

To All Members of the Joint Subcommittee:

American Farmland Trust, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, the Piedmont Environmental Council, the Virginia Farm Bureau, and Virginia*forever* commend the Virginia Senate and the Virginia House of Delegates for reaching unanimity in support of SJ94: a joint subcommittee to study long-term funding sources for the purchase of development rights to preserve open-space land and farmlands.

Our organizations are guided by differing missions, and we often serve different constituencies. We are united, however, in our commitment to land conservation that protects the natural, cultural, historic, and working landscapes that define Virginia, support our economy, and underpin our quality of life. We offer the following as our agreed-to principles in the hopes they might help frame your discussion and guide the recommendations of this subcommittee:

Land conservation matters to all Virginians. We all need clean air and water, healthy and abundant supplies of food and fiber, and places for recreation. Land conservation supports all these related resources.

Virginia is blessed with an abundance of natural, cultural, and historic resources. We are a state known for its scenic beauty, its productive farms and forests, its pristine natural areas and its historic landscapes.

Rapidly expanding development increasingly threatens these resources. Of all the land developed in Virginia since the founding of Jamestown nearly 400 years ago, more than 25 percent has been developed in the last 15 years.

Successful land conservation requires the protection of a diversity of lands. Working farms and forests, scenic landscapes, natural areas, wildlife habitat and game lands, historic resources, and parks and recreational areas are all important to conserve for present and future generations of Virginians.

Successful land conservation requires action and initiative at all levels. An individual landowner who wants to protect his or her property should have the incentives to do so. A local community that wants to come together to conserve the lands that matter most to its citizens should have the resources to launch such an effort. Lastly, agencies and organizations seeking to protect lands of statewide importance should have the tools to preserve those lands for all Virginians to enjoy.

Successful land conservation requires a variety of programs and approaches. We support maintaining a market-based approach through Land Preservation Tax Credits for landowners interested in protecting their properties at their initiative. We also need reliable state funding for Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) programs delivered at the county level to address local land conservation priorities. Lastly, we need reliable state funding for the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation (VLCF) to support statewide conservation priorities and objectives.

We look forward to working with the Joint Subcommittee to identify the funding needs, and the revenue sources required to meet those needs, so that we can take action together to protect Virginia's natural, cultural, and working landscapes.



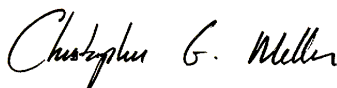
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Ann Jennings
Virginia Executive Director
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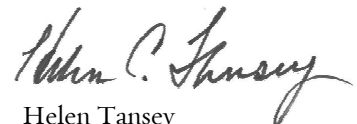
Michael Lipford
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