways, parks, beaches, and other public and private property;

1            **[(3)] (III)** Increasing beauty through stimulation of private business,  
2 community, and public planting projects; and

3            **[(4)] (IV)** Stimulating pride and appreciation for home, community, and  
4 State.

5            **(B) (1)** IN FISCAL YEAR 2025 AND EACH FISCAL YEAR THEREAFTER, THE  
6 GOVERNOR SHALL INCLUDE IN THE ANNUAL BUDGET BILL AN APPROPRIATION OF  
7 **\$235,000** TO THE TRUST, TO BE USED IN THE FOLLOWING AMOUNTS FOR THE  
8 FOLLOWING PURPOSES:

9            **(I)** **\$50,000** PER YEAR TO PROVIDE LAND STEWARDSHIP  
10 CAPACITY-BUILDING GRANTS OF UP TO **\$10,000** TO LAND TRUSTS TO SUPPORT  
11 MONITORING AND STEWARDSHIP SCHOLARSHIPS, LAND MONITORING AND  
12 STEWARDSHIP EQUIPMENT, OR ORGANIZATIONAL ACCREDITATION AND  
13 CERTIFICATION TRAININGS;

14            **(II)** **\$50,000** PER YEAR TO PROVIDE LAND STEWARDSHIP  
15 IMPROVEMENT GRANTS OF UP TO **\$10,000** TO LAND TRUSTS TO SUPPORT IMPROVED  
16 MONITORING AND STEWARDSHIP OF AGRICULTURAL LANDS, FOREST LANDS, OR  
17 LANDS FACING A HIGH DEGREE OF THREAT FROM INVASIVE SPECIES OR THE  
18 EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE; AND

19            **(III)** **\$135,000** PER YEAR TO PROVIDE CITIZEN STEWARDSHIP  
20 GRANTS OF UP TO **\$5,000** TO NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS, COMMUNITY  
21 ORGANIZATIONS, SCHOOLS, AND MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS TO ENGAGE  
22 COMMUNITY MEMBERS, ESPECIALLY CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS, IN  
23 ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND STEWARDSHIP.

24            **(2)** FUNDS PROVIDED TO THE TRUST UNDER PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS  
25 SUBSECTION ARE SUPPLEMENTAL TO AND ARE NOT INTENDED TO TAKE THE PLACE  
26 OF FUNDING THAT WOULD OTHERWISE BE APPROPRIATED TO THE TRUST FOR  
27 GRANTS ADMINISTERED UNDER THE KEEP MARYLAND BEAUTIFUL PROGRAM.

28 **3-212. RESERVED.**

29 **3-213. RESERVED.**

30            **PART II. LOCAL LAND TRUST REVOLVING LOAN PROGRAM.**

31 **3-214.**

32            **(A)** IN THIS PART THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS  
33 INDICATED.

1           **(B) “ADVISORY COMMITTEE” MEANS THE LAND PRESERVATION RAPID**  
2 **RESPONSE ADVISORY COMMITTEE.**

3           **(C) “BOARD OF TRUSTEES” MEANS THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE**  
4 **MARYLAND ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST.**

5           **(D) “EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE” MEANS THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE**  
6 **MARYLAND ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST.**

7           **(E) “FUND” MEANS THE LOCAL LAND TRUST REVOLVING LOAN FUND.**

8           **(F) “PROGRAM” MEANS THE LOCAL LAND TRUST REVOLVING LOAN**  
9 **PROGRAM.**

10 **3-215.**

11           **(A) THERE IS A LOCAL LAND TRUST REVOLVING LOAN PROGRAM.**

12           **(B) THE PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM IS TO:**

13                   **(1) SUPPORT THE EFFORTS OF LOCAL LAND TRUSTS THAT WORK**  
14 **WITH STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTAL ENTITIES AND THAT HAVE DIFFICULTY**  
15 **ACCESSING MONEY FROM EXISTING PROGRAM OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION**  
16 **PROGRAMS IN A TIMELY MANNER; AND**

