

HEARING DATE: February 17, 2021

BILL NO: HB0860

COMMITTEE: Environment and Transportation

POSITION: Letter of Information

FOR INFORMATION CONTACT: Adam Gruz (410) 767-4613

TITLE:

State Planning - Preservation of Agricultural Land - Goal

BILL ANALYSIS:

HB0860 establishes a statewide agricultural land preservation goal, through various preservation programs, of preserving 1,030,000 acres of land by the year 2030. Acreage counted toward the land preservation goal are acres preserved through: (1) the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF); (2) the Maryland GreenPrint Program (GreenPrint); (3) the Rural Legacy Program (Rural Legacy); (4) the Maryland Environmental Trust (MET); or (5) local land preservation programs.

POSITION AND RATIONALE:

On an annual basis, the Maryland Department of Planning (Planning) reports to the Joint Subcommittee on Program Open Space and Agricultural Land Preservation on the state's progress toward implementing the current statewide agricultural land preservation goal of 1,030,000 acres to be preserved. The current goal was created by Senate Joint Resolution 10/House Joint Resolution 22 of 2002. That goal was to be met through a combination of four programs: (1) MALPF; (2) GreenPrint; (3) Rural Legacy; and (4) and local land preservation programs. HB0860 adds acreage preserved through MET as a contributing program toward the statewide goal of 1,030,000 acres preserved by 2030.

Planning wishes to point out that there are other land preservation programs that could potentially be considered as the state works toward its 1,030,000 acres preserved goal. The state currently preserves agricultural land through the Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Company (MARBIDCO). MARBIDCO's programs (e.g., Next General

Farmland Acquisition Program) have preserved 519 acres of agricultural land. Furthermore, the following federal programs currently continue to preserve agricultural land: (1) the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP); (2) the Forest Legacy Program; and (3) the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program. There are also scenic easements funded through federal transportation legislation. Collectively, these programs have protected 30,040 acres. There are also private conservation organizations that have preserved 61,309 acres of agricultural land. Please note that the acreage totals noted in this paragraph are based on the best available data, as of November 18, 2020. Additionally, although funding from GreenPrint had also been used to acquire acreage under other programs, no land acquisitions have occurred under GreenPrint since 2005.

Planning has developed an interactive dashboard application that tracks agricultural land preserved within the state. That resource is available for your use at the following URL: maryland.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opdashboard/index.html#/0f3ffd3350b24b17bd3b8e1705af3df5.

Thank you for your consideration of the above. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.