



**Maryland Chamber of Commerce**

## **Legislative Position**

**SB 666  
OPPOSE  
EHEA  
Committee  
02/24/09**

### **SB 666**

### **Natural Resources - No Net Loss of Forest Policy - Forest Conservation Act**

#### **Brief Summary of Bill:**

SB 666 requires the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to develop and implement, by December 31, 2012, a no net loss of forest policy that does not reduce the acreage of prime agricultural land. DNR has to adopt regulations and propose legislation to achieve a no net loss of forest policy. DNR must submit a progress report to the General Assembly by December 1, 2011, and annually thereafter. The bill amends several provisions of the Forest Conservation Act, including changing the minimum area of disturbance above which the Act applies from 40,000 to 20,000 square feet and increasing the fee-in-lieu contribution rate to State and local Forest Conservation Funds.

#### **Maryland Chamber's Position:**

The Maryland Chamber of Commerce opposes this bill as currently written. There is a concern that the bill could impact the ability to use land and take reasonable measures to minimize damage to trees.

The Chamber understands that a number of amendments are being submitted to address a number of the provisions in the bill that the Chamber has concerns regarding, including the change in the minimum area of disturbance from 40,000 to 20,000 square feet, and the Public Service Commission (PSC) one stop procedure regarding the permitting process for public service utilities. It is necessary to maintain the 40,000 square feet minimum disturbance area to allow reasonable and adequate development. Additionally, the PSC's current procedure regarding the permitting process for public service utilities should not be changed. It is a streamlined approach to the permitting process that has proven efficient and successful.

The Maryland Chamber urges adoption of proper amendments that address these issues in the legislation as currently written.

**For these reasons, the Maryland Chamber respectfully requests that the Committee give SB 666 an unfavorable report.**

*If questions please contact Allyson Black, [ablack@mdchamber.org](mailto:ablack@mdchamber.org)*