

March 6, 2026

Written Testimony in Favor of HB1267 – Patuxent Research Refuge and Beltsville Agricultural Research Center – Zoning Classification (Protecting Patuxent Research Refuge Act)

Chair Valderrama, Vice Chair Charkoudian, and Members of the Economic Matters Committee,

My name is Susan McCutchen. I am writing in support of HB1267, sponsored by Delegates Lehman, Pena-Melnyk, Barnes, Bartlett, Boafó, Chang, Holmes, Rogers, and Taylor.

This bill addresses: Requiring a certain local zoning authority to designate and maintain certain property in a zoning classification that restricts the uses in a certain manner under certain circumstances; and requiring the appropriate authority to maintain certain property in a certain zoning classification that restricts the uses in a certain manner under certain circumstances.

The Patuxent Research Refuge (PRR) and Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC) face insistent, ill-considered, and insidious encroachment efforts by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and other entities. I agree with the text of HB1267 that a classification that restricts the zoning uses of the Patuxent Research Refuge to open space or other conservation uses is needed. If the USDA attempts by various approaches—including selling, leasing, or licensing—to take over BARC or other Beltsville property, the zoning classification should be restricted to open space or reserved space uses. BARC and other Beltsville USDA property need to be designated by the District Council as open space and maintained as such. Overlays, special exceptions, or modifications should not be approved by the District Council. Commercial, industrial, or residential uses should not be permitted. In other words, the PRR and BARC, the lungs of Maryland and the source of invaluable international agricultural research, need to be protected.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony favorable to HB1267, which I look forward to moving out of committee.

Sincerely,

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Committees

Original:

[Economic Matters](#)

[Environment and Transportation](#)

Details

Bill File Type: Regular

Effective Date(s): June 1, 2026