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4 March 2025

Economic Matters Committee
230 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

TRANSMITTED BY ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION

Re: Opposition to House Bill 631, Agricultural and Conservation Easements.

Chairman Wilson and members of the Economic Matters Committee,

My name is Sean Collins and I am the Eastern Regional Manager for the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA). We are the world's largest aviation membership organization representing the general aviation interests of more than 300,000 aircraft owners and pilots across the country including 5,156 in Maryland. On behalf of these members, **AOPA opposes House Bill 631, Agricultural and Conservation Easements, but would remove opposition with amendment.**

According to the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT), the state's aviation industry generates more than \$1.1 billion in annual economic impact while supporting 10,200 jobs and \$752 million in income. The state's system consists of 33 public-use airports, most of which are owned by municipalities or counties (including two owned by the state). Land near airports is often used for agricultural purposes as a more compatible land use because of its lack of interference with aircraft operations. As a method of protecting runway approaches and airspace immediately surrounding airports, municipalities occasionally use eminent domain to enforce safety standards to prevent the development of airspace obstructions from structures and vegetation, and to extend the runway length.

On this basis, we would request an amendment that provides for an exemption for all public-use airports. As an example:

"...except where the state or any of its instrumentalities or political subdivision require eminent domain for the protection of airports and air safety."

AOPA is committed to ensuring the safety, future viability, and development of general aviation as an integral part of a national transportation system. Thank you for your consideration of this important matter. We welcome any opportunity to serve this Committee as a resource on matters impacting general aviation airports. I can be reached at sean.collins@aopa.org or by phone at (301) 695-2090.

Sincerely,

Sean M. Collins, AOPA
Eastern Regional Manager