

**HB0640 and HB0645 FAVORABLE**

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All open land whether natural resources (woodland, watersheds, wetlands) or agricultural land (preserved or not) is FINITE. Once it is constructed on, it will never return the value that it has provided to our state.

Agricultural land in particular is also “the production plant” of working farmers. Just because it isn’t a building doesn’t make it less of a critical production asset for these farmers and their livelihood.

Culturally we have to, as a small state, stop equating open land to “EASY TAKING” because developers can develop it at lower costs than redeveloping brownfield.

Top soil, the medium without which plants do not grow, takes hundreds of years per inch to reform and projections show that at this rate we could be depleting all of our top soil in the next 50 years.

For all the reasons above, in evaluating a large infrastructure project like transmission lines, we need to look at the best way to meet the goals, taking into account all available new technologies in energy production and storage, leveraging partnerships, and existing Rights of Ways (federal highways, abandoned industrial zones, unoptimized urban land).

We also need to honor the contracts that the State as agreed to on preserved land, with landowners that have forfeited their rights to build or have any commercial activity on their property, to see it be developed by foreign entities without a clear return of benefits to the Maryland community.

Thank you