



Enhancing and Advancing Land Conservation

Testimony on HB 286

February 4, 2025

Local Comprehensive Planning and State Economic Growth, Resource Protection,
and Planning Principles

Kristin Kirkwood, Chair Forever Maryland

Position: Favorable with amendments

Forever Maryland represents Maryland's land trust community. Local land trusts are valuable partners in the efforts to preserve the most important farms, forests and ecological areas in the state. We work side by side with state and local government to reach the goal of permanently preserving 40% of the state by the year 2040.

We support the efforts by the Maryland Department of Planning to simplify and clarify the State Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Policy planning principles for local comprehensive planning. However, in doing so, all references to "resource conservation" and "natural resource-based businesses" have been removed. As such, the critical role that land preservation plays in achieving the ecological, land use, and economic goals of the state is missing from the simplified principles. Forever Maryland recommends the prior vision (10) Resource Conservation be retained as a ninth principle - "Resource Conservation – waterways, forests, agricultural areas, open space, natural systems and scenic areas are conserved". If that is not possible, we recommend the following amendments:

- Principle One (Land) – add language that land outside of population centers should be permanently protected with agricultural or conservation easements.
- Principle Four (Economy) – add language that highlights the importance of the agricultural and seafood industries (or resource-based industries) to the state.
- Principal Eight (Ecology) – add language that the protection and restoration of sensitive ecological systems are enhanced by permanent conservation easements.

We look forward to working with the state to achieve the goal of preserving 40% of the state by 2040. The planning principles are an important step to ensuring this goal.