

Testimony in Support of HB 1362

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Brenda Myers, and I am writing today to express my support for House Bill 1362 (HB 1362), a vital piece of legislation that enhances fairness and equity in Maryland's eminent domain process. The power of eminent domain allows the government to acquire private property for public use, but the Fifth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution mandates that property owners receive "**just compensation**" when their land is taken. Unfortunately, under current Maryland law, property owners often face significant financial burdens beyond the market value of their land—burdens that HB 1362 seeks to address.

HB 1362 proposes a much-needed amendment to Maryland's existing compensation framework. In addition to receiving fair market value for their property, affected property owners would also be entitled to compensation for:

Legal Fees – Expenses incurred from hiring attorneys to navigate the condemnation process and defend their rights.

Expert Fees – Costs associated with specialists, such as appraisers or land surveyors, who provide essential valuations and assessments.

Other Related Costs – Additional expenditures directly tied to the condemnation proceedings, ensuring that landowners are not financially disadvantaged in the process.

By covering these ancillary costs, HB 1362 ensures that property owners do not have to shoulder the financial burden of defending their property rights when the government exercises eminent domain.

HB 1362 is Essential for Property Owners

For many property owners, particularly small businesses, farmers, and homeowners, losing land through eminent domain is not just a matter of financial compensation—it is a major disruption to their lives and livelihoods. Under the current system, even if they receive the fair market value for their property, they are still left to cover the legal and expert costs associated with fighting for their rightful compensation. This creates an unfair situation where property owners must spend thousands of dollars just to ensure they are treated fairly.

Should HB 1362 be enacted, Maryland property owners facing eminent domain would experience a more **equitable** and **just** compensation process. By ensuring that landowners are fully reimbursed for the costs incurred during condemnation proceedings, this bill upholds the fundamental principles of fairness in property rights.

The bipartisan sponsorship of the bill—14 Republican delegates and one Democratic delegate—demonstrates a collective recognition that Maryland's eminent domain laws need reform to protect property owners from undue financial burdens.

A Step Toward a More Balanced Eminent Domain Process

HB 1362 represents a **progressive shift** in Maryland's approach to eminent domain, emphasizing a comprehensive and fair compensation process. By addressing the often-overlooked expenses that property owners incur during condemnation proceedings, this bill reinforces the principle that **just compensation must be truly just**.

I urge this committee to support HB 1362 and take a stand for fairness in Maryland's eminent domain laws. Property owners should not be left financially disadvantaged when their land is seized for public use. This bill ensures that Maryland's laws align with the constitutional principles of equity and justice.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Brenda Myers

Hampstead, Maryland