



Maryland Farm Bureau

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March 3, 2026

To: House Ways and Means Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

RE: **Support of HB609 State Transfer Tax - Land Preservation Special Fund - Revenue Allocation**

On behalf of the over 7,000 member families of the Maryland Farm Bureau, I submit this written testimony in support of House Bill 609. Maryland's long-standing leadership in agricultural and open-space preservation has been central to the success of our farming communities and the health of our state's natural resources. The State Transfer Tax has played a vital role in sustaining this commitment by providing reliable funding for Program Open Space, the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation, and the Rural Legacy Program. Together, these programs form the backbone of Maryland's efforts to safeguard farmland, protect natural landscapes, and ensure that working lands remain productive for future generations.

HB0609 advances this mission by repealing provisions that diverted dedicated land preservation revenues to the General Fund. When funds intended for conservation are redirected, it weakens long-term planning, delays preservation projects, and creates uncertainty for farm families considering easements. The bill restores the integrity of the State Transfer Tax by ensuring that the revenues collected are used solely for their intended purposes. This strengthens the state's preservation framework and provides consistency for the programs that depend on these critical resources.

Maryland's agricultural lands are irreplaceable. Once farmland is lost, it rarely returns to production, and the consequences extend far beyond acreage. Preserved lands support food security, maintain rural economies, protect wildlife habitat, and enhance water quality across the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Programs like those supported through the State Transfer Tax offer farmers voluntary, market-based tools to keep their land in agriculture while also preserving the scenic and environmental qualities that benefit all Marylanders. Protecting these funding streams ensures that Maryland continues to be a national model for conservation and responsible land stewardship.

For these reasons, the Maryland Farm Bureau strongly supports HB0609 and urges a favorable report. Strengthening Maryland's land preservation programs is not only an investment in agriculture, but an investment in the state's environment, economy, and future.

Tyler Hough
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Please contact Tyler Hough, though@marylandfb.org, with any questions