



LPT LAND PRESERVATION TRUST

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**Testimony – SB 699 – Forest Conservation Act – Linear Projects – Alterations
Hearing – Education, Energy and the Environment
February 25, 2025**

Position: Favorable

Dear Chair Feldman, and Distinguished Members,

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Vicky Collins and I live in North Baltimore County and serve as the President and Board Chair of the Land Preservation Trust, Inc, a 501c 3 which conserved land in partnership with the County, State, and individuals. We have 380 easements representing over 14,000 acres and manage an area of 53,000 acres for the Rural Legacy program – half of which is in perpetual conservation easement with the State, the County or with individuals. I am concerned about the threat of transmission projects crossing much of the conserved land in Baltimore County. Specifically, we hold an easement which is also protected by a forest conservation easement and which is directly threatened by a new transmission project.

The essence of this bill is to remove electric transmission lines from permissible project within a forest conservation easement. As everyone is aware, the rural, forested and conserved areas in three Maryland Counties are threatened by construction of a new transmission line, known as the Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project. The company developing the line, Public Service Enterprise Group and the regional transmission authority, PJM, each admit to targeting rural farmland and conserved areas as the best option for constructing new transmission lines.

Through Baltimore, Carroll, and Frederick Counties, the preferred lines as well as the alternate pathways all cross significant amounts of conserved farmland, open space, and forest conservation areas. Removing the possibility to construct overhead transmission lines through forest conservation would simply affirm the reasons for the conservation. A 150 wide swath of deforested land within an existing conservation zone makes little sense as it would impact not only that lost space, but would compromise the health of the surrounding forest. Forests are healthy when they are continuous and not interrupted by swaths of light created by an opened right of way. In addition to the project itself, access roads required to develop and maintain a transmission line create further harmful disturbance.

While the Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project may be the inspiration behind such a bill, the project has in many ways, elevated the discussion of how much Maryland and its precious resources must be sacrificed for this and future projects designed to primarily benefit neighboring States.

Thank you for a favorable decision.

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