

## Unfavorable Testimony on HB 1270

### Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Brenda Myers, and I am writing today to express my **strong** opposition to House Bill 1270 (HB 1270). This bill presents a serious threat to Maryland's Wildlands, undermining critical environmental protections and violating the very statutes designed to preserve these sensitive ecosystems for future generations. HB 1270 not only weakens existing conservation laws but also establishes a dangerous precedent for the future management of Maryland's protected lands. This bill demonstrates lawmakers putting transmission line profits above Marylanders and our environment.

## Major Concerns with HB 1270

### 1. HB 1270 Violates the Wilderness Preservation System Statute and COMAR Regulations

Maryland's Wilderness Preservation System was created to ensure that designated Wildlands remain protected and unimpaired. HB 1270 directly contradicts this mission by creating a new pathway for non-permitted activities in Wildlands. This move violates both the **Wilderness Preservation System statute** and existing **COMAR regulations**, which were established to safeguard these areas from harmful development and degradation.

### 2. Undermines the Foundation of the State's Protected Lands System

For decades, Maryland has maintained a **robust and transparent process** for managing Wildlands, ensuring that decisions about these areas are made with careful consideration and public input. HB 1270 **sidesteps this established process**, opening the door for arbitrary changes to Wildlands protections without the necessary scientific, legal, and community review. By doing so, this bill weakens the very foundation of Maryland's conservation efforts.

### 3. Creates a Dangerous Precedent for Wildlands Management

Under current law, **only the Governor, with public input, has the authority to propose changes** to Wildlands management. HB 1270 disrupts this framework by allowing any delegate to submit bills that alter Wildlands protections, stripping the process of its necessary safeguards. This move undermines the integrity of environmental governance and could open the floodgates for future legislative efforts to weaken Wildlands protections.

### 4. Cedes General Assembly Stewardship Responsibility to the Public Service Commission

The management of Wildlands should remain in the hands of conservation professionals, not regulatory bodies focused on utility infrastructure. HB 1270 effectively transfers decision-making power over Wildlands to the **Public Service Commission**, an entity with no specific expertise

or mandate to protect sensitive natural habitats. This shift threatens to prioritize energy and development interests over conservation goals.

## **5. Lack of Transparency and Public Engagement**

One of the most troubling aspects of HB 1270 is the **lack of prior disclosure or public engagement before its submission**. Maryland's Wildlands are public resources, and any changes to their status should involve robust public discussion and stakeholder involvement. By bypassing these critical steps, HB 1270 disregards the principles of transparency and accountability that should guide any decision-making regarding protected lands.

## **6. Environmental Harm and Irreversible Damage**

Wildlands are designated to remain **unimpaired for future generations**, providing vital ecosystem services such as habitat preservation, water quality protection, and carbon sequestration. HB 1270 is **fundamentally counter to the intent of the Wildlands Preservation statute**, as it opens the door for industrial activities that could cause irreversible environmental damage. Allowing new pathways for non-permitted activities in these areas would **fragment ecosystems, threaten wildlife, and degrade the natural landscapes that Maryland has worked so hard to preserve**.

## **HB 1270 is a Step Backward for Conservation**

HB 1270 is a **direct attack on Maryland's commitment to environmental stewardship**. By violating established statutes, undermining conservation laws, and removing necessary protections, this bill sets a dangerous precedent for the future of Maryland's Wildlands. Instead of weakening these safeguards, we should be strengthening them to ensure that our most sensitive natural areas remain protected for generations to come.

I strongly urge this committee to **reject HB 1270** and uphold Maryland's longstanding commitment to protecting its Wildlands.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Brenda Myers

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