



FOREVER
MARYLAND

Enhancing and Advancing Land Conservation

Board of Directors

Sarah Knebel,
Chair

Date: February 26, 2024
Bill Number: **SB 685 - Program Open Space - Use of Property - Renewable Energy and Storage**

Kristin Kirkwood,
Vice Chair

Committee: Senate Education, Energy and the Environment
Position: Oppose

Steve Kline,
Treasurer

Chairman Feldman and Members of the Education, Energy and Environment Committee:

David Lillard,
Secretary

Forever Maryland, and the included land conservation partner organizations, oppose **SB 685 - Program Open Space - Use of Property - Renewable Energy and Storage** as land conservation and commercial energy production are broadly incompatible.

Nick Dilks

We are organizations that advocate for the preservation of Maryland land – including our state’s most important forests, habitat, historical lands, farms, parks, playgrounds, and more.

John Griffin

Francis (Joe) Hickman

Created by the Maryland General Assembly in 1969, *Program Open Space* and the state’s transfer tax has led Maryland to be recognized as a national leader in the conservation and protection of its vitally significant landscapes.

Katie Lautar

Kate Patton

We appreciate and greatly applaud Senator Augustine’s efforts to facilitate the necessary transformation to clean energy and look forward to future opportunities to identify appropriate locations, however we cannot support any efforts to place commercial solar facilities on properties or easements purchased with transfer tax revenues. These properties represent:

Barry Salisbury

- The best and most productive agricultural land;
- The most biologically important and ecologically sensitive areas;
- The parks and playgrounds enjoyed by residents throughout the state; and
- Irreplaceable cultural and historic resources.

Adair Stifel

Alisa L. Webb

Major Gary S. Burnett,
MET Liaison

The programs funded by the transfer tax all currently allow solar energy for on-site use. This legislation would allow community solar and commercial/industrial scale solar on these lands -- thereby compromising the very resources that make Maryland a national leader in land conservation.

Josh Hastings
Executive Director

Advisory Council

Phyllis Joris

We greatly support and champion the transition to a renewable energy economy, as well as the associated state goals, but these actions should not conflict with the state’s goals to plant 5 million trees, restore the Chesapeake Bay, restore critical habitat, to protect 40% of land by 2040, and more. For further information, please contact the organization’s Executive Director, Josh Hastings, at 410-251-5268 or Josh@ForeverMaryland.org.

Ann Jones

We respectfully request an unfavorable report.

Sincerely,

Forever Maryland and the following organizations:

FOREVER MARYLAND FOUNDATION

PO Box 4489 | Salisbury, MD 21803 | 410-251-5268 | www.ForeverMaryland.org



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American Chestnut Land Trust

Greg Bowen, Executive Director

Baltimore County Land Trust Alliance

Ann Jones, Executive Director

Baltimore Green Space

Katherine Lautar, Executive Director

Catoctin Land Trust

David Lillard, Executive Director

Cecil Land Trust

Alisa Webb, Executive Director

Chesapeake Conservancy

Joel Dunn, President & CEO

Eastern Shore Land Conservancy

Steve Kline, President & CEO

Forever Maryland

Josh Hastings, Executive Director

Harford Land Trust

Kristin Kirkwood, Executive Director

Howard County Conservancy

Meg Boyd, Executive Director

Land Trust Alliance

Andrew Szwak

Lower Shore Land Trust

Matt Heim, Executive Director

NeighborSpace of Baltimore County

Phyllis Joris, Executive Director

Preservation Maryland

Nicholas Redding, President & CEO

Scenic River Land Trust

Sarah Knebel, Executive Director

Southern Maryland National Heritage Area

Lucille Walker, Executive Director

The Conservation Fund

Bill Crouch, Maryland State Director

Trust for Public Land

Kent Whitehead, Director/Sr Project Manager

Valleys Planning Council

Renee Hamidi, Executive Director



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