

Barron Shaw
Shaw Orchards
5594 Norrisville Rd
White Hall, MD 21161

March 3, 2026

RE: Testimony in SUPPORT of HB1024

Dear Economic Matters Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this important bill. I am one of the few people in Maryland who has been through a threat of eminent domain on state-preserved agricultural property, and I appreciate the chance to provide input.

My ancestors purchased our farm in the 1830's, and my family has farmed the land as our sole means of income for nearly 200 years. We are one of the oldest commercial orchards in the state, and now open our farm annually to thousands of visitors who enjoy pick-your-own berries, tree fruit, and pumpkins from June through October. With no parking fees, reservations, or admission fees, we are one of the most accessible farms in the state.

In 2007, before my return to the family farm, my parents sold development rights to the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation ("MALPF"). This was a very difficult decision for them because it greatly diminished the value of our 220 acre farm. They included me in the decision, and I agreed because, like them, I never wanted to see the land be anything but a farm. Our farm is our oldest family member, and arguably the only family member that continues to look better with age.

When the time came to sign the documents, I was in the room. I remember saying to the state attorney that "forever is a long time." She smiled, and agreed, saying that it was the state's intention to ensure that the land remained a beautiful farm forever.

About ten years later, my land was threatened by a new PJM-sponsored interstate high voltage transmission line intended to decrease the cost of electricity in the Washington, DC metro area (the Transource IEC). Both the PA and MD consumer advocates were in strong opposition, as the increased cost to ratepayers in PA was exactly matched by the decreased costs in the DC market. Most pertinently to these proceedings, the PPRP also opposed the project, and submitted testimony from Michelle Cable, Executive Director MALPF, who defended our easement. From her written testimony¹ on 4/19/2019:

"Are the transmission lines proposed by Transource's project compatible with the restrictions of the foundation's program?"

¹ PSC Case 9471, 9/12/2019, PPRP Exhibit MC-1.

No, they are not. By design, the Foundation's easements limit property uses to agriculturally related activities. Examples of agricultural operations include traditional (and non-traditional) crops, livestock, poultry production, orchards, equestrian facilities, forests, pick-your-own produce, or similar agricultural activities. Because Transource's proposed transmission lines are not agricultural uses, and are akin to commercial activities, they are prohibited by the Foundation's statutory and easement restrictions."

The actual easement language provides strong evidence of Ms. Cable's position. The easement reads in part:

"It is the purpose of this Easement to enable the land to remain in agricultural use for the production of food and fiber by preserving and protecting in perpetuity its agricultural value, character, use and utility, and to prevent any use or condition of the land that would impair or interfere with its agricultural value, character, use or utility."

This is certainly the understanding of farmers who have sold their easements. Were the state to sanction eminent domain seizure of preserved lands, all easement organizations, including MALPF, could be assured that land preservation in Maryland would effectively cease. Many of us would actively campaign against MALPF and any further easement sales.

I urge you to **support HB1024** and protect the promises made to our farms.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Barron Shaw". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Barron Shaw