

March 4, 2026

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

To: Economic Matters Committee

My name is Susan Barnett. I am submitting testimony as an individual. I am in support of HB1267, sponsored by Delegates [Lehman](#), [Pena-Melnyk](#), [Barnes](#), [Bartlett](#), [Boafo](#), [Chang](#), [Holmes](#), [Rogers](#), and [Taylor](#).

In essence this bill is a necessary step to protect the important land of Patuxent Wildlife Research Refuge and the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center as well as the essential work of the scientists and support staff taking place in both research centers.

- Patuxent Wildlife Research Refuge works to both provide refuge for a wide range of birds and other wildlife as well as to engage in research to better understand birds and other inhabitants and how to protect them. In addition, they provide a robust education program for schools and the public.
- Scientists at BARC are addressing vital issues in agriculture, including stopping the Varroa mite that is killing honeybee populations, developing a vaccine against Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, improving productivity of dairy cattle while decreasing methane emissions, and protecting our nation's crops from invasive insects, nematodes, and fungi.

In addition, these lands are part of what was referred to by long-time Maryland Senator Paul Sarbanes as the Green Lungs of the Chesapeake. Given the significant development and loss of forests and green space that Maryland has experienced, this forested land is essential for providing our region with clean air, clean water, climate resilience and access to healthy recreation.

The American Lung Association reports that the air in Prince George's County can put your health at risk. This alone indicates how essential the Green Lungs are for those living in Prince George's County.

HB1267 is a necessary step to ensure that our research centers continue the important work of maintaining our food safety, that nature is provided protection, and that our environment in Prince George's County is safe for residents to live, work and play in.

HB1267 should receive a favorable vote and be moved out of committee.

Sincerely,

Susan Barnett

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