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MARYLAND

*Enhancing and Advancing Land Conservation*

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**Date:** March 1, 2021  
**Bill Number:** **SB 493 & HB 589**  
**Committee:** Capital Budget Subcommittee  
**Position:** Support (Program Open Space – Transfer Tax Revenue)

The Forever Maryland Foundation supports, SB493/HB589 - Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act of 2021 for the purpose of continuing to support Maryland's Program Open Space and all it does for investment in parks, habitat conservation, local foods & agricultural land conservation, historic preservation, and more.

As proposed by Governor Hogan, the Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act of 2021 would adjust the repayment schedule for previously diverted Program Open Space and related program funding, resulting in a reduction in Program Open Space funding of \$43.9 million in FY 2022. The \$43.9 million would be repaid in the following FY 2023.

The Forever Maryland Foundation supports the Administration's proposed FY22 state budget for funding of Program Open Space and **strongly agree to reject the Department of Legislative Services recommendation to eliminate the \$220.5 million payback of previously diverted transfer tax funds.**

Last month, a poll commissioned by Partners for Open Space found that:

- 90% of Maryland residents support Program Open space; and
- More than 3 in 5 Maryland voters are opposed to diverting the dedicated Program Open Space funding for other uses.

Had payback funds been made available, the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) would have preserved more than 3,600 acres. Furthermore, Maryland's local land trusts, which strongly utilize the Rural Legacy program would have likely preserved 1,000 additional acres.

We urge you to reject the DLS recommendations contained in the Capital Budget Fiscal briefing. Failure to fully fund State Side Program Open Space will have a negative impact on the acquisition of additional parkland at a time when the demand is higher than ever. Last year shattered attendance records throughout Maryland's network of local and state parks. Acquiring additional parkland and meeting critical maintenance needs is essential to meeting current demands.

The Forever Maryland Foundation is dedicated to the conservation of our state's land, water, wildlife, and other natural values. If further information is requested, please contact the organization's Program and Policy Director, Josh Hastings, at 443-640-1034 Ex. 1267 or [Josh@ForeverMaryland.org](mailto:Josh@ForeverMaryland.org).

Thank you for your time and consideration.

We respectfully request a favorable report.

**FOREVER MARYLAND FOUNDATION**

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