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February 11, 2025

Testimony in support of Bill# SB0034

To: Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

From: Mollie McCormick (partner in Flickinger Farm, LLC)

Dear Chair [Senator Brian J. Feldman](#), Vice-Chair [Senator Cheryl C. Kagan](#) and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

My name is Mollie McCormick, and I am a resident of Mount Airy, Maryland. I have lived here on my family farm since 1996, continuing the legacy of living on this property that my family started nearly 100 years ago. **I am writing to express my SUPPORT for Bill #SB0034, which seeks to protect Maryland's farmland from harmful development projects, particularly those that people have entrusted Maryland to help preserve by opting into perpetual conservation easements.**

We are the third generation to own or live on the Flickinger Farm, a now 170-acre set of properties purchased by my great great grandfather that was part of an original English land grant. My great uncle ran a substantial dairy operation here in the 1950s and since then my family has worked to retain it as farmland, sharing ownership with those in the family who have sought to preserve, rather than develop, it. My husband and I moved here in 1996 and formed an LLC with my Dad and brother (both living elsewhere) to seek a conservation easement with the state in 1999. We have raised a family here and — even when struggling to pay our mortgage — felt we had made the right, historic choice to preserve the land, planting many acres of trees and wildlife cover and ensuring that our “Flickinger Branch” of the stream that flows through the property to the Monocacy River remains un-polluted by runoff from development, or modern farming practices. Our property has a family cemetery that historians sometimes stop into visit, including one that explained how some of our gravestones were created by the only freed enslaved man who locally designed stones.

Although we are not currently in the path of the MPRP project, it is within 1.5 miles of us, and we are deeply concerned about the ramifications of allowing the state to possible “take back” through eminent domain what any family has sacrificed for and willingly restricted in the spirit of preservation. As we approach retirement age and consider improvements to our home and additional projects with conservation groups, we are very concerned about implementing plans we have envisioned if some group may simply one day ask Maryland to take the land that we “set aside.” It is a very bad precedent and feels like a breach of the agreement we have partnered with Maryland in for decades. The manner in the MPRP was revealed to the public is an indication of how un-transparent the involved parties are about their data and intentions for Marylanders.

If you look up the word “conservation,” you will learn that “conservation seeks the *proper use of nature*” and is defined as “prevention of a *wasteful use of a resource*.” The research shows that the MPRP project is not aligned with the “proper use of nature” and should therefore not be allowed anywhere near

conservation properties, much less where people hope to reside and thrive. MPRP is instead the “wasteful use of a resource” that many Marylanders have long sacrificed for so that other Marylanders can enjoy it—through vistas, hunting, farm stands, tree farms, and breweries/wineries. It is unconscionable that people should be fighting for the right to the land that they conserved and preserved in good faith, particularly to satisfy the data needs of billionaires and people in another state.

I respectfully urge you to strongly support Bill# SB0034 and to advocate for its passage to preserve (which means “to keep”) our farmland and viewscape and protect Maryland’s rich natural and cultural heritage, so that we may continue to model a legacy of conservation, especially in the face of the unprecedented change being forced on the American people.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important legislation. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to contact me at mmccormick@bytesnwords.com I appreciate your dedication to serving our community and look forward to seeing your leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,

Mollie R. McCormick
Joseph P. McCormick