



FOREVER
MARYLAND

Enhancing and Advancing Land Conservation

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Date: February 11, 2021

Bill Number: SB 492 & HB 590

Committee: Capital Budget Subcommittee

Position: Support (Program Open Space – Transfer Tax Revenue)

The Forever Maryland Foundation supports, SB492/HB590 - Creation of a State Debt - Maryland Consolidated Capital Bond Loan 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.

The Forever Maryland Foundation supports the Administration's proposed FY22 state budget for funding of Program Open Space and it **strongly recommends rejecting the Department of Legislative Services recommendation to eliminate the \$218M payback of previously diverted transfer tax funds.**

We recognize the financial difficulties brought on by the pandemic, and support Governor Hogan's proposal to replace the current transfer tax revenue with bond funding only for FY 2022. We support the return to full cash funding in FY 2023 and beyond.

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.

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. The last year has shattered attendance records throughout Maryland's network of parks and open space. Acquiring additional parkland is critical to meet these demands.

Similarly the recommendation to permanently delete the required legislated pay-back provisions would have devastating impacts on our efforts to "catch up" with the pent-up demand for preservation and open space.

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.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

We respectfully request a favorable report.

FOREVER MARYLAND FOUNDATION

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