

Testimony in Support of SB 0699

SB 0699 proposes a critical amendment to the Forest Conservation Act by removing automatic exemptions for new transmission and distribution lines constructed on or after October 1, 2025. This change closes a major loophole that has allowed widespread deforestation with minimal oversight, directly impacting projects like the Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP).

By ensuring new transmission projects comply with forest conservation requirements, SB 0699 will:

- **Eliminate exemptions** that currently allow transmission lines to bypass conservation laws.
- **Strengthen afforestation obligations**, requiring more tree planting when forests are cleared.
- **Hold utilities accountable**, preventing unchecked infrastructure expansion through rural Maryland.

MPRP alone threatens thousands of acres of farmland, forests, and private property. If passed, SB 0699 would:

- Increase regulatory scrutiny, potentially halting MPRP before it gains traction.
- Prevent utilities from fast-tracking harmful projects under outdated rules.
- Ensure greater environmental accountability for energy developers.

This bill is part of a larger push to rethink Maryland's energy strategy. Instead of prioritizing unnecessary transmission expansion, the state should focus on:

- Upgrading existing grid infrastructure for efficiency.
- Routing new transmission along transportation corridors.
- Investing in localized, distributed energy solutions.

SB 0699 is essential to protecting Maryland's landscapes and communities from reckless infrastructure projects. I urge your support to pass this bill and promote a more sustainable, responsible energy future. Maryland can lead the way, will we?

Regards,

Brenda Myers