

HB 1024: Eminent Domain - Agricultural and Conservation Easements - Prohibited Taking: Please vote to **SUPPORT** this bill.

Dear Economic Matters Committee:

I am writing to strongly urge you to **SUPPORT HB 1024**.

HB 1024 ensures that land voluntarily placed under permanent easement—often at significant cost to landowners through reduced property value and development rights—cannot be seized for public projects, preserving the integrity of these conservation commitments.

Agricultural preservation and conservation easements are vital tools for protecting Maryland's farmland, open spaces, rural character, and environmental resources. Landowners enter these agreements in good faith, often sacrificing substantial future value to benefit the public through sustained agriculture, wildlife habitat, water quality protection, and scenic preservation. Allowing eminent domain appropriations of such land undermines the trust and incentives behind these programs, discourages future participation, and threatens the long-term viability of Maryland's agricultural economy—especially in rural areas where farmland preservation is critical.

This bill does not eliminate eminent domain entirely; it carves out a narrow, reasonable exemption for permanently protected easement properties, respecting the voluntary bargains made between landowners and the public. **It strengthens property rights, upholds the spirit of conservation programs, and ensures that once land is locked into perpetual protection, it remains so.**

For these reasons, I respectfully ask you to **vote in favor of HB 1024**.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of this important property rights, agriculture, and conservation legislation.

Sincerely,

Trudy Tibbals