



Committee: Environment and Transportation
Testimony on: HB0631 – Maryland the Beautiful Act
Organization: Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate Justice Wing
Submitting: Laurie McGilvray, Co-Chair
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 22, 2022

Dear Chair and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing our testimony today in support of HB631. The Maryland Legislative Coalition (MLC) Climate Justice Wing, a statewide coalition of over 50 grassroots and professional organizations, urges you to vote favorably on HB631.

HB631 will create the Local Land Trust Revolving Loan Program to provide loans to land trusts to purchase land for conservation purposes; require the Governor to include in the annual budget funding for the Maryland Environmental Trust for grants through the Keep Maryland Beautiful Program; and establish the 40 x 40 Land Conservation Implementation Grant Program to support a goal of 40% of Maryland land preserved by 2040.

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%.

HB631 will set a goal of 40% of Maryland land preserved by 2040; dramatically improve funding available to urban land trusts; and invest in stewardship of lands impacted by climate change and invasive species. For these reasons, we recommend a **FAVORABLE** report for HB631 in committee.