



June 22, 2026

Re: Oppose Senate Bill 857, Providing for Local Approvals for Certain Land Transactions

Dear Members of the Pennsylvania State Senate:

The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (WPC) respectfully asks you to oppose Senate Bill 857, PN 958.

This legislation would require county approval for any land acquisitions by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission.

For over 90 years the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy has worked with landowners who steward and manage their land according to their conservation values. In some cases, this intent is fulfilled by landowners voluntarily wishing to convey their land, by gift or sale, to a state resource agency. By imposing new approval requirements, Senate Bill 857 would compromise a landowner's right to gift or sell their land to the natural resource agency they've identified as best positioned to honor their legacy and limit the ability of the landowner to sell or donate the property to whom they wish. WPC worked collaboratively with private landowners and resource agencies to help create and expand public lands such as Erie Bluffs State Park, McConnells Mill State Park, and Forbes State Forest, among many others. Many landowners with whom we work have made a decision to leave a legacy of conservation through the sale or donation of their land to a state resource agency and also simply appreciate being able to exercise their private property right of being able to sell their land to whom they wish.

WPC relies heavily on conservation values to guide its land protection efforts. We seek to conserve lands with exceptional natural significance, often including high-quality waterways and imperiled plants and wildlife. We work closely with the state resource agencies to carefully identify lands where Pennsylvania's variety of native plants and wildlife can be best conserved for future generations. We believe it is important that land acquisitions continue to be guided by conservation values to protect the Commonwealth's unique natural heritage. Senate Bill 857 could lead to lands of exceptional significance not being conserved due to reasons other than what is best for the long-term protection of our shared natural heritage for future generations. And we appreciate that landowners may be able to sell their lands to the buyer of their choosing.

Local tax revenue is a primary concern of this bill, but this issue is already addressed by the existing Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILT) program. The PILT program distributes state funds

annually to local taxing authorities to offset the property tax revenue that would not be received from tax-exempt state-owned land. PILT has been increased for state agencies twice in the past four years, and is now tied to the Consumer Price Index.

Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "MKuzemchak", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michael J. Kuzemchak  
Associate Vice President, Government and Community Relations