

JUSTIN READY
Legislative District 5
Carroll County

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MINORITY WHIP
—
Finance Committee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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Senator Justin Ready
SB 565 – Maryland Stadium Authority – Sale of Shamrock Farms to Carroll County

Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee,

SB 565 establishes clear conditions for the future sale or transfer of Shamrock Farm and creates a structured pathway for the Carroll County Commissioners to purchase the property within a specified timeframe. The purchase price would be the amount originally paid by the Maryland Stadium Authority, adjusted for inflation and with the \$500,000 provided by the county taken out. This comes out to approximately \$4.1 million.

Shamrock Farm is a historic equestrian property located in Woodbine, Maryland. Established in 1948 by Art Rooney, founder of the Pittsburgh Steelers, the farm grew over decades to roughly 640 acres and became a respected Thoroughbred breeding and training facility. It has long contributed to Maryland’s agricultural economy and proud horse racing tradition.

In 2024, the property entered state policy discussions as part of Maryland’s broader effort to modernize horse racing infrastructure, including redevelopment of Pimlico Racecourse. In December 2024, Shamrock Farm was selected as the proposed site for a new centralized training center to support the racing industry statewide. In October 2025, the Maryland Stadium Authority purchased approximately 330 acres of the property for about \$4.5 million in public funds, including \$500,000 given by Carroll County.

However, after acquisition, engineering analysis and cost projections revealed significant challenges. The site’s terrain and infrastructure needs made development far more expensive than originally anticipated, with estimates ultimately coming in roughly \$100 million over budget.

The terrain was considered too rough, requiring extensive grading to create the flat surfaces necessary for horse training. The surrounding road infrastructure—particularly a narrow two-lane road without shoulders—posed logistical challenges for transporting construction materials and, eventually, more than 800 horses.

Environmental regulators also raised serious concerns. Development would likely increase runoff into a tributary of Gillis Falls that originates on the property. That waterway supports a significant brown trout population, a valued recreational species, which could be harmed by the project.

Given the escalating projected costs and the environmental implications, the Maryland Stadium Authority announced in January that it would abandon the Shamrock Farm plan and instead pursue acquisition and redevelopment of Laurel Park as the centralized training center. As a result, the state now owns approximately 330 acres of agricultural property in the heart of Carroll County without defined long-term use. Senate Bill 565 addresses that situation while giving the county a path to acquiring the land if they see fit.

I respectfully request a favorable on SB 147.