



LPT LAND PRESERVATION TRUST

13501 Falls Road
Cockeysville, Maryland 21030

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Testimony
HB1398 – State Transfer Tax – Temporary Suspension
House Ways and Means Committee
March 3, 2026

Position: Oppose

Dear Chairman Wilkins, Vice-Chairman Feldmark and Committee members

The Land Preservation Trust is a small grassroots non-profit located in Baltimore County. We have been a successful Rural Legacy sponsor since the inception of the program. We work across the kitchen table with our neighbors, family farmers who are willing to voluntarily and permanently protect their farms.

The decision to place your farm in a conservation easement is not a decision lightly made by these families. Often the decision is years, or decades in the making. Sometimes the decision is necessitated by a change in family circumstances, such as the death of parent or a change in operations. We work with these families to find the best option for their farms, and to complete the easement in a timely manner. Pausing the transfer tax for three years would do irreputable damage to the programs, and more importantly to the families who have chosen to protect their farms, their heritage and their livelihood.

The transfer tax was designed to respond to changes in the housing market. When demand is high more funds are available. When demand is low there are less funds, and by extension less development pressure. The transfer tax funds a suite of programs that benefit all Marylanders. These programs include:

- **The Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation** (purchases easements on productive agricultural land throughout the state);
- **The Maryland Rural Legacy Program** (purchases easements on properties in designated areas rich in multiple resources to include farms, forests, streams and rivers);
- **State Side Program Open Space** (purchases state parkland and land of high ecological value);
- **Local Side Program Open Space** (purchases land for and makes improvements on local parks and playgrounds);
- **The Greenspace Equity Program** (provides parkland and greenspace in underserved areas of the state); and

- **Maryland Heritage Areas** (interpret and celebrate the state’s history, cultural traditions and natural resources.

Together this suite of programs protect, celebrate and support the unique natural resources that define this great state. Once the land is gone it is gone forever. Pausing the program for three years is not in the best interest of the state.

I would like to close with a quote from former Governor Robert Ehrlich when asked what the biggest mistake of his administration was responded that it was “diversion of hundreds of millions of dollars from Program Open Space into the state’s general fund has meant less money to acquire and preserve environmentally sensitive and threatened lands”.

We urge you to reject HB 1398. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ann H. Jones". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "A".

Ann H. Jones, Easement Administrator