



Regarding HB0673/SB0538

**OPPOSED**

Renee Hamidi, executive director, The Valleys Planning Council

The Valleys Planning Council, which for 60 years has been protecting land, resources, and the rural way of life in Baltimore County, objects to HB0673/SB0538. This bill would allow special events and occasions to be conducted on a farm that generates income from an agricultural activity. There are no limitations or restrictions on the special events and there are no requirements on how much income the farm must generate from an agricultural activity.

One can imagine a farm that grows a few tomatoes and sells them at a farmers' market. The tomatoes qualify as an ag activity that generates income, but the real money is in the weddings scheduled for every Saturday and Sunday. The "barn", erected without the usual permits because it was an accessory agricultural building, could be outfitted to seat a few hundred guests. What were farm field or paddocks could accommodate a few hundred cars. And any neighbors, who bought properties where they could enjoy the rural way of life, will instead have to contend with music until the wee hours, crowds, and traffic.

Event venues would replace farms. Yes, each county could try to restrict and limit activities, but this bill could see prime and productive ag land used for whatever anyone defines as a "special event" or "occasion". Not just weddings, but monster truck rallies, rodeos, and all manner of fairs and festivals could take place. Because agricultural easements would have to severely restrict such activities, owners of ag land would be reluctant to preserve their properties.

Please do not open up our precious farmland to non-ag activities without limitations. Thank you for your consideration.