

March 13, 2025

The Honorable Kriselda Valderrama
Chair, Economic Matters Committee
230 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Letter of Opposition – House Bill 1550 – Eminent Domain and Condemnation Authority – Repeal (Property Rights Protection Act)

Dear Chair Valderrama and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) respectfully opposes House Bill 1550 and offers the following information for the Committee’s consideration.

HB 1550 repeals the authority of the State to engage in eminent domain and repeals certain provisions of law relating to the State’s eminent domain and condemnation authority.

Under the Constitution of Maryland and the Annotated Code, the State has the right to acquire private property for public use through the process of eminent domain. This is not a right that is exercised lightly by the State. The Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) works to acquire property in an appropriate and respectful manner with minimal disruption to affected parties.

If passed, HB 1550 would fundamentally restrict SHA’s ability to build, maintain, and improve Maryland’s highway system. The ability to acquire land through condemnation is essential for SHA to plan, design, and build critical highway infrastructure projects and make the system safer, more accessible, and less congested. The SHA anticipates that a repeal of the State’s eminent domain authority would lead to significant project delays and cancellations, cost escalations, and inevitable litigation for current acquisition proceedings. The SHA is committed to just compensation, a transparent process, and respectful engagement with property owners during the condemnation process.

Furthermore, eminent domain is often used for “friendly condemnations”, whereby project delivery can be accelerated by the State securing the property early while procedural matters with amenable property owners are resolved. HB 1550 would preclude such acquisitions and have a direct, negative impact on the Transportation Trust Fund.

The Maryland Department of Transportation requests that the Committee consider this information during its deliberations and issue House Bill 1550 an unfavorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

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