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Testimony in support of HB0081 - Real Property - Condemnation - Compensation for Farm and Agricultural Property (Protect Maryland Farm Lands Act)

**To:** Economic Matters Committee

**From:** Cortney Davis

Dear Chair C.T. Wilson, Vice Chair Brian M. Crosby, and Members of the Economic Matters Committee,

My name is Cortney Davis, and I am a resident of Westminster, MD. I am writing to express my support for HB0081 - Real Property - Condemnation - Compensation for Farm and Agricultural Property (Protect Maryland Farm Lands Act).

Myself and my husband are the current owners of a portion of my husband's family farm that has been in the family for 3 generations. A piece of land that we purchased with the intent of building our forever home there. Our plans now in a complete upheaval as our farm is in the direct path of the proposed route for the Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project.

For many landowners, their property represents much more than just a piece of real estate—it's the result of years of hard work, investment, and connection to the land. A family who has farmed the same soil for generations or carefully nurtured their land often sees it as part of their identity, a heritage passed down through the family. When they are offered compensation that doesn't reflect the true value of their property, it is deeply insulting. It's not just about money; it's about the years of effort that have gone into cultivating and caring for that land.

The emotional toll of receiving an offer that undervalues the property can be significant. A landowner might feel as though their efforts, their history, and their legacy are being dismissed. The land is more than just a financial asset—it's a place filled with memories, decisions, and long-term commitments. When the compensation doesn't adequately reflect all of this, it can be incredibly disheartening, especially when the land is an integral part of their livelihood and sense of self.

This situation goes beyond the individual landowner. The effects ripple out to the broader community. In rural areas, farming is often the backbone of the local economy. When a landowner is forced to sell their land for less than its value, not only are they losing a financial asset, but the community can lose an essential part of its character and economy. The local workforce, the market for agricultural products, and even the way of life in these areas can suffer. Developers may buy the land, but they never carry the same long-term investment in the local community. This shift leads to fewer jobs, fewer opportunities, and a loss of the local culture tied to farming and agriculture.

Moreover, land is not just something to be bought and sold. It's something that has been cared for over time, and when a fair offer isn't made, there's little incentive for the landowner to continue stewarding it with the same care. Fair compensation would not only recognize the value of the land as an asset but also acknowledge the effort and responsibility that goes into preserving it for future generations.

At its core, fair compensation is about respect—respect for the land, for the hard work that has gone into it, and for the people whose lives and livelihoods are tied to it. Without that respect, landowners are left feeling their efforts are being undervalued and their futures uncertain. It's not just a financial transaction; it's a matter of fairness and acknowledgment of the deeper connection to the land that goes far beyond its market price.

I respectfully urge you to support HB0081 - Real Property - Condemnation - Compensation for Farm and Agricultural Property (Protect Maryland Farm Lands Act) and to advocate for its passage to guarantee that farmers and individuals are not taken advantage of.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to contact me at [cortneydavis28@gmail.com](mailto:cortneydavis28@gmail.com) or 443-605-5397. I appreciate your dedication to serving our community and look forward to seeing your leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,  
Cortney Davis