



February 20, 2023

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

Dear Chair Guzzone, Vice-Chair Rosapeppe and Honorable Members of the Budget and Taxation Committee,

The Green Towson Alliance writes in support of SB470, Maryland the Beautiful Act which sets new state conservation goals of 30% of Maryland lands permanently protected by 2030 and 40% of land by 2040. This goal aligns with and exceeds the nationwide land and water conservation goals of President Biden's Conserving and Restoring America the Beautiful Report. The Green Towson Alliance advocates for a greener, healthier, more beautiful community at the local level monitoring development proposals and restoring habitat, among other work. We believe that development must be balanced with smart and strategic land conservation. We see pockets of green disappearing that could otherwise connect wildlife corridors, stabilize temperatures in urban heat islands, provide recreation and open space, and absorb stormwater - all problems our neighborhoods in Towson are increasingly experiencing.

This bill equips local land trusts to act quickly and balance development pressure when land becomes available. Our work in restoring habitat by removing invasive species on public and private land has taught us that conservation land must be managed to protect local biodiversity. This legislation will bolster and create new funding programs to help drive both acquisition and stewardship of new publicly owned greenspace.

As you know, species extinction is occurring at an alarming rate: current reports from the United Nations estimate that we are losing more than 150 – 170 unique species per day across the planet; the highest rate since the extinction of the dinosaurs! We must protect the unique biodiversity of Maryland and the Chesapeake Bay. The Chesapeake alone is home to more than 3,000 species of plants and animals, including 348 species of finfish, 173 species of shellfish, and roughly 30 species of waterfowl.

Conservation lands provide vital carbon sinks and create spaces that are resilient to the harmful effects of climate change. Additionally, these spaces contribute towards improved soil stabilization, temperature stability, and preservation of wildlife through expanded habitat. This conservation goal will contribute to protecting our water and air quality while providing outdoor places for Marylanders to connect with nature and the many associated mental and physical health benefits.

We ask for a favorable report on SB470 so that Maryland's rich plant and animal diversity can be better preserved and stewarded.

Respectfully,

**Beth Miller for the Green Towson Alliance**  
523 Murdock Road, Towson