



SB470 – Natural Resources - Land Conservation - Establishment of Goals and Programs (Maryland the Beautiful Act)

Testimony before Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

March 1, 2023

Position: Favorable

Mr. Chair, Mr. Vice Chair and members of the committee, my name is Crystal Konny, and I represent the 750+ members of Indivisible Howard County. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We are providing written testimony today in support of SB470 Natural Resources - Land Conservation - Establishment of Goals and Programs (Maryland the Beautiful Act). We appreciate the leadership of Senator Elfreth for sponsoring this important legislation.

The bill establishes the Local Land Trust Revolving Loan Program to provide loans to land trusts to purchase land for conservation purposes, establishes a Land Trust Revolving Loan Fund, contributes money to the Maryland Environmental Trust to be used to provide grants through the Keep Maryland Beautiful Program, and establishes the 40 x 40 Land Conservation Implementation Grant Program to support implementation of land conservation goals.

Land conservation is a very simple defense to the challenge of climate change and sea-level rise as it offers carbon sequestration and lessens flooding impacts. It preserves essential habitat for native plants and animals which helps ensure biodiversity and mitigate the unprecedented species loss we've been seeing in the past several years. One million species are at risk of extinction worldwide. In the last 40 years, wildlife populations have declined by 60 percent. Land conservation will help stop species loss.

Natural areas and parks are indispensable to people's physical and mental health and enjoyment. This bill will provide space for people and wildlife to thrive. In the last half of the century, Maryland lost an estimated 7,200 acres of forest land per year. Let's set a goal to reverse that.

We urge you to pass the Maryland the Beautiful Act. Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

We respectfully urge a favorable committee report.

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