

HOUSE BILL 1267

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By: **Delegates Lehman, Pena–Melnyk, Barnes, Bartlett, Boaf, Chang, Holmes, Rogers, and Taylor**

Introduced and read first time: February 12, 2026

Assigned to: Economic Matters and Environment and Transportation

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Patuxent Research Refuge and Beltsville Agricultural Research Center – Zoning**
3 **Classification**
4 **(Protecting Patuxent Research Refuge Act)**

5 FOR the purpose of requiring a certain local zoning authority to designate and maintain
6 certain property in a zoning classification that restricts the uses in a certain manner
7 under certain circumstances; requiring the appropriate authority to maintain
8 certain property in a certain zoning classification that restricts the uses in a certain
9 manner under certain circumstances; and generally relating to land use.

10 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,
11 Article – Land Use
12 Section 1–401(a)
13 Annotated Code of Maryland
14 (2012 Volume and 2025 Supplement)

15 BY adding to
16 Article – Land Use
17 Section 1–401(b)(19), 4–217, and 25–211
18 Annotated Code of Maryland
19 (2012 Volume and 2025 Supplement)

20 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
21 Article – Land Use
22 Section 1–401(b)(19) through (32)
23 Annotated Code of Maryland
24 (2012 Volume and 2025 Supplement)

25 BY repealing
26 Article – Land Use

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 Section 25–211
2 Annotated Code of Maryland
3 (2012 Volume and 2025 Supplement)

4 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
5 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

6 **Article – Land Use**

7 1–401.

8 (a) Except as provided in this section, this division does not apply to charter
9 counties.

10 (b) The following provisions of this division apply to a charter county:

11 **(19) § 4–217 (PATUXENT RESEARCH REFUGE);**

12 **[(19)] (20)** Title 4, Subtitle 5 (Accessory Dwelling Units);

13 **[(20)] (21)** § 5–102(d) (Subdivision regulations – Burial sites);

14 **[(21)] (22)** § 5–104 (Major subdivision – Review);

15 **[(22)] (23)** Title 7, Subtitle 1 (Development Mechanisms);

16 **[(23)] (24)** Title 7, Subtitle 2 (Transfer of Development Rights);

17 **[(24)] (25)** except in Montgomery County or Prince George’s County, Title
18 7, Subtitle 3 (Development Rights and Responsibilities Agreements);

19 **[(25)] (26)** Title 7, Subtitle 4 (Inclusionary Zoning);

20 **[(26)] (27)** Title 7, Subtitle 5 (Housing Expansion and Affordability);

21 **[(27)] (28)** § 8–401 (Conversion of overhead facilities);

22 **[(28)] (29)** for Baltimore County only, Title 9, Subtitle 3 (Single–County
23 Provisions – Baltimore County);

24 **[(29)] (30)** for Frederick County only, Title 9, Subtitle 10 (Single–County
25 Provisions – Frederick County);

26 **[(30)] (31)** for Howard County only, Title 9, Subtitle 13 (Single–County
27 Provisions – Howard County);

1 ~~[(31)]~~ **(32)** for Talbot County only, Title 9, Subtitle 18 (Single-County
2 Provisions – Talbot County); and

3 ~~[(32)]~~ **(33)** Title 11, Subtitle 2 (Civil Penalty).

4 **4-217.**

5 **(A) (1) IN THIS SECTION THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS**
6 **INDICATED.**

7 **(2) “DISTRICT COUNCIL” HAS THE MEANING STATED IN § 14-101 OF**
8 **THIS ARTICLE.**

9 **(3) “LOCAL ZONING AUTHORITY” MEANS:**

10 **(I) A LOCAL JURISDICTION; OR**

11 **(II) FOR PROPERTY LOCATED IN THE**
12 **MARYLAND-WASHINGTON REGIONAL DISTRICT ESTABLISHED UNDER TITLE 20,**
13 **SUBTITLE 1 OF THIS ARTICLE, A DISTRICT COUNCIL.**

14 **(B) ANY FEDERALLY OWNED LAND THAT IS PART OF THE PROPERTY KNOWN**
15 **AS THE PATUXENT RESEARCH REFUGE SHALL BE DESIGNATED AND MAINTAINED IN**
16 **A ZONING CLASSIFICATION THAT RESTRICTS THE USES TO OPEN SPACE, RESERVED**
17 **OPEN SPACE, OR OTHER RESOURCE CONSERVATION USES.**

18 **(C) IF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OR ANY ASSIGNEE SELLS, LEASES,**
19 **LICENSES, OR OTHERWISE ENCUMBERS ANY PORTION OF LAND THAT IS PART OF THE**
20 **PROPERTY KNOWN AS THE PATUXENT RESEARCH REFUGE, THE LOCAL ZONING**
21 **AUTHORITY SHALL CONTINUE A ZONING CLASSIFICATION FOR THAT PROPERTY**
22 **THAT:**

23 **(1) RESTRICTS THE USES TO OPEN SPACE, RESERVED OPEN SPACE,**
24 **OR OTHER RESOURCE CONSERVATION USES; AND**

25 **(2) DOES NOT PERMIT COMMERCIAL, INDUSTRIAL, OR RESIDENTIAL**
26 **USES.**

27 **[25-211.**

28 If the United States Department of Agriculture sells any portion of the property
29 known as the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, the district council shall place and
30 permanently maintain the land in a zoning classification of agricultural open space
31 immediately after the transfer of the land to the buyer.]

1 25-211.

2 (A) SUBJECT TO SUBSECTION (C) OF THIS SECTION, THE DISTRICT COUNCIL
3 SHALL DESIGNATE AND MAINTAIN THE FEDERALLY OWNED PROPERTY KNOWN AS
4 THE BELTSVILLE AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH CENTER OR ANY OTHER U.S.
5 DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE PROPERTY IN BELTSVILLE OR ITS VICINITY TO A
6 ZONING CLASSIFICATION THAT RESTRICTS THE USES TO OPEN SPACE OR RESERVED
7 OPEN SPACE.

8 (B) IF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OR ANY ASSIGNEE SELLS, LEASES,
9 LICENSES, OR OTHERWISE ENCUMBERS ANY PORTION OF THE PROPERTY KNOWN AS
10 THE BELTSVILLE AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH CENTER OR ANY OTHER U.S.
11 DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE PROPERTY IN BELTSVILLE OR ITS VICINITY, THE
12 DISTRICT COUNCIL SHALL CONTINUE A ZONING CLASSIFICATION FOR THAT
13 PROPERTY THAT RESTRICTS THE USES TO OPEN SPACE OR RESERVED OPEN SPACE.

14 (C) THE DISTRICT COUNCIL MAY NOT APPROVE ANY OVERLAYS, SPECIAL
15 EXCEPTIONS, OR MODIFICATIONS TO THE ZONING CLASSIFICATIONS REQUIRED BY
16 THIS SECTION.

17 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect June
18 1, 2026.