



## HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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February 10, 2026

The Honorable Jheanelle K. Wilkins, Chair  
Ways and Means Committee  
130 Taylor House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT of House Bill 590:** Howard County – Transfer Tax – Use of Proceeds Ho. Co. 12-26

Dear Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, and Members of the Committee:

Agriculture is the fifth-largest economic contributor in the state, with sales surpassing \$200 million, and it continues to be the backbone of Howard County. Howard County is home to more than 300 farms, with nearly one-quarter of the County's land dedicated to farmland. Agriculture plays a vital role in our community by providing food security, environmental benefits, recreational opportunities, and the scenic landscapes that define our rural character.

Recognizing the importance of agricultural land, Howard County's Agricultural Land Preservation Program (ALPP) has done an excellent job preserving farmland. To date, the program has preserved 295 parcels totaling 23,396 acres, with only 1,890 acres remaining that meet the program's criteria.

However, preserving land is only the first step in ensuring a secure future for agriculture in Howard County. While the County should continue to encourage participation in the ALPP for remaining eligible properties, it is equally important that we begin to focus not only on preserving land, but on preserving the viability of farming as an industry in Howard County.

House Bill 590 addresses this need by renaming the Howard County Agricultural Land Preservation Fund to the Howard County Agricultural Preservation and Innovation Fund and clarifying that the fund may be used not only to support the ALPP, but also other programs, services, or initiatives that enhance the commercial viability of agriculture in Howard County.

I want to thank the Howard County Delegation for their leadership in crafting this bill. HB 590 reflects the true intent of preserving agriculture as a whole, ensuring that future generations can continue farming in Howard County.

For these reasons, I again urge the Committee's **favorable action on House Bill 590.**

Respectfully,

Calvin Ball  
Howard County Executive