

Southern Maryland Conservation Alliance

Protecting habitats, heritage, and livelihoods



February 17, 2023

The Honorable Kumar Barve
Chair, Environment and Transportation
Maryland House of Delegates
251 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Dana Stein
Vice Chair, Environment and Transportation
Maryland House of Delegates
251 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

On behalf of The Southern Maryland Conservation Alliance (SMCA), I write to urge your support for the **Maryland the Beautiful legislation (HB 631)**, to advance this bill favorably from committee.

The Southern Maryland Conservation Alliance is a network of partners who work to conserve and restore Southern Maryland's landscapes, waterways, and shorelines that are special to its people, fundamental to its economy, reflected in its culture, and vital for its native fish, wildlife, and plants, on which we rely. Large scale issues such as climate change require large scale solutions, and this bill would help SMCA combat threats to the region's critical landscapes through accelerated land preservation.

Land preservation is one of the single most effective tools for combating climate change. Maryland's forests, meadows, bogs, and marshes attenuate stormwater, filter nutrients, sequester carbon, and sustain the diversity of wildlife that signposts the region's resiliency. The Maryland the Beautiful Act would be a critical legislative tool in SMCA's land preservation toolbelt, ramping up the Alliance's efforts to preserve large, contiguous tracts of land in Southern Maryland and ensuring the region retains the necessary green infrastructure to mitigate climate change.

Presently, a large portion of protected lands are done so through landowner donations. However, properties with critical ecological assets go up for sale each day, becoming vulnerable to development. These properties need to be protected at an accelerated rate in order to achieve the scale of land preservation required to address climate change. With the implementation of a revolving loan fund, SMCA land trusts will be able to play a more active role in the land preservation game, preserving priority properties soon after they go up for sale.

SMCA also strongly supports the Maryland the Beautiful goal to protect 40% of Maryland's lands by 2040. Not only is this goal achievable, but SMCA believes it necessary. Goals beget action, and aggressive land preservation action is needed to

address the ecological crises facing 21st century humans. Now is the time for serious action, and we strongly urge you to act in favor of HB631.

Sincerely,

Greg Bowen
Executive Director
American Chestnut Land Trust

Hal Delaplane
President
Conservancy for Charles County

Ron Klauda
Friends of Hunting Creek

Bonnie Bick
President
Chapman Forest Foundation

Alex Winter
President
Mattawoman Watershed Society

Bob Boxwell
Business Manager
Cove Point Natural Heritage Trust

Franklin A. Robinson Jr.
Board Chairman
Farm Heritage Conservancy

A. Theresa Robinson
Vice President
Serenity Farm, Inc.

Peter LaPorte
Executive Director
St. Mary's County Historical Society

Frank Allen
President
Patuxent Tidewater Land Trust

Anjela Barnes (*Piscataway*)
Interim President & Executive Director
Accokeek Foundation at Piscataway Park

Liz Curtz
Board President
Friends of St. Clements Bay