



Testimony to the Economic Subcommittee

Name: Gail Webb Owings, Executive Director
Organization: Eastern Shore Heritage, Inc. - Stories of the Chesapeake: The Heritage Area of Caroline, Kent, Queen Anne's, and Talbot Counties
Issue: Public Utilities - Generating Stations - Generation and Siting (Renewable Energy Certainty Act)
Position: Opposed

The Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area (SOCHA) occupies one of our country's most significant cultural landscapes and one of the oldest and largest intact working landscapes in North America. These landscapes provide context and siting for nationally and internationally significant stories of religious development, early American settling, agriculture and maritime industries, abolition, and the Underground Railroad. SOCHA is home to two All- American Road, the most prestigious designation in the national scenic byway program. These byways: Chesapeake Country and the Harriett Tubman Underground Railroad – weave throughout the heritage area and serve as an introduction to the intrinsic qualities of the Eastern Shore.

The proliferation of large scale utility solar with minimal standardized buffering threatens the integrity of these important landscapes, scenic byways, and nationally significant heritage resources. The safeguarding of these resources, including our strong agricultural and maritime industries, is essential to maintaining the economy of our region. These resources attract tourists from across the world, which help support our historic towns and small businesses. Local review and approval of buffering and landscaping is essential to assure that impacts to these resources are minimized. Landscaping tailored to location is essential to preserving our most important and vulnerable resources.

Please oppose HB1036. Let's keep our important landscapes intact and ensure that our heritage area continues to benefit our citizens by stimulating economic growth through heritage tourism and preservation. Thank you!