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CONSERVATION
VOTERS**

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March 5, 2010

House Economic Matters Committee
House Office Building, Rm 230
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Testimony in Support of HB 716 – Direct Wine Shipper's License

Dear Chair Davis and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland League of Conservation Voters would like to voice its support for HB 716 – Direct Wine Shipper's License. We believe this legislation supports sustainable farming practices and will protect and preserve Maryland's open space.

For many Maryland farmers, 2010 will be last year they will receive subsidies from the Maryland Tobacco Buyout. As a result, many farmers will be left with some difficult choices regarding their land. Without economic incentives these farm lands will eventually be sold and open space will be lost.

Passage of HB 716 would establish such an incentive with the creation of a Direct Wine Shipper's License to strengthen Maryland's existing wine industry and encourage its growth, thereby making grape growing a viable alternative for Tobacco Buyout farmers. Passage of this bill will also provide smaller vintners, whose wines are not carried through existing distribution channels, the ability to sell their product to a broader base supporting the sale of a growing agricultural product – Maryland wine.

We wish to thank Delegate Krysiak for her leadership on this issue and the committee for its consideration of this important matter. We respectfully urge a favorable report of HB 716.

Sincerely,

Cindy Schwartz
Executive Director

For more than 30 years, the Maryland League of Conservation Voters has been the independent political voice for the environment in our state. Maryland LCV is dedicated to making environmental protection and restoration a top priority for Maryland's elected officials, appointed leaders, candidates and voters. The Maryland League of Conservation Voters advocates for sound conservation policies, works to get pro-environment candidates elected, and holds elected officials accountable for their votes and actions.