

Testimony in Support of SB 950

Presented by Bryan Price

Maryland State Senate Hearing on SB 950

Chair, Vice Chair, and Esteemed Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 950 (SB 950). My name is Bryan Price, and I am a Maryland resident committed to ensuring that our state transitions to clean energy in a responsible and pragmatic manner. SB 950 represents a crucial step toward balancing energy reliability with Maryland's ambitious renewable energy goals by allowing for the construction and operation of natural gas power plants until the state achieves 50% renewable energy generation, including nuclear power.

Maryland's energy future is at a crossroads. While the transition to renewable energy is imperative, we must also acknowledge the realities of our current energy landscape. Renewable sources like wind and solar are intermittent, requiring backup solutions to maintain grid stability. Battery storage technology continues to improve, but it is not yet capable of fully replacing the reliability of dispatchable power plants. SB 950 ensures that Maryland's electric grid remains dependable by permitting natural gas-fired generating stations until the state meets its 50% renewable energy threshold. This approach prevents blackouts, energy shortages, and excessive reliance on imported electricity.

Maryland has retired multiple coal plants in recent years, significantly reducing in-state power generation capacity. At the same time, demand continues to rise due to electrification efforts and the expansion of data centers. This growing gap between supply and demand means that Maryland is importing a substantial portion of its electricity from other states, making us vulnerable to fluctuating wholesale energy prices and regional supply constraints. SB 950 provides a necessary stopgap by allowing for the responsible use of natural gas while Maryland continues to build its renewable energy infrastructure. This ensures that the state does not become overly dependent on out-of-state power, which can be both costly and less sustainable.

Some may argue that any expansion of natural gas infrastructure contradicts Maryland's clean energy goals, but SB 950 takes a measured approach. A sudden elimination of natural gas would put grid reliability at risk, leading to economic and social consequences that would undermine support for the state's climate policies. As an unwavering environmental advocate deeply committed to sustainability and conservation, I

understand the urgency of the green movement, but I also recognize that playing the long game requires pragmatic decision-making. The premature closure of coal plants, while symbolically powerful, has eroded public trust in the clean energy transition by driving up costs, threatening grid reliability, and giving opponents of renewable energy ammunition to challenge the cause. SB 950 acknowledges that natural gas can serve as a bridge fuel while renewables and nuclear energy scale up, ensuring that Maryland's transition is both successful and sustainable.

This legislation is not about slowing Maryland's transition to clean energy; it is about ensuring that the transition is both successful and sustainable. The Climate Solutions Now Act commits Maryland to achieving 100% clean electricity by 2045, and SB 950 does not contradict this goal. Rather, it provides a realistic pathway for maintaining reliability as the state ramps up its investments in offshore wind, solar energy, grid modernization, and energy storage improvements. By allowing a limited role for natural gas in the interim, SB 950 provides the flexibility needed to ensure that Maryland's clean energy transition does not come at the expense of energy security and economic stability.

SB 950 also aligns with the principles of fairness and responsible energy planning. Marylanders should not be forced to bear the consequences of an energy transition that does not adequately address present-day reliability challenges. Energy shortages and price volatility disproportionately affect working families, small businesses, and farmers—many of whom already face economic pressures. Ensuring that Maryland's power grid remains stable while renewables continue to grow is a commonsense solution that protects consumers from unintended consequences.

As someone who has long fought against unnecessary transmission expansion projects like the Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP), I see SB 950 as a way to prevent future justifications for large-scale transmission projects that primarily serve out-of-state energy needs. By investing in in-state generation and prioritizing grid reliability, Maryland can reduce its dependence on PJM-driven transmission projects that disrupt farmland, forests, and rural communities. Instead of building more massive high-voltage transmission lines, Maryland should focus on modernizing its existing infrastructure and supporting distributed energy generation.

The passage of SB 950 is an opportunity to chart a responsible path forward—one that ensures Maryland's energy future is both clean and reliable. I urge the committee to support this bill and take a balanced, pragmatic approach to our state's energy transition.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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