



John Hartline, Chairman

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Testimony in Support of
House Bill 860 – State Planning – Preservation of Agricultural Land – Goal
Environment and Transportation Committee
February 17, 2021

The Rural Maryland Council **Supports** HB860. The bill sets a goal of preserving 1,030,000 acres of productive agriculture land by 2030 through the Maryland Agriculture Land Preservation Program, the Maryland Greenprint Program, the Rural Legacy Program, the Maryland Environmental Trust, and local preservation programs.

Agriculture plays an important role in Maryland's economy while also providing food and resources across the state, country and world. By preserving 1,030,000 acres of land for agriculture, it guarantees that the land will be available in the future to help grow Maryland's economy, provide Maryland resources, and assure land for future agriculture workers. In Grow & Fortify's Value added Agriculture Report, the Business Economic and Community Outreach Network (BEACON) reported that Maryland's agriculture industry supports almost 74,000 jobs, has an economic impact of more than \$20.6 billion annually to the state's economy, which results in almost \$875 million to the state's financial resources.

The American Farmland Trust reports that over 100,000 acres of Maryland's farmland was threatened or developed between 2001 and 2016. Agricultural land must be preserved for the future generations of agriculture workers, and for the benefit of Maryland's economy. The Council respectfully asks for your favorable support of HB860.

The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) is an independent state agency governed by a nonpartisan, 40-member board that consists of inclusive representation from the federal, state, regional, county and municipal governments, as well as the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. We bring together federal, state, county and municipal government officials as well as representatives of the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to identify challenges unique to rural communities and to craft public policy, programmatic or regulatory solutions.

"A Collective Voice for Rural Maryland"