



January 23, 2025

To: Judicial Proceedings and Education, Energy, and the Environment Committees

From: Horizon Farm Credit

Bill: SB 189 – Eminent Domain – Agricultural and Conservation Easements – Prohibited Taking

Position: Support

Horizon Farm Credit is a member-owned cooperative supporting rural communities and agriculture with reliable, consistent credit and financial services throughout our five-state lending territory in good times and bad. With over \$6.5 billion dollars in loans outstanding to over 23,000 member-owners representing the full range of agriculture, we are one of the largest agricultural lenders on the East Coast.

SB 189 prohibits the State or any of its instrumentalities or political subdivisions from taking privately owned property that is subject to perpetual agricultural or conservation easement.

Maryland has preserved over 1.85 million acres, including over 350,000 acres of agricultural land, wooded areas, and open space as of 2024. This critical tool of land preservation secures the rights of that area and protects it from any future development for future generations. The ability of landowners to utilize this tool affords them the ability to continue to operate and eventually pass those lands onto young and beginning producers who want to get into the practice of farming in Maryland. As an agricultural lender, agriculture and conservation easements lower the overall risk tolerance for land secured as collateral. In turn, this allows for that institution to make additional capital investments in other producers. If the State or any of its instrumentalities or political subdivisions takes secured land via eminent domain, it will significantly impact lending institutions and the borrower's ability to generate the needed and anticipated income to cover operating costs.

Senate Bill 189 secures the rights of agricultural and conservation easement holders from eminent domain, securing crucial lands for the current and future generations of agriculturalist and conservationists.

Horizon Farm Credit Supports SB 189

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