



Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

3358 Davidsonville Road • Davidsonville, MD 21035 • (410) 922-3426

March 31, 2021

To: Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

Re: **Support of HB 991 - Natural Resources – Forest Mitigation Banks – Qualified Conservation**

On behalf of our member families, I submit this written testimony in support of HB 991, legislation that establishes the use of qualified conservation in a forest mitigation bank of all or a part of existing forests as a standard for meeting afforestation or reforestation requirements under the Forest Conservation Act. The bill defines the term "qualified preservation" as it applies to the Forest Conservation Act and alters the defined term "forest mitigation banking" as it applies to the Forest Conservation Act to include the qualified preservation of forests.

In 2020, there was an Attorney General opinion that existing stands of forests were not eligible for Forest Banking credits. The many landowners and farmers that have spent money to put their existing forested property in forest banking programs around the state. This is a significant economic impact to not allowing those properties to now not be eligible. This bill will clarify in the State Natural Resources Article that existing stands of forest are eligible for Forest Banking Credits.

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS HB 991 AND ENCOURAGE A FAVORABLE REPORT

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colby Ferguson'.

Colby Ferguson
Director of Government Relations

For more information contact Colby Ferguson at (240) 578-0396