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Written testimony for SB0189: Eminent Domain – Agricultural and
Conservation Easements – Prohibited Taking

Dear Committee Members:

I reside in the rolling hills of Carroll County amid farms in multiple different Agricultural state and county Easement Programs. I asking you to support this bill that is important to farmer's faith in these programs that are critical to preservation of the agricultural economy in rural parts of our state and our number one industry, Agriculture, employing over 300,000 people statewide.

That land in easement can be taken through eminent domain in nothing short of an attack on environmental justice, the livelihoods of farmers on tight margins already susceptible to the forces of nature outside their control to serve the interests of big industry. Prime top grade farm soil and land are becoming ever more finite resources in our state, land supporting industry can "grow" on any soil. We learned during the height of COVID how fragile our local supply chain is, as we are now learning related to bird flu. We must protect our local food supply or risk importing food from out of state or outside the country making food on our tables more expensive for residents at a time when groceries already seem out of reach for low income neighbors.

Farmers need contiguous access to the farms they work, owned or leased property. This helps to reduce expenses, sharing major equipment, costs of aerial spraying and seeding and gasoline use traveling between properties.

Some easement Agreements state that agriculture is the highest and best use of this land and those Agreements can only be breached through an act of the General Assembly. Clearly those who developed these programs intended that perpetuity meant forever.

I appreciate your time and consideration of these important issues. Please vote to support Senate Bill 0189.

Very sincerely,

Jennifer Teeter