



LEGISLATIVE AGENDA FOR 2012

Vibrant Communities... Strong Rural Economies

CLEAN OUR COMMUNITIES AND CURB COSTLY SPRAWL

Maryland must aggressively pay down our clean water debt. For decades we have grown without regard to the impact to local waters, borrowing from our future to pay for our immediate development needs. We must act fast because the cost of clean water will rise the longer we wait. We must also stop sprawling into our rural lands, since this development is very expensive to taxpayers and is the fastest growing source of water pollution. Allowing new growth on septic systems is a hidden subsidy for sprawl and pollution. To save tax dollars and clean up our waters, we must develop smarter.

1000 Friends supports legislation to clean up our existing communities and save taxpayers money by curbing expensive sprawl development on septic systems.

STRENGTHEN OUR COMMUNITIES

The Sustainable Communities Tax Credit, often called the historic tax credit, has driven critical residential and commercial investment in our historic areas from Berlin to Cumberland. The program rebuilds neighborhoods, creates incentives for smart growth, saves energy, protects the environment, and creates jobs where we most need them. It has been used by private homeowners to stay in their homes by developers to spur commercial redevelopment in our oldest neighborhoods, such as Frederick, Hagerstown, Baltimore, and Easton. This program joins other key programs in revitalizing our communities; these programs include Community Legacy, Neighborhood Business Works, the Affordable Housing Trust, Maple Streets and Main Streets.

1000 Friends supports full funding for programs that invest in and strengthen our communities, and making those programs as effective as possible.

PRESERVE UNDEVELOPED LANDS

Program Open Space and its related land conservation programs are nationally recognized programs that have helped Maryland protect land from development efficiently and effectively. Because of this program we have established state and local parks, preserved agricultural lands, and created playgrounds and other recreational opportunities. These programs are funded from their own dedicated source, a half of a percent from each real estate transaction, ensuring they do not impact the State budget and allowing preservation to keep pace with development. These

funds are urgently needed and continued investment by the state is necessary to ensure that our land is not just a link to our past, but is also a path to a vibrant future.

1000 Friends supports full funding for our nationally recognized land conservation programs and opposes any attempts to undermine these critical programs especially by diverting these dedicated funds to other areas.

END THE ESTATE TAX ON MARYLAND FARMS

The estate tax remains a significant burden on farm families, especially in urban and suburban areas where land values are high and farmland is most at risk. Farms are lost because the owner dies and the family cannot afford to pay the estate taxes without selling all or part of the farm. Because of the pressure of development and the rising price of land, the typical land-rich cash-poor farm family is faced with a much more excessive burden than any other family business. Maryland must invest in its leading industry by alleviating this burden on our farm families.

1000 Friends supports legislation to end the estate tax on family farms.

PROTECT SMART PLANNING

Smart planning pays. Planning ensures that our most valuable agriculture lands are not growing stripmall; that new development is not polluting our waterways or draining aquifers; that our communities are not seeing a continued pattern of disinvestment; and that our transportation dollars are being spent to create the most efficient system that gives people choices in how they get around. Smart growth pays for citizens and governments. Vibrant town centers and working rural lands provide more in tax revenues than they require in services. Sprawl, however, costs more to taxpayers than it pays back.

1000 Friends opposes efforts to impose higher tax burdens, destroy rural lands, and pollute our air and water by rolling back basic smart growth and environmental protections.

SPEND LIMITED STATE DOLLARS WISELY

Our communities suffer from a continued cycle of disinvestment. Every time a new road is built to a new subdivision it draws critically needed infrastructure, whether roads, schools, or emergency response, away from our existing communities and out into those new fringe developments. While there are many funding needs across the state, if Maryland chooses to raise fees for infrastructure - and transportation in particular - then a promise must be made that the new fees will go first to meeting the backlog of needs in existing communities and towards creating new transportation choices for existing residents.

1000 Friends demands that any increased funding for infrastructure, particularly transportation infrastructure, be connected to strong smart growth limitations on how and where the money can be spent.