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March 6, 2025

Hon. C.T. Wilson
Chair
Maryland House Economic Matters Committee
Rm 231 House Office Bldg.
6 Bladen Street Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Favorable report on HB1270

Dear Chair Wilson and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Land & Liberty Coalition of Maryland, of which I serve as State Director, I am writing to convey our support for HB1270.

With chapters in 12 states, the Land & Liberty Coalition is a project of the Conservative Energy Network, a national center-right nonprofit nonpartisan organization which advocates for clean energy and a modern, reliable and safe transmission infrastructure.

Families and employers across the state and of all income brackets are enraged that at a time of abundant American energy, their electric bills are skyrocketing. This is forcing many to cut back on spending and in some cases having to choose between keeping the lights and heat on or a long overdue car repair, or new clothes for their children. Already a costly state in which to do business, increased power costs mean less hiring, more layoffs and higher prices for customers. Many are predicting that western Maryland, especially Allegany County, will be among the hardest hit areas of the state when additional price hikes go into effect later this year.

While interstate energy markets are complex, the simple reason for higher prices is not enough power supply to meet current and expected demand running on an outdated grid and inefficient transmission lines. This last point can't be minimized. Our increasingly digital personal lives, education, careers, entertainment, communication, healthcare, government services and the broader economy not only require massive amounts of electricity but also the ability to deliver it safely, reliably and efficiently. Our highways need to be repaved regularly and sometimes widened to meet demand and the same is true of our transmission infrastructure, much of which is more than half a century old.



The fact is Maryland needs upgraded and additional transmission infrastructure to power our economy and our increasing reliance on digital devices and cloud computing. HB1270 and its Senate companion bill, SB0399, take the right approach when it comes to a vital new transmission line through Garrett and Allegany counties.

As conservatives, the Land & Liberty Coalition believes in the importance of responsible stewardship of our natural resources while also promoting economic growth and energy independence. The legislation, which exempts certain areas in the Big Savage Mountain Wildland, Bear Pen Wildland, and Dan's Mountain Wildland from designation as wildland areas, addresses both priorities by routing the new line parallel to an existing Potomac Edison transmission line that already runs through these wildlands. Compared to potential alternative routes, HB1270 and SB0399 would ensure that the new line has less impact on residents, farms and businesses. And because it would also be a much shorter route than alternatives it will save money, involve less forest clearing and have a smaller footprint on wetlands and trout streams.

One of the primary benefits of HB1270 and SB0399 is the potential for economic growth and job creation. By allowing the construction of overhead transmission lines in these areas, we can facilitate the development of critical infrastructure projects. These projects not only create jobs during the construction phase but also support long-term employment opportunities in maintenance and operations. In a time when many communities are struggling economically, this bill provides a much-needed boost to local economies.

HB1270 and SB0399 also play a vital role in enhancing our energy independence and security. By enabling the construction of new transmission lines, we can improve the reliability and efficiency of our energy grid. This is particularly important as we seek to reduce our dependence on foreign energy sources and ensure a stable and secure energy supply for Maryland residents. A robust and modern energy infrastructure is essential for our state's economic resilience and our national security.

While environmental conservation is important, it must be balanced with the current and future needs of our communities and economy. Importantly, the legislation ensures that any development in these wildland areas is subject to a Public Service Commission certificate of public convenience and necessity which includes rigorous environmental reviews and the opportunity for public input. As such, the CPCN process guarantees that projects are developed responsibly and with minimal impact on the environment.

As conservatives, we fully support this bill as it aligns with our values of conservation, economic prosperity, energy security, and responsible governance. I thank the Committee for this opportunity to summarize our support for HB1270 and respectfully request a favorable report on this important legislation.

Sincerely,

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