

MALCOLM AUGUSTINE
Legislative District 47
Prince George's County

PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

Executive Nominations Committee

Education, Energy and the
Environment Committee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 27, 2024

Senate Bill 685 - Program Open Space - Use of Property - Renewable Energy and Storage

Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to present **Senate Bill 685 - Program Open Space - Use of Property - Renewable Energy and Storage**, which centers on the approval of land use financed through Program Open Space for the purpose of providing the opportunity for an alternate and complementary use of solar and wind energy, as well as storing electricity in designated energy storage devices.

The primary goal of this legislation is to broaden the scope of potential uses of land acquired through Program Open Space, making it available for the development of renewable energy projects, with a specific focus on solar and wind power generation. Furthermore, it aims to facilitate the integration of diverse energy storage technologies into these projects.

Program Open Space has been instrumental in safeguarding Maryland's natural landscapes, protecting an impressive 415,000 acres of land. The initiative's impact goes beyond conservation, with over 6,900 grants distributed to local governments through Program Open Space Local, contributing to the overall enhancement of community quality. Notably, the establishment of a Greenways and Green Infrastructure network underscores our commitment to sustainable practices. Moreover, the program ensures accessibility by providing state and local park or public open space areas within a convenient 15-minute radius for most residents.

As a state, we have prioritized renewable energy. That renewable energy requires that 5 to 10 acres are required per megawatt for solar projects, while wind energy production utilizes 60 acres of land per megawatt. This holistic approach emphasizes both environmental preservation and responsible energy development.

The economic benefits derived from Program Open Space extend far beyond mere conservation efforts, profoundly impacting Maryland's business landscape and overall quality of life. The presence of parks and protected open spaces correlates with accelerated increases in home values, creating more attractive residential communities. Notably, businesses show a preference for locating in areas adorned with parks and quality environments, emphasizing the pivotal role Program Open Space plays in fostering a conducive business climate. As tourism stands as one of Maryland's leading industries, the historical structures, landscapes, parks, and forests supported by Program Open Space become crucial contributors to the sustained growth of this sector.

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In essence, the bill is for the purpose of the potential alternate use for Program Open Space to bolster the generation of renewable energy, specifically from solar and wind sources. It also emphasizes the importance of advancing energy storage capabilities. This legislative initiative underscores our commitment to championing sustainable practices and expanding the footprint of renewable energy across Maryland. Importantly, this effort aligns with our state's commitment to offshore wind initiatives. By leveraging the resources provided by Program Open Space, we are poised to make significant strides in promoting a cleaner and more sustainable energy landscape for Maryland.

I urge each of you to support this legislation, recognizing its potential to not only advance our environmental goals but also to position Maryland as a leader in the pursuit of renewable energy solutions. Together, let us work towards a greener, more sustainable future for generations to come.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. I urge the committee to give a **favorable** report for **Senate Bill 685 - Program Open Space - Use of Property - Renewable Energy and Storage**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Malcolm Augustine".

Senator Malcolm Augustine