

Testimony in Opposition to SB0931/HB1036

Senator Feldman, Delegates Wilson and Crosby,

My name is Amanda Miller, and I farm with my husband and his family at Chesapeake Gold Farms. Our daughter is a seventh-generation dairy farmer. Living in Maryland is already a challenge for farmers. This state was built on agriculture, yet as more and more people move in, development constantly threatens our way of life.

We cannot compete with the large dairy farms in the Midwest—they have more land and resources than we do. In Maryland, we have to be creative to survive and preserve the small family dairy tradition. That's why, in 2018, we started producing and selling our own dairy products directly to consumers. From cheese, milk, and butter to yogurt, farm-raised beef, and cut flowers, everything we sell is 100% produced by our Maryland farm family.

This bill threatens not only our livelihood but also the opportunity we are creating for rural Marylanders to learn where their food comes from. I am not opposed to alternative energy, but I am opposed to developing prime farmland for that purpose. Maryland is already filled with massive warehouses—from Amazon to Walmart to Lidl—many of which span multiple acres. Why aren't we prioritizing solar installations on those rooftops? Why aren't we building solar shade structures in parking lots across the state?

Why would you choose to undermine the very people who provide food for this state and this country? Farmers may be a minority in Maryland, but we represent a way of life that people from all walks of life appreciate. One of the best parts of driving to the beach is passing through Maryland's farmland—stopping at roadside stands to buy fresh sweet corn, enjoying steamed crabs with locally grown produce, and attending firehouse dinners where the chicken was raised by a farmer down the road, even if it carries a big-name brand like Perdue.

Agriculture is Maryland's number one industry and a cornerstone of our heritage. But once farmland is gone, it's gone forever. I urge you to oppose SB0931/HB1036 and protect the future of Maryland farming.

Thank you.

Amanda Miller

Chesapeake Gold Farms