



FOREVER
MARYLAND

Enhancing and Advancing Land Conservation

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Date: March 7, 2022
Bill Number: **SB 791 - Natural Resources - Land Conservation - Establishment of Goals and Programs (Maryland the Beautiful Act)**
Committee: Senate – Budget & Tax
Position: Support

Forever Maryland supports, SB 791 - Natural Resources - Land Conservation - Establishment of Goals and Programs (Maryland the Beautiful Act) for the purpose of setting aside a new state land preservation goal, creating two new programs to allow for greater greenspace conservation and access, and for the purpose of enhancing sustainable forestry and better managed forests.

The Maryland the Beautiful Act would create a new statewide conservation goal of 30% of Maryland land by 2030 and 40% of Maryland lands by 2040.

This bill would also create a Greenspace Equity Program where local land trusts, operating within specific areas of need, would be able to utilize grant funds for greenspace purposes, including: community gardens, community parks and woodlands, new trails, urban farms, or other open space uses. The Department of Natural Resources would create a Greenspace Equity Board to help make determinations for grant awards and the program is proposed to be funded at \$3 million within the first year and \$5 million annually, thereafter.

Additionally, this bill would create a Local Land Trust Revolving Loan Program and have the program capitalized at \$10 million. This one-time payment would set up a fund, administered by the Maryland Environmental Trust or a qualified land trust support organization, to help local land trusts rapidly secure a property to accelerate private land conservation. After the land is eased, the funds would be paid back to the revolving loan fund program.

Lastly, this bill would allocate \$1 million annually towards the Mel Noland Woodland Incentives Fund. The purpose of this fund is to support sustainable forestry and better forestland management.

Forever Maryland promotes and supports the land and water conservation community, through education, advocacy, and outreach, to permanently protect working landscapes and healthy ecosystems for all. If further information is requested, please contact the organization's Program and Policy Director, Josh Hastings, at 410-251-5268 or Josh@ForeverMaryland.org.

We respectfully request a favorable report.

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