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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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SB 699 – Forest Conservation Act – Linear Projects – Alteration

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

Senate Bill 669 alters the definition of “linear project” under the Forest Conservation Act to exclude a project for a new transmission line or new distribution line constructed on or after a certain date. Linear projects are construction or reconstruction of roads, trails, sidewalks, rail lines, etc.

Under the Forest Conservation Act, any public or private subdivision plan or application for a grading control permit by any person, including a unit of State or local government on areas 40,000 square feet or greater is required to afforest (tree planting) the land that was graded. For agricultural/resource areas, if the land has less than 20% forest cover, it must be afforested until the forest cover reaches 20% again. Additionally, if the forest cover is less than 15%, afforestation is required until the forest cover reaches 15% again. However, linear projects are excluded from the afforestation provision.

As the MPRP projects stands, a rough estimate provided by a constituent showed that over 6,000 acres of forest covered land will be cut down. This bill seeks to hold utility companies who deforest tens of thousands of acres of forest land.

I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 699.