

Somerset County Economic Development Commission

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Executive Director

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Delegate Kumar P. Barve
Chairman of Environment and Transportation Rules and Executive Nominations Committee
251 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: SB 528/ HB 831 "Climate Action Now Act of 2022"

Dear Delegate Barve and Committee Members:

As the Executive Director for the Somerset County Economic Development Commission (EDC), we would like to submit this letter opposing SB 528/ HB 831 "Climate Action Now Act of 2022" which will ban efforts of bringing future Natural Gas initiatives to the State of Maryland, specifically Somerset County.

It is the mission of the Somerset County EDC to actively pursue businesses to expand and locate in Somerset. I am writing to you today to underscore the importance of Natural Gas and provide you with some statistics as an overview of the economic impact that Natural Gas availability would have in Somerset County.

The County has explored various energy projects over the years to include wind, solar, waste to energy, etc. Natural Gas is one that the county has pursued for over 2 decades. It would be unfortunate to deny access to our local businesses and residents having pursued this endeavor for 20 plus years. Many of the issues were carefully thought out by the Board of Public Works during this process.

Some projects that will benefit immediately include:

- Mountaire Farms, who is waiting to invest additional \$5 million and add 5-7 new jobs
- Peraton (formerly Northrop Grumman), who is waiting to invest \$6 million and add 10-15 new jobs
- Princess Anne Industrial Park (2 companies currently have contracts on park property and have referenced the benefit of natural gas accessibility)
 1. \$2.5 million and 20 jobs
 2. \$1.5 million and 12-15 jobs
- Somerset Crossing, a 63 acre property located along Rt. 13 in Princess Anne is now in site review. This will include mixed use projects such as a Hotel (100 rooms), Office Space 50,000 sq. ft., and Retail 150,000 sq. ft., 3 pad sites. Creating a total of approximately 75-100 jobs.
- Renewable Energy Projects (proposed)
 - Clean Bay - \$175 million and 20 jobs
 - Planet Found - \$25 million and 10 jobs



These are just a few projects that are currently in need of Natural Gas. There have been countless projects that have been lost over the years to other jurisdictions due to the lack of supply in Somerset. Mainly, those industries were affiliated with boat manufacturing, welding, processing, etc.

Certainly the extension of the natural gas pipeline brings prosperity to local businesses by decreasing their energy cost and in return will be able to invest more in their business which means added job growth. However, I think what is lost is the true benefit to our local residents.

Somerset County has many challenges such as high unemployment, high poverty rates, high energy cost, etc. Therefore, why should one of the most challenged counties in Maryland not have access to natural gas, when other counties enjoy the benefits? Below are some resources and facts that may help you better understand:

- Unemployment as of December 2021 5.8% which is second highest in state (next highest was Worcester County at 7.0%)
[MonthlyLaborReview12_Dec21.pdf \(maryland.gov\)](#)
- Poverty rate is 22.2% which is highest in the state (next closest is Baltimore City at 20.0%)
[U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Somerset County, Maryland; United States](#)
- Median Household Income is \$37,803 (which is the lowest in the State of Maryland)
[U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Somerset County, Maryland; United States](#)

Over the years Somerset County has missed out on opportunities for companies to locate or expand in the county and should not be held hostage at a time when added growth is vital.

Bringing Natural Gas to the County will result in great economic development success by providing additional tax revenue to the County as well as much needed jobs. Natural Gas will play an energetic role in promoting commercial, industrial, and agribusiness to locate here.

We certainly encourage your consideration in opposing SB 528/ HB 831 and support our endeavor of continuing to grow the local economy in Somerset County. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact our office.

Sincerely,



Daniel K. Thompson
Executive Director