Beelar testimony

before the Senate Committee on Budget and Taxation,

February, 12, 2014.

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee

My name is Barbara Beelar. I live on Garrett County.

I support SB 534.

I came today to present another perspective on this discussion.

I am Director of Friends of Deep Creek Lake, a non-profit watershed organization. While I am a resident of Garrett County, over 90% of Lake property owners are non-resident property owners and tax payers.

One of the reasons the wealth measure is so high in Garrett County the high value of lake homes. The cluster of million dollar, vacation homes and investment properties around the lake skew the wealth formula greatly.

What I want you to know is that these non-resident property owners generally accept the high valuation of their homes.

They accept the fact their taxes support a range of services which they do not use.

Most talk about how pleased they are their taxes support an excellent County school system. Every week we read in the local newspaper, *The Republican,* of another award won by a Garrett County student, alum or teacher, of another strong innovative program providing excellence in education.

Under the current state method for funding of schools, the taxes these non-resident lake property owners pay turn out to be a detriment to school funding, not an asset. This is not what the property owners want. But more importantly and to the issue at hand, it just does not make any sense.

These owners know a strong school system is an integral component of a strong County and community. The future of this remote, rural region of the State needs both a sustainable Deep Creek Lake and a sustainable school system.

The General Assembly is tasked with enacting laws necessary for the welfare of the State’s citizens. Implied in this charge is that you will strive to ensure fairness for all Maryland citizens.

Today we have a system which is unfair and threatens the welfare of those in rural areas. Please pass SB 534 so this method can be fully studied, and hopefully changed.

Thank you.