17                   **(2) PROVIDE REVOLVING LOANS TO LAND TRUSTS ON A ROLLING**  
18 **BASIS TO ASSIST THE LAND TRUSTS TO PURCHASE PROPERTY.**

19           **(C) A LAND TRUST THAT RECEIVES A PROGRAM LOAN TO PURCHASE**  
20 **PROPERTY IN ACCORDANCE WITH SUBSECTION (B) OF THIS SECTION SHALL REPAY**  
21 **THE FUND:**

22                   **(1) AT A RATE TO BE DETERMINED BY THE MARYLAND**  
23 **ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST, NOT TO EXCEED ONE POINT BELOW THE PRIME INTEREST**  
24 **RATE; AND**

25                   **(2) AFTER THE PROPERTY IS:**

26                           **(I) PLACED UNDER EASEMENT; OR**

27                           **(II) TRANSFERRED TO A STATE OR LOCAL GOVERNMENTAL**  
28 **ENTITY.**

1 (D) THE PROGRAM IS ADMINISTERED BY THE MARYLAND ENVIRONMENTAL  
2 TRUST.

3 (E) (1) THERE IS A LAND PRESERVATION RAPID RESPONSE ADVISORY  
4 COMMITTEE.

5 (2) THE PURPOSE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE IS TO:

6 (I) REVIEW AND PRIORITIZE PROGRAM LOAN APPLICATIONS  
7 FOR FINAL APPROVAL BY THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE; AND

8 (II) MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE  
9 COMMITTEE ON:

10 1. WHICH PROJECTS TO FUND, WHETHER IN WHOLE OR  
11 IN PART; AND

12 2. THE FUNDING TO BE ALLOCATED TO EACH PROJECT.

13 (3) THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE CONSISTS OF:

14 (I) A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE DEPARTMENT, SELECTED BY  
15 THE SECRETARY; AND

16 (II) THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS, SELECTED BY THE BOARD OF  
17 TRUSTEES:

18 1. A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MARYLAND  
19 ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST THAT IS NOT A MEMBER OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE;

20 2. A REPRESENTATIVE OF A NONPROFIT LAND  
21 CONSERVATION ORGANIZATION IN THE STATE;

22 3. A REPRESENTATIVE OF A LOCAL PARKS AND  
23 RECREATION DEPARTMENT IN THE STATE; AND

24 4. AN INDIVIDUAL WITH EXPERIENCE IN LOAN  
25 UNDERWRITING.

26 3-216.

27 (A) THERE IS A LOCAL LAND TRUST REVOLVING LOAN FUND.

1 (B) THE PURPOSE OF THE FUND IS TO FINANCE THE PROGRAM.

2 (C) THE MARYLAND ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST SHALL ADMINISTER THE  
3 FUND.

4 (D) (1) THE FUND IS A SPECIAL, NONLAPSING FUND THAT IS NOT  
5 SUBJECT TO § 7-302 OF THE STATE FINANCE AND PROCUREMENT ARTICLE.

6 (2) THE STATE TREASURER SHALL HOLD THE FUND SEPARATELY,  
7 AND THE COMPTROLLER SHALL ACCOUNT FOR THE FUND.

8 (E) THE FUND CONSISTS OF:

9 (1) MONEY APPROPRIATED IN THE STATE BUDGET TO THE FUND;

10 (2) INTEREST EARNINGS; AND

11 (3) ANY OTHER MONEY FROM ANY OTHER SOURCE ACCEPTED FOR  
12 THE BENEFIT OF THE FUND.

13 (F) IN FISCAL YEAR 2025, THE GOVERNOR SHALL INCLUDE IN THE ANNUAL  
14 BUDGET BILL AN APPROPRIATION OF \$10,000,000 TO THE FUND.

15 (G) THE FUND MAY BE USED ONLY TO PROVIDE FUNDING FOR THE  
16 PROGRAM.

17 (H) (1) THE STATE TREASURER SHALL INVEST THE MONEY OF THE FUND  
18 IN THE SAME MANNER AS OTHER STATE MONEY MAY BE INVESTED.

