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Prince George's and  
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Government, Labor, and  
Elections Committee

*Chair*  
Local Government/Bi-County  
Agencies and Administration  
Subcommittee



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**HB1267 – PATUXENT RESEARCH REFUGE AND BELTSVILLE  
AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH CENTER – ZONING CLASSIFICATION  
(PROTECTING PATUXENT RESEARCH REFUGE ACT)**

**FAVORABLE**

Good afternoon Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Honorable Members of the Education, Energy and Environment Committee,

For the record my name is Delegate Mary Lehman, requesting a favorable report on House Bill 1267, Protecting Patuxent Research Refuge Act.

This bill will limit future development of the Patuxent Research Refuge and Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC) and protect them as open space or a relative preservation zoning. It will ensure that even in the event of selling or leasing the property known as the Patuxent Research Refuge, it will be perpetually protected within the zoning classes of open space, reserved open space, or any other resource conservation uses.

The Patuxent Research Refuge encapsulates almost 13,000 acres of land that is home to over 230 species in need of conservational protection and over 1,250 species total. This plot of land is also the only refuge in the US established specifically for wildlife research, an essential field that ensures sustainability of our environment. As an example of the research that has come out of this facility, Rachel Carson based her landmark book, *Silent Spring*, largely off their findings on how the use of DDT effects the thickness of eggshells and hatch rates for the bald eagles living in this area. Another example of exemplary conservation work that has been done at PPR is the recovery of whooping cranes. Their population was once at a low of 16 wild individuals and has now risen to over 400 largely in part to Patuxent's work.

This is the largest plot of undeveloped, natural forest between DC and Baltimore, and it needs to maintain that title. As a green lung between the two major cities, its ecological functions are irreplaceable with functions such as carbon sequestration, stormwater drainage, heat-island mitigation, and climate resilience.

The Patuxent Research Refuge is also constrained by former military testing zones. The refuge acquired the land formerly known as Fort Meade, an allotment that is over 8,000 acres of past military testing grounds that are dangerous to develop.

The current federal administration has shared its wishes to close the BARC facility. It is another unique research facility with over 6,500 acres of natural environment. BARC has been essential in pioneering the research that has led to the grass in your backyards, the type of mosquito repellent you use, and even the turkeys you eat for Thanksgiving. The facility has proven valuable for not only all Marylanders, but all Americans.

For Maryland residents, the benefits are plentiful. PRR area provides an avid birding experience, beautiful views, opportunities for students (many can find internships at this location), and families interested in environmental conservation to observe untouched natural beauty in the backyards of many urban communities.

In a time where the future of many research facilities, and public lands in general, is unknown, it is essential that Maryland protects what is established and aids the active contributions to the betterment of our ecosystems. These landscapes are irreplaceable. We cannot simply replace 13,000 acres of mature forest, nor replicate the scientific impacts of these facilities elsewhere.

I respectfully ask the committee for a favorable report on HB1267.