



March 1, 2023

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**SUPPORT: SB 470 - Natural Resources - Land Conservation - Establishment of Goals and Programs (Maryland the Beautiful Act)**

Chairman Guzzone and Members of the Committee:

Maryland LCV supports SB 470, the Maryland the Beautiful Act. This legislation makes important progress on land conservation in Maryland and is a priority bill of the environmental community. We thank Senator Elfreth for leadership supporting environmental conservation in Maryland.

This bill advances Maryland's land conservation efforts with the establishment of the Local Land Trust Revolving Loan Program. It also affirms Maryland's commitment to conserve 40% of land in our state by 2040 and provides much needed support to land trusts and others maintaining these lands and making the connections between the land and Marylanders through grant-supported programs.

In January of 2021, President Biden announced plans to conserve 30% of America's land and waters by 2030. Since then, many states have taken initiative to follow this path by creating their own state-led plans for land conservation. We are urging Maryland to join this important goal, but to commit to go even further by looking to have 40% of land conserved by the year 2040.

To achieve this, the Maryland the Beautiful Act would:

1. Allocate a one-time expenditure of \$10 million to create a revolving loan, rapid-response fund land trusts would be able to borrow from to quickly act when important properties for conservation become available. Revolving loans are sustainable and fiscally-prudent investments to provide financial support while ensuring the opportunity to use that support remains viable for multiple instances and in perpetuity.
2. Increase popular grant programs to ensure greater success in habitat conservation, through funds for land stewardship capacity building and improvement, and the promotion of citizen stewardship through the popular Keep Maryland Beautiful grant program. This grant program has been well utilized throughout the state, extending opportunities to connect communities with land stewardship behavior.
3. Ensure considerations for land conservation include – coordination with local communities and private landowners; improved access to nature for all people in Maryland; sequestering greenhouse gas emissions; and landscape scale conservation that promotes the continuance of important native species and/or stabilizes ecosystems.

Maryland LCV recognizes the importance of planning for and establishing bold conservation goals to protect biodiversity, supporting goals to mitigate the effects of climate change, and increasing access to natural spaces in Maryland. Investing in conservation is a prudent use of state financial resources, supporting the sustainability and livability of our state for future generations. For these reasons we support the enactment of the Maryland the Beautiful Act and urge a favorable report on SB 470.