



Eastern Shore

LAND CONSERVANCY

February 27, 2026

Testimony on **HB609**
State Transfer Tax – Land Preservation Special Fund
House Appropriations Committee
Position: **Favorable**

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy (ESLC), I am writing to express our strong support for **House Bill 609**, which restores and protects Maryland's long-standing commitment to land conservation funded by the Transfer Tax.

For communities across the Eastern Shore, these funds are not abstract line items—they are the foundation of successful land conservation. The diverse projects supported through Program Open Space protect working farms, forests, waterways, wildlife habitat, and the rural character that defines our region.

HB 609 restores fiscal integrity by removing the temporary exemption that relieved the State of its obligation to wholly reimburse Program Open Space when General Fund transfers occur.

Maryland's transfer tax has long been a reliable, dedicated funding source for land conservation. Protecting it from diversion strengthens predictability for local governments, land trusts, farmers, and conservation partners who rely on these programs to leverage matching funds, plan multi-year projects, and respond to time-sensitive opportunities.

For the Eastern Shore—where agriculture, natural resources, and tourism are cornerstones of the economy—stable and uninterrupted conservation funding is essential. HB 609 reaffirms the General Assembly's commitment to safeguarding the State's land preservation legacy and ensuring that dedicated funds remain dedicated.

We respectfully urge a favorable report on House Bill 609.

Thank you for your leadership and continued commitment to Maryland's land conservation programs.

Sincerely,

Carol Bean

Land Use and Policy Manager

