



Enhancing and Advancing Land Conservation

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Date: February 27, 2024

Bill Number: **HB 530 - Maryland Trails Advisory Committee and the Maryland Office of Trails - Establishment (Great Maryland Trails Act)**

Committee: House Environment & Transportation Committee

Position: Favorable

Chairman Korman and Committee:

Forever Maryland supports **HB 530 - Maryland Trails Advisory Committee and the Maryland Office of Trails - Establishment (Great Maryland Trails Act)** for the purpose of continuing to thoughtfully support the development of trails across the state. Trail connectivity is good for recreation, tourism, vibrant economies, and more.

This bill establishes the Maryland Office of Trails (MOT) and the Maryland Trails Advisory Commission (MTAC) within the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT). The Maryland Office of Trails will work with local jurisdictions and regional efforts to facilitate the development, construction, maintenance, management, use, and promotion of the “Maryland Trails Network.”

Forever Maryland works with Maryland’s more than three dozen land trusts and conservation organizations to advance the conservation and restoration of lands. Our organization recognizes the immense work that is done among local conservation partnerships, local governments, nonprofit organizations and more, to work with landowners to provide for greater connectivity of communities and natural spaces – through trails. Having greater state coordinated support would be helpful for thoughtfully increasing public access to spaces while also providing greater means for connecting communities.

This bill is good for conservation and is a compliment to the work of nonprofits, local governments, and community organizations alike. For further information, please contact the organization’s Executive Director, Josh Hastings, at 410-251-5268 or Josh@ForeverMaryland.org.

We respectfully request a favorable report.

FOREVER MARYLAND FOUNDATION

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