



**HB 766 – State Transfer Tax – Exemption for Real Property Used as Principal Residence  
Position: Unfavorable**

**Hearing: Tuesday February 21, 2023**

**TO:** Vanessa Atterbeary, Chair of the House Ways and Means Committee and Committee Members

The undersigned organizations urge you to reject HB 766. The bill would greatly reduce the revenue available through the transfer tax by 15 – 25% and limit the corresponding effectiveness of the programs funded by the transfer tax. Maryland’s transfer tax is an innovative funding mechanism that provides vital support for Program Open Space. Maryland’s Program Open Space is our state’s best and most important tool responsible for protecting land for outdoor recreation and for nature, preserving farmland for future generations to work the land and feed Marylanders, and supporting heritage tourism.

Maryland has been a national leader in land conservation. Established in 1969, Program Open Space (POS) symbolizes Maryland’s long-term commitment to conserving natural resources while providing exceptional outdoor recreation opportunities. The transfer tax is a high return investment in land conservation and the nature-based solutions that open space provides. The air and water quality benefits is critical to our economy, environment and quality of life.

Deteriorating conditions associated with climate change- sea level rise, salt water intrusion, erosion, loss of wetlands, and invasive disruption; call for thoughtful review of how we face increasing pressures for development. Program Open Space funds important Stateside, Local, Rural Legacy and Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation programs enable land conservation for forests, farms, wildlife habitat and parks.

Transfer tax revenue also provides funding for historic preservation and tourism, helping Maryland to leverage its history and natural beauty in order to support local economies. In addition to the great need to protect Maryland's large contiguous tract lands, there is an increasing urgent need to restore urban greenspace improve the health of those living in our overburdened, underserved communities. Maryland's Program Open Space has the power to provide greenspace equity, by investing in the restoration of natural spaces, and focuses funding that helps our people and planet to thrive.

We urge you to reject HB 766 and protect the future of our state's natural resources by protecting Maryland's transfer tax revenue.

Thank you for your consideration,

Joel Dunn, President and CEO  
***Chesapeake Conservancy***

Steve Kline, President  
***Eastern Shore Land Conservancy***

Ann H. Jones, Member  
***Partners for Open Space***

Wendy Stringfellow,  
President  
***Forever Maryland***

Vicky Collins, President  
***Land Preservation Trust***

Kate Patton, Executive  
Director  
***Lower Shore Land Trust***

Meg Boyd, Executive Director  
***Howard County Conservancy***

Jim Brown, Director of Policy  
***Audubon Mid-Atlantic***

Shannon Nazzal, President  
***Maryland Association of  
County Park and  
Recreation Administrators***

Maryanna Skowronski,  
Executive Director  
***The Manor Conservancy***

David Lillard, Executive  
Director  
***Catoctin Land Trust***

Sarah Knebel, Executive  
Director  
***Scenic Rivers Land Trust***

Kristin Kirkwood, Executive  
Director  
***Harford Land Trust***

Alisa Webb, Executive  
Coordinator  
***Cecil Land Trust***

Bill Crouch, Maryland  
Director  
***The Conservation Fund***

Greg Bowen, Executive  
Director  
***American Chestnut Land  
Trust***

Kim Coble, Executive Director  
***Maryland League of  
Conservation Voters***

Renee Hamidi, Executive  
Director  
***The Valleys Planning Council***

Katherine Lautar, Executive  
Director  
***Baltimore Green Space***

Phyllis Joris, Executive  
Director  
***Neighborspace Baltimore  
County***

Alan Girard, Eastern Shore  
Director  
***Chesapeake Bay Foundation***