



FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF AGRICULTURE

Jessica Fitzwater
County Executive

Katie Stevens, Director

HB 1024- Eminent Domain- Agricultural and Conservation Easements- Prohibited Taking

DATE: 3/5/2026
COMMITTEE: Economic Matters
POSITION: Katie Stevens
FROM: Katie Stevens, Director, Office of Agriculture, Frederick County Government

Thank you for your consideration of **HB 1024 Eminent Domain-Agricultural and Conservation Easements-Prohibited Taking**. As the Director of the Office of Agriculture in Frederick County, I urge the committee to give HB 1024 a Favorable report.

Frederick County contains one of the largest concentrations of preserved farmland in Maryland, with nearly 78,000 acres permanently protected through agricultural preservation programs. These easements represent not only significant public investment, but also long-term commitments made by farm families to ensure the continued viability of agriculture for future generations.

Agricultural preservation easements are foundational to maintaining Frederick County's agricultural economy, protecting food production capacity, creating local jobs, and sustaining the rural landscape that supports the State's agricultural industry. When landowners voluntarily enter these programs, they do so with the understanding that the land will remain protected in perpetuity for agricultural use.

Allowing land that is subject to these permanent protections to be taken through eminent domain undermines both the intent of these programs and the public trust placed in them. Such actions also discourage participation in preservation programs, weaken long-term farmland protection strategies, and create uncertainty for farm families making multi-generational planning decisions.

HB 1024 reinforces Maryland's longstanding commitment to farmland preservation by protecting public investments in agricultural and conservation easements and supports the long-term sustainability of Maryland Agriculture.

Thank you for your consideration of HB 1024. On behalf of Frederick County Government, I urge a Favorable report.

Katie Stevens, Director
Frederick County Office of Agriculture