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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515–3806

SUPPORT FARMLAND PRESERVATION
COSPONSOR THE OPEN SPACE AND FARMLAND PRESERVATION ACT

Dear Colleague:

I am writing to ask you to become an original cosponsor of the Open Space and Farmland Preservation Act of 2007. The bill is identical to H.R. 5313, a bill that was agreed to in the House by voice vote during the 109th Congress.

In order to encourage local governments and private entities across the country to preserve farmland through purchase of conservation easements, this legislation would reserve 15 percent of existing Farmland Protection Program funds for a challenge grant to encourage greater cooperation and coordination in conservation efforts. The bill would provide matching federal dollars for preservation efforts that are already receiving state, county, **and** local **or** private funds. The legislation would not authorize any new funding; it would simply allocate a portion of the existing federal funds to encourage local governments or private entities to work with county and state governments knowing that additional federal dollars will be made available to support that effort.

I would greatly appreciate your support. As Congress will soon consider a reauthorization of the Farm Bill, now is the time that we work to strengthen conservation programs like the Farmland Protection Program. States like Pennsylvania and Pennsylvania's counties and municipalities have invested heavily in preserving farmland. The challenge grant created through the Open Space and Farmland Preservation Act of 2007 would only help to encourage other states and more local governments to follow this example and compete for federal dollars. This challenge grant will also steer federal resources toward those projects already receiving wide support from states, counties and municipalities or private organizations. This ensures that limited federal resources are being used to preserve the most threatened farmland.

I would encourage your co-sponsorship. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me directly or have your staff call Bill Tighe in my office at 225-4315. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jim Gerlach
Member of Congress

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