



FOREVER
MARYLAND

Enhancing and Advancing Land Conservation

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Date: February 18, 2022

Bill Number: **HB 784 - Department of Natural Resources - Irreplaceable Natural Areas Program - Establishment**

Committee: House – Environment and Transportation

Position: Support

Forever Maryland supports, **HB 784 - Department of Natural Resources - Irreplaceable Natural Areas Program - Establishment** for the purpose of continuing to protect, enhance, and manage the State of Maryland’s most ecologically pristine areas.

Under this bill, the *Irreplaceable Natural Areas Program* would be created within the Department of Natural Resources to preserve Maryland’s native biodiversity on State-owned land. These, yet to be determined, “irreplaceable natural areas” would be areas that are currently under the management of the Department of Natural Resources and that have a significant assemblage of rare plant and animal species as well as important native plants.

The purpose of the program is to try to preserve Maryland’s current natural biodiversity. Maryland, like any other state in the continental U.S., is under siege from invasive non-native species which decimate native ecosystems. Native landscapes are best at supporting native animal species and providing vital ecosystem services. Protecting native flora directly helps protect native animal species – some of which are now threatened with extinction.

Once these irreplaceable natural areas are determined, a plan for management and compatible and/or incompatible activities shall be determined.

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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