



Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

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February 16, 2022

To: Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

Re: **Support of SB 541 - Natural Resources - Maryland Park Service and State Parks - Alterations (Great Maryland Outdoors Act)**

On behalf of our member families, I submit this written testimony in support of SB 541 with 2 amendments. This comprehensive bill addresses infrastructure, capacity, and accessibility needs within the Maryland Park Service and State parks, including establishing systems and processes for surveying infrastructure and critical maintenance needs, increasing the number of Maryland Park Service full-time employees, requiring the Department of Budget and Management to conduct certain staff reviews, and requiring the Department of Natural Resources to develop a capital improvement plan and a comprehensive long-range strategic plan.

Included in this bill is more funding for the Maryland Agland Preservation Foundation. Also in this bill is the possible use of the Program Open space payback funding. Maryland Farm Bureau supports the repayment of these funds and seeks to see some of these funds to cover the cost for the Urban Ag Water and Power Infrastructure Fund that is being established in HB 855. Also, we would like to see funding go to the Department of Natural Resource - Wildlife Services Division to assist with proper wildlife habitat maintenance on the state's parks, forests and wildlife management areas.

Maryland Farm Bureau Policy:

We support grant programs to provide infrastructure for urban farms. We urge Program Open Space revenues that were diverted to the General Fund to be repaid. We support using a portion of these repaid funds to be used to increase wildlife management in the state. This could include state cost share for vegetative fencing/sacrificial crops and wildlife fencing. We recommend that the larger share of open space funds be used for maintenance of present state-owned land rather than the acquisition of new land. We urge diverting a portion of the open space funds to be used for managing wildlife on state owned land.

Maryland Farm Bureau Amendments:

#1: If this bill is to use the Program Open Space payback funds, we would like the Urban Agriculture Water and Power Infrastructure Grant Fund and program to be included at \$500,000/year for 4 years starting in FY24.

#2: We would like to see dedicated funds appropriated to maintain the wildlife more properly in the state parks, forests and wildlife management areas at \$500,000/year for 4 years starting in FY24.

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS SB 541 WITH TWO AMENDMENTS

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