19 (2) ANY INTEREST EARNINGS OF THE FUND SHALL BE CREDITED TO  
20 THE FUND.

21 (I) EXPENDITURES FROM THE FUND MAY BE MADE ONLY IN ACCORDANCE  
22 WITH THE STATE BUDGET.

23 (J) MONEY EXPENDED FROM THE FUND FOR THE PROGRAM IS  
24 SUPPLEMENTAL TO AND IS NOT INTENDED TO TAKE THE PLACE OF FUNDING THAT  
25 OTHERWISE WOULD BE APPROPRIATED FOR THE PROGRAM.

26 5-104.

1           (A) (1) IN THIS SECTION THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS  
2 INDICATED.

3           (2) “CONSERVE” MEANS TO PERMANENTLY PROTECT LAND FROM  
4 DEVELOPMENT THROUGH PURCHASE, DONATION, A PERPETUAL CONSERVATION OR  
5 AN OPEN SPACE EASEMENT, OR FEE OWNERSHIP IN ORDER TO PRESERVE THE  
6 CULTURAL, HISTORICAL, ECOLOGICAL, OR AGRICULTURAL VALUE OF THE LAND.

7           (3) “PROGRAM” MEANS THE 40 X 40 LAND CONSERVATION  
8 IMPLEMENTATION GRANT PROGRAM ESTABLISHED UNDER SUBSECTION (C) OF  
9 THIS SECTION.

10           (4) “SMART GROWTH SUBCABINET” MEANS THE SMART GROWTH  
11 SUBCABINET ESTABLISHED UNDER § 9-1406 OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT  
12 ARTICLE.

13           (5) “TRUST” MEANS THE MARYLAND ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST.

14           (B) (1) IT IS THE INTENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY THAT:

15                   (I) BY 2030, 30% OF LANDS IN THE STATE BE CONSERVED; AND

16                   (II) BY 2040, 40% OF LANDS IN THE STATE BE CONSERVED.

17           (2) THE CONSERVATION GOALS ESTABLISHED UNDER PARAGRAPH  
18 (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION SHALL BE ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH MULTIPLE EFFORTS,  
19 INCLUDING:

20                   (I) WORKING WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES, COUNTIES,  
21 MUNICIPALITIES, AMERICAN INDIAN COMMUNITIES, AND PRIVATE LANDOWNERS TO  
22 CONSERVE NATURAL PLACES AND RESOURCES;

23                   (II) IMPROVING ACCESS TO NATURE FOR ALL INDIVIDUALS IN  
24 THE STATE, INCLUDING COMMUNITIES OF COLOR AND ECONOMICALLY  
25 DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES;

26                   (III) SEQUESTERING CARBON AND GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS  
27 IN THE LANDS AND WATERS OF THE STATE;

28                   (IV) INCREASING PUBLIC INCENTIVES FOR PRIVATE  
29 LANDOWNERS TO VOLUNTARILY CONSERVE AND PROTECT AREAS OF  
30 DEMONSTRATED CONSERVATION VALUE AND AREAS THAT HAVE A HIGH CAPACITY  
31 TO SEQUESTER CARBON AND GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS;

1 (V) FOCUSING CONSERVATION WORK AT A LARGE LANDSCAPE  
2 SCALE THAT IS BIOLOGICALLY AND ECOLOGICALLY MEANINGFUL;

3 (VI) PREVENTING THE EXTINCTION OF NATIVE PLANT AND  
4 ANIMAL SPECIES BY RECOVERING AND RESTORING THE SPECIES;

5 (VII) STABILIZING ECOSYSTEMS AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES,  
6 RESTORING DEGRADED ECOSYSTEMS, AND MAINTAINING ECOLOGICAL FUNCTIONS;  
7 AND

8 (VIII) INCREASING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR FARMERS,  
9 RANCHERS, FISHERS, AND FORESTERS.

