



FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT
OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Jessica Fitzwater
County Executive

**HB 530 - Natural Resources – Forest Mitigation Banks and the Forest Conservation Fund
– Alterations**

DATE: March 1, 2023
COMMITTEE: House Environment and Transportation Committee
POSITION: Favorable
FROM: The Office of Frederick County Executive Jessica Fitzwater

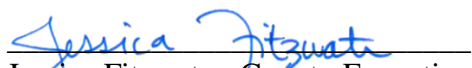
As the County Executive of Frederick County, I urge the committee to give HB 530 - Natural Resources – Forest Mitigation Banks and the Forest Conservation Fund – Alterations a favorable report.

This bill is a priority of Frederick County Government and was introduced by Delegate Kerr by my request. This legislation will help local governments balance growth and economic activities with the commitment to protect natural resources. Frederick County has a strong forest conservation ordinance and is committed to continue our policies that ensure no net-loss of forest cover. The minor changes proposed in this bill will not reduce the impact of our strong conservation policies but rather restore the ability of local jurisdictions to preserve existing forests and provide a more viable timeline for reforestation and afforestation projects.

This bill makes two key changes to existing law. First, by removing the approval deadline of December 31, 2020 for a forest conservation plan it allows counties and municipalities to continue to save existing forests and preserve existing forest ecosystems through the banking program. Second, it extends the timeframe for local jurisdictions to use forest conservation funds for reforestation or afforestation from two years (or three growing periods) to five years (or six growing periods) to provide sufficient time to effectively use these funds for planting projects. This is a particularly important change for smaller municipalities such as Emmitsburg, which may need more time to accrue sufficient funds, plan, and execute a qualifying project.

The minor changes to the state's forest conservation programs proposed in this bill will give local governments more tools and flexibility for reforestation and afforestation projects. I believe this will help local governments throughout Maryland make the most out of our forest conversation policies.

Thank you for your consideration of HB 530. Thank you to the bill sponsor, Del. Ken Kerr for introducing this important legislation. I urge the committee to give this bill a favorable report.



Jessica Fitzwater, County Executive
Frederick County, MD