

**DATE:** April 2, 2026  
**BILL NO.:** Senate Bill 754  
**TITLE:** Land Use - Preservation of Natural Resources  
**COMMITTEE:** House Environment and Transportation Committee

### Letter of Opposition

#### **Description of Bill:**

Senate Bill 754 would enable local jurisdictions to enact local laws that aim to preserve natural resources through the transfer of development rights, the conservation of preservation easements, open space or agricultural land preservation programs, subdivision design, flood protections, and other land use or zoning mechanisms. The legislation also states that an area with a “natural resource” includes land, water, forests, wetlands, floodplains, habitat areas, sensitive areas, and other areas that provide ecological, hydrological, or conservation value.

#### **Background and Analysis:**

While the legislation is well-intentioned in its aim to protect Maryland’s natural resources, it cannot be divorced from the fact that the State is in a housing crisis. In giving local jurisdictions complete broad authority over natural resource preservation, the State would further enable additional barriers to housing development.

As demonstrated through DHCD’s estimated local housing targets from the Housing Starts Here Executive Order, there is no jurisdiction in Maryland that has met its housing demand<sup>1</sup>. While we remain in this housing crisis, localities should be easing development restrictions instead of adding them. However, the legislation’s definition of natural resources allows counties to put protections on areas with “ecological, hydrological, or conservation value”. This language is vague enough to allow a locality to designate almost anywhere as a natural resource, as every point on Earth has ecological value. Depending on a local jurisdiction’s interpretation, this could result in a complete halt on development in the entirety of their purview and not just in environmentally sensitive areas. This bill only serves to exacerbate the housing crisis without providing any substantive environmental protections.

#### **DHCD Position:**

The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development respectfully requests an **unfavorable** report on Senate Bill 754.

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<sup>1</sup> [Housing Starts Here Executive Order Summary](#) (page 9)