

March 2, 2020

STATE OF MARYLAND
HOUSE OF DELEGATES
Ways and Means Committee

RE: House Bill # 1362
Opposed

To whom it may concern:

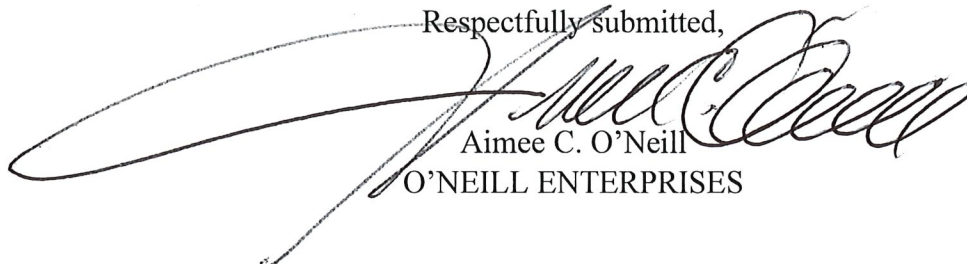
The undersigned 7th generation resident of Harford County, farm land owner and operator, member of the Harford Land Trust and Maryland Farm Bureau, former member of the Harford County AG Land Preservation Easement Advisory Board and regional real estate consultant joins with the Harford County Executive, certain members of the Harford County Council, the Harford County Land Trust Advisory Board and citizens throughout Harford County to oppose House Bill # 1362.

This is an ill-advised attempt to change the management of funds which were directed to be used for AG Land Preservation in Harford County, by referendum of the citizens of the County in 1992.

I have enclosed a letter from Harford County Executive Barry Glassman, which is presented in opposition to the Bill, which provides detailed explanation of the reasons to oppose HB# 1362.

Your attention to the voice of the People in Harford County is anticipated.

Respectfully submitted,



Aimee C. O'Neill
O'NEILL ENTERPRISES

Harford County Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Ways and Means Committee

Date: March 3, 2020

From: Barry Glassman, County Executive

Harford County Government (County) **OPPOSES HB1362**. If this bill passes it would allow the County Council to change the percentage of who would get funded from the County's 1% real estate transfer tax to go to school funding or land preservation. Currently these funds are dedicated to land preservation at .5% and .5% for education which are dedicated by State law and was overwhelmingly approved by Harford County voters in referendum. The property and income taxes that fund education do not fund land preservation for very tangible reasons.

HB1362 creates an unstable funding source for the land preservation program and does risk elimination of the program completely since bond funding could come into play in order to keep the land preservation program active. Bond funding is unpredictable since it can change on an annual basis.

HB1362 will impact the ability to forward fund easement purchases. The County currently relies on a predictable funding source for ten (10) year payment options thru Installment Purchase Agreements. This predictable funding source affords the County the ability to double our buying power now instead of future yearly increases. These impacts would be felt for the County District Program as well.

HB1362 puts the County at risk immediately by creating an unstable environment to encourage more properties to come into the County program without the benefit of having a stable funding source to provide offers from.

HB1362 not only impacts the County land preservation program but it will also impact State land preservation programs. The bill will impact participation in the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Fund (MALPF) due to the required matching funds that is funded from the County transfer tax fund.

In addition the Rural Legacy funding will be limited since the administration's cost is paid thru the County transfer tax fund.

HB1362 will cause a serious risk to the County by impacting the property tax credit program which is also funded from the County transfer tax fund and began in 1989. The County tax credit program gives every landowner in all three programs \$50 per acre off their County tax bill.

Harford County has preserved 27 farms, 3,094 acres using \$17,483,934.00 dollars during my time as County Executive. In total the County has preserved 274 farms totaling 32,179 acres using \$129,994,610.00 dollars. These investments are invaluable to preserving the County's rural and agricultural heritage and they also protect the County from added capital costs related to more infrastructure such as roads, schools and public utilities from being expanded.

For these reasons I, Barry Glassman, urge the Committee to issue an **UNFAVORABLE** report on HB1362.