

Garrett County Forestry Board

Will Williams, Chair

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**HB1270 – Natural Resources – Wildland Areas – Overhead
Transmission Lines** By: Delegate Hinebaugh

Economic Matters Committee

UNFAVORABLE

This bill undermines legislative intent by proposing an exemption to build a controversial high-powered electric transmission line through three protected areas (COMAR 08.01.02.02) in the Big Savage Wildland, Bear Pen Wildland, and Dan's Mountain Wildland, an area of 8,443 acres located in Garrett and Allegany Counties.

An UNFAVORABLE REPORT is requested for the following reasons:

1. In spite of the opening language of the bill, there has been no open, transparent, or comprehensive civic engagement prior to the bill's submission. None of the comprehensive planning involved the general public.
2. The bill is premature and oversteps State authority as demands for high-voltage electricity supply are overstated and not proven. There is fear that unnecessary disruption and forest fragmentation would occur near the existing and expanded ROW.
3. Farmers, forest landowners, environmental groups, and political leaders were not made aware by Delegate Hinebaugh that this legislation was being considered for introduction. There have been no public meetings or opportunities for public input on this project.
4. There has been a firestorm of criticism from farmers, forest landowners, homeowners, and those holding agricultural and conservation easements who fear their land could be taken from them through *Eminent Domain*.

5. There is no map of the exempted transmission line routes being proposed by the bill.
6. There has been no determination that these high-voltage electric lines will serve the interests of the State and its people when there are other forms of energy to be considered that are less intrusive.
7. The proposed transmission line corridor through Western Maryland is part of a larger project to meet the exclusive demands of data centers in Northern Virginia.

Respectfully submitted,

Garrett County Forest Conservancy District Board