

Written Testimony in Support of Maryland House Bill 1024

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Bill Number: Maryland House Bill 1024

Committee: Economic Matters

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To: Members of the Economic Matters Committee

Re: Support for Maryland House Bill 1024 – Eminent Domain – Agricultural and Conservation Easements – Prohibited

Dear Honorable Chair Valderrama and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for **Maryland House Bill 1024**, which seeks to protect agricultural and conservation easements from being taken by eminent domain. This bill is crucial in preserving our state's agricultural heritage, protecting natural resources, and ensuring that the valuable investments made in conservation are not undermined by eminent domain actions. As a concerned citizen and member of the TriCounty Coalition, I strongly believe that this bill will help protect the integrity of agricultural and conservation easements, which play a vital role in preserving Maryland's farmland and natural landscapes.

Agricultural and conservation easements are permanent agreements that ensure land is preserved for specific uses, such as farming or conservation, and these easements contribute significantly to the long-term environmental health and sustainability of our state. The ability to use eminent domain to take property that is subject to such easements would not only violate the intent of these agreements but would also disrupt critical land conservation efforts and undermine Maryland's agricultural legacy. By preventing eminent domain from being used to seize land under these easements, **House Bill 1024** ensures that farmland and natural spaces remain protected from arbitrary development or re-purposing. This bill is essential for ensuring the stability and sustainability of Maryland's agricultural and conservation efforts, offering landowners the assurance that their conservation efforts will be honored, and their lands will remain intact for future generations.

Moreover, this bill reinforces Maryland's long-standing commitment to responsible land stewardship. It ensures that landowners who participate in agricultural and conservation easement programs can continue their work with confidence, knowing their properties will be protected from forced sale or disruption. Such stability is crucial, not just for landowners, but for the broader community and the environment. These easement programs are vital for preserving biodiversity, supporting local agriculture, and maintaining the natural resources that benefit all Marylanders. By preventing the state or its subdivisions from taking lands under these

easements, **House Bill 1024** encourages further participation in these programs, strengthening the integrity of conservation initiatives across the state.

In conclusion, I urge the committee to pass **Maryland House Bill 1024** to protect agricultural and conservation easements from eminent domain. This legislation will ensure that Maryland's farmland, natural resources, and conservation efforts are preserved for the benefit of future generations, while honoring the commitments made through these legal agreements. I believe this bill is a crucial step in safeguarding our state's agricultural and environmental legacy, and I strongly support its passage.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter. I am available to provide further information or answer any questions you may have regarding my support for this bill.

Sincerely,

Shawn McIntosh
Member, TriCounty Coalition