Testimony in Support of HB1397
Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity – Overhead Transmission Lines – Grid Enhancing Technologies
Submitted to the House Economic Matters Committee
Position: Favorable

On behalf of **Stop MPRP, Inc.** and the many Maryland residents committed to protecting our environment, farmland, and communities, I submit this testimony in strong support of **House Bill 1397**. This critical legislation will ensure that Maryland takes a responsible, technology-driven approach to energy transmission by prioritizing grid-enhancing technologies over destructive and unnecessary new power lines.

The Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP): An Unjustified and Harmful Proposal

The **Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP)**, proposed by PSEG, aims to construct a **67.2-mile-long, 500-kV transmission line** through Baltimore, Carroll, and Frederick Counties. The project, which would require a **1,221-acre right-of-way**, would permanently damage Maryland's landscape, environment, and agricultural economy. Among its severe impacts are:

- **Deforestation & Land Loss:** Over **394.2 acres of forest** and **522.6 acres of productive farmland** would be permanently cleared.
- **Waterway Disruptions:** The project would cross **101 streams and waterbodies**, increasing pollution and flood risks.
- **Destruction of Conservation Lands: 245.8 acres** of conservation easements, including **224.6 acres** under the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF), would be lost.
- **Harm to Wildlife:** Endangered species such as the **Indiana Bat, Northern Long-Eared Bat, and Bog Turtle** would suffer severe habitat destruction.
- **Access Roads & Permanent Environmental Damage:** The construction of **303 access roads** would result in **140 acres of additional land destruction**, further fragmenting ecosystems and increasing erosion.

Despite these devastating impacts, PSEG has not adequately considered less harmful alternatives, such as **grid-enhancing technologies** or optimizing existing infrastructure.

HB1397: A Smarter Path Forward

House Bill 1397 will help correct the current imbalance in Maryland's energy planning process by requiring the **Public Service Commission (PSC) to consider grid-enhancing technologies** before approving new overhead transmission lines. Grid-enhancing technologies, such as **high-performance conductors and energy storage used as transmission**, can significantly **increase capacity, reliability, and resilience** without the destruction associated with new transmission corridors.

Existing Transmission Capacity is Sufficient

The recent report[1] by the **Nicholas Institute for Energy, Environment & Sustainability at Duke University** highlights that **there is enough capacity on the existing transmission system** to accommodate anticipated load growth **without the need for new transmission expansion**. The study found that **up to 215 GW of new load could be integrated into the U.S. power grid using load flexibility measures and optimization techniques**, reducing the urgency for massive new transmission projects like MPRP.

Why HB1397 is Essential Now

1. **Protects Maryland's Environment & Farmland** – By requiring the PSC to prioritize existing transmission optimization, HB1397 will help prevent unnecessary destruction of forests, farmland, and conservation lands.
2. **Saves Ratepayers Money** – Building new transmission lines is **significantly more expensive** than upgrading existing infrastructure. This legislation ensures that **cost-effective** solutions are considered first.
3. **Promotes Energy Innovation & Resilience** – By incorporating **grid-enhancing technologies**, Maryland can modernize its electric grid while maintaining reliability and avoiding large-scale environmental damage.
4. **Aligns with National Energy Strategies** – Federal agencies, energy experts, and industry stakeholders agree that **optimizing existing transmission** is the most effective strategy for meeting future energy demands.

[1] Rethinking Load Growth: Assessing the Potential for Integration of Large Flexible Loads in US Power Systems https://nicholasinstitute.duke.edu/publications/rethinking-load-growth

Conclusion: Issue a Favorable Report on HB1397

The **Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP) is not necessary** and represents an outdated approach to energy planning. Maryland must shift toward **modern, responsible, and sustainable energy transmission strategies** that prioritize technology-driven solutions over destructive new infrastructure.

By supporting **HB1397**, this committee can **ensure a future where Maryland's energy grid is reliable, cost-effective, and environmentally sustainable**. We urge you to issue a **favorable report** on **House Bill 1397** and stand with Maryland's communities, landowners, and environment.

Respectfully submitted,

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