



**The Maryland Department of the Environment
Secretary Serena McIlwain**

House Bill 243

Land Use - Comprehensive and General Plans - Alteration of Elements

Position: Support
Committee: Economic Matters Committee
Date: February 12, 2026
From: Alex Butler, Deputy Director of Government Relations

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) **SUPPORTS** HB 243.

Bill Summary

HB 243 would reorganize the Land Use Article to align local comprehensive planning with Maryland's eight Planning Principles for economic growth and resource protection, and planning policy. To support sustainable development, the bill mandates that state agencies share their best available data on housing, transportation, and economic health with local jurisdictions. Additionally, the legislation repeals the requirement for "Areas of Critical State Concern" currently mandated by state law.

Position Rationale

Currently, Maryland's 24 counties and various municipalities operate under a patchwork of planning requirements. HB 243 will replace this inconsistent system with a uniform list of eight core elements applicable to all local jurisdictions. This standardization is essential for effective environmental management. The bill will ensure that every local government in Maryland is planning for water resources, natural resource protection, and climate resiliency using a common set of standards and data. The bill will integrate and update subelements for water resources and ecology, ensuring that growth is aligned with available water supply and wastewater capacity. The formalization of a resilience element requires local jurisdictions to explicitly plan for climate-related hazards, such as flooding and sea-level rise, ensuring that future development is built to withstand a changing environment. By moving mineral resources and municipal growth into standardized subelements, this will allow MDE to provide more consistent technical assistance and oversight during the plan's development rather than after zoning decisions are finalized.

Accordingly, MDE asks for a **FAVORABLE** report for HB 243.