



TESTIMONY FOR HB0631

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

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Stein

Committee: Environment and Transportation

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in strong support of HB0631 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

The Keep Maryland Beautiful Program and Land Conservation Implementation Grant Program will serve to maintain 40% of Maryland's land in its natural state and save the habitats of countless species. This bill will not only preserve our environment, it will also dramatically improve funding available to urban land trusts, and invest in stewardship of lands impacted by climate change and invasive species.

Currently, Maryland has conserved 28.7% of its lands and critical habitats (23% of total land mass) and only annually monitors ~11% of land under easement. Land preservation is critical to the protection of species and the habitats they depend on. The United Nations recently reported that 150 – 170 species permanently go extinct every day. In North America alone, since 1970, bird populations have dropped by more than 30%.

We strongly support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.