



## Queen Anne's Soil Conservation District

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Ways and Means Committee  
Maryland House of Delegates  
House Office Building, Room 131  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

February 27, 2020

Re: House Bill 1146: Forest Conservation – Mel Noland Woodland Incentives Fund –  
Distribution of Agricultural Land Transfer Tax Revenue

Position: OPPOSE

Dear Chairman Kaiser and Members of the Committee:

I have been administering the MALPF program in Queen Anne's County for 15 years and the demand for MALPF monies is very great. I have over 25,000 acres of agricultural land waiting to be preserved through MALPF. The revenue generated from the Agricultural Land Tax has never been adequate to fund the demand of MALPF applications within Queen Anne's County and other Counties within Maryland.

In the past three years the MALPF program has been operating on a single year easement cycle which doubles the amount of applications to be processed, appraisals to be reviewed and easement to be settled. With reducing the annual allocation by \$300,000 that would reduce the operating budget which affects staffing for legal reviewing and appraisers, which in turn make the easement process much slower.

This proposed decrease in the operating budget would drastically affect MALPF staff, the County Administrators and the applicants to the program by delaying their settlements by months.

If easement acquisition funds were used to meet the operational needs, the overall funds available to purchase new easements would be reduced. Terminating the recently created attorney and appraiser positions would significantly impact the length of time it takes MALPF to complete the new easement acquisitions as well as continue all other ongoing easement requests and transactions.

MALPF has recently signed a memorandum of understanding with DGS to pay additional appraisers and attorneys to handle the extra applications received every year. Reducing the budget would terminate those critical positions. In turn it would impede MALPF's ability to process applications and preserve farmland efficiently.

Respectfully submitted  
Donna K. Landis-Smith – MALPF Program Administrator

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