10 (C) (1) THE TRUST SHALL ADMINISTER A 40 X 40 LAND CONSERVATION  
11 IMPLEMENTATION GRANT PROGRAM TO SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE  
12 GOALS ESTABLISHED UNDER SUBSECTION (B) OF THIS SECTION.

13 (2) PROGRAM GRANTS SHALL:

14 (I) BE AWARDED EACH YEAR ON A COMPETITIVE BASIS TO A  
15 STATEWIDE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION THAT FOCUSES ON SUPPORTING THE  
16 PERMANENT CONSERVATION OF THE LANDS OF THE STATE; AND

17 (II) PROVIDE AT LEAST:

18 1. \$150,000 TO THE GRANT RECIPIENT FOR THE  
19 PURPOSE OF PROVIDING TOOLS AND RESOURCES, ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT, AND  
20 CAPACITY BUILDING TO LOCAL LAND TRUSTS; AND

21 2. \$100,000 TO THE GRANT RECIPIENT FOR THE  
22 PURPOSE OF PROVIDING STATEWIDE EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCES AND TRAININGS  
23 FOR LOCAL LAND TRUSTS ON THE TOPICS OF EASEMENT ACQUISITION,  
24 CONSERVATION PROGRAMS AND TOOLS, LAND MANAGEMENT AND STEWARDSHIP,  
25 AND OTHER RELEVANT SUBJECTS.

26 (3) IN FISCAL YEAR 2025 AND EACH FISCAL YEAR THEREAFTER, THE  
27 GOVERNOR SHALL INCLUDE IN THE ANNUAL BUDGET BILL AN APPROPRIATION OF  
28 \$250,000 TO THE TRUST FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING THE GRANTS REQUIRED  
29 UNDER THIS SUBSECTION.



1           **(D) (1) IN ORDER TO MEET THE CONSERVATION GOALS ESTABLISHED**  
2 **UNDER SUBSECTION (B) OF THIS SECTION, THE SMART GROWTH SUBCABINET, IN**  
3 **COORDINATION WITH RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS, SHALL:**

4                   **(I) COORDINATE THE ACTIONS OF STATE AGENCIES, LOCAL**  
5 **GOVERNMENTS, AND NONGOVERNMENTAL PARTNERS;**

6                   **(II) ON OR BEFORE JULY 1, 2024, DEVELOP AND PUBLISH A**  
7 **PLAN TO MEET THE STATE'S CONSERVATION GOALS AND UPDATE THE PLAN AS**  
8 **NEEDED, BUT NOT LESS THAN EVERY 5 YEARS THEREAFTER; AND**

9                   **(III) ON OR BEFORE DECEMBER 1, 2024, AND EACH DECEMBER**  
10 **1 THEREAFTER, REPORT TO THE SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE**  
11 **ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE AND THE HOUSE ENVIRONMENT AND**  
12 **TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE, IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 2-1257 OF THE STATE**  
13 **GOVERNMENT ARTICLE, ON THE STATE'S PROGRESS TOWARD MEETING THE**  
14 **CONSERVATION GOALS.**

15                   **(2) THE SMART GROWTH SUBCABINET SHALL MAKE THE ANNUAL**  
16 **REPORT REQUIRED UNDER PARAGRAPH (1)(III) OF THIS SUBSECTION AVAILABLE ON**  
17 **ITS WEBSITE.**

18                                   **Article – State Finance and Procurement**

19 6–226.

20           (a) (2) (i) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, and unless  
21 inconsistent with a federal law, grant agreement, or other federal requirement or with the  
22 terms of a gift or settlement agreement, net interest on all State money allocated by the  
23 State Treasurer under this section to special funds or accounts, and otherwise entitled to  
24 receive interest earnings, as accounted for by the Comptroller, shall accrue to the General  
25 Fund of the State.

26                                   (ii) The provisions of subparagraph (i) of this paragraph do not apply  
27 to the following funds:

28   170. the Cannabis Public Health Fund; [and]

29   171. the Community Reinvestment and Repair Fund; AND

30   **172. THE LOCAL LAND TRUST REVOLVING LOAN FUND.**

31           SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect  
32 October 1, 2023.