



Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor
Josh Kurtz, Secretary
David Goshorn, Deputy Secretary

February 12, 2026

BILL NUMBER: House Bill 243

SHORT TITLE: LAND USE - COMPREHENSIVE AND GENERAL PLANS - ALTERATION OF ELEMENTS

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: SUPPORT

EXPLANATION OF DEPARTMENT'S POSITION

The Department supports HB 243 as it helps simplify the comprehensive planning process for localities and helps align existing laws and guidance. The Department of Natural Resources works closely with the Department of Planning and localities to provide expert guidance on a variety of topics covered in the elements required in comprehensive plans. This includes protections for sensitive species and areas, land preservation and recreation planning, and sustainable growth that is resilient to the impacts of climate change.

In particular, Watershed & Climate Services within the Department is in the process of streamlining and improving a variety of planning tools available for localities to use when assessing the resilience of their comprehensive plan. This bill aligns with that current initiative. While the bill does repeal the "Areas of Critical State Concern" element, this element has not been properly implemented since its inception and the Department of Natural Resources' Critical Areas Program already addresses environmentally sensitive areas on a statewide basis. The repeal of this element will prevent unnecessary confusion from localities.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In 2025, HB 286 updated and simplified Maryland's Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Policy (Policy). HB 243 aligns the Land Use Article with the newly established Planning Principles to ensure consistency.

BILL EXPLANATION

HB 243 aligns Title 1, Subtitle 4 and Title 3, Subtitle 1 of the Land Use Article with the comprehensive planning elements of Maryland's Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Policy.

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