



Enhancing and Advancing Land Conservation

Senate Budget & Taxation Hearing

March 4, 2026

SB284 - Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act of 2026

On behalf of Forever Maryland's member organizations, we write in **strong support for full and sustained funding for Maryland's real estate transfer tax programs in this year's budget.**

Forever Maryland is the statewide coalition representing nearly 30 land trusts and land conservation organizations. Land trusts work in every region of the state to conserve farms, forests, waterways, wildlife habitat, and culturally significant landscapes in collaboration with state and local government and a wide variety of other conservation nonprofits.

Maryland's land trusts are longstanding partners with Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Department of Agriculture (MDA) in both the acquisition and stewardship of land protected with Program Open Space funds.

Maryland's land trusts strongly support full funding for the Program Open Space transfer tax funded programs. Program Open Space is a nationally respected, and truly visionary, land conservation program. It is the funding stream most responsible for Maryland's achievement of permanent protection of 30% of the state by the year 2030 (30x30) ahead of schedule and sets the table for achieving 40x40. Both conservation goals were passed by the Maryland legislature, in view of the critical importance of land conservation to human health, biodiversity, water quality, and climate adaptation.

We work with the Rural Legacy program to preserve large blocks of contiguous agricultural, forest and ecologically sensitive areas; with stateside Program Open Space to preserve land for public access and recreation; with the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation to preserve our farms and forests; and in support of local parkland acquisition through localside Program Open Space.

Forever Maryland respectfully requests the following:

- Replacement of redirection of transfer tax special funds with GO bonds in the capital budget is temporary. Movement back to full cash funding is restored as soon as possible. Interest on GO bonds is paid from the General Fund, not future transfer tax revenue.

- Transfer tax special funds are used for their intended purpose and distributed per the statutory allocations, not used for special projects or ongoing operating costs.

Forever Maryland and the undersigned organizations respectfully urge the Committee to recommend full and sustained funding for Maryland’s transfer tax programs, collectively known as Program Open Space. Thank you for your consideration and for your continued leadership on behalf of Maryland’s communities, landscapes, and future generations.

Forever Maryland member organizations

American Chestnut Land Trust
Baltimore County Land Trust Coalition
Baltimore Green Space
Casey Trees
Catoctin Land Trust
Cecil Land Trust
Chesapeake Conservancy
Conservancy For Charles County
Crownsville Conservancy
Eastern Shore Land Conservancy
Green Trust Alliance
Gunpowder Valley Conservancy
Harford Land Trust
Howard County Conservancy

Land Trust Alliance
Land Preservation Trust
Long Green Land Trust
Lower Shore Land Trust
Magothy River Land Trust
NeighborSpace of Baltimore County
Patuxent Tidewater Land Trust
Potomac Conservancy
Rockburn Land Trust
Scenic Rivers Land Trust
The Manor Conservancy
The Nature Conservancy
Trust For Public Land
The Conservation Fund