

Testimony: HB1270 – Natural Resources – Wildland Areas – Overhead Transmission Lines  
Committee: Economic Matters  
Hearing Date: March 6, 2025  
Position: OPPOSE

Dear Members of the Economic Matters Committee,

I am a resident of Garrett County and ask you in the strongest terms to vote NO on HB1270.

Maryland's designated Wildlands represent the most sensitive and pristine lands in the state. They have been designated as Wildlands and protected by our laws because they are so special. The three Wildlands (Big Savage Mountain Wildland, Bear Pen Wildland, and Dan's Mountain Wildland) that are threatened by this bill are very close to my home. I have visited all of them; as a student with experts, as a volunteer, and as a hiker. They are unique places that live up to the high level of protection currently afforded to them.

HB1270 violates the Wilderness Preservation System statute and existing COMAR regulations that protect the Wildlands. The bill would create a new pathway for non-permitted activities in Wildlands all over the state, not just in western Maryland. This bill undermines the foundation of the state's protected lands system.

The bill would allow a new transmission line "parallel" to the existing Potomac Edison transmission. Although the bill's sponsors and NextEra have suggested that this means their proposed lines would be adjacent to the existing line, the bill just says parallel. As the bill is written, new lines could be built parallel but a mile away, creating a brand new enormous corridor through these pristine lands! This language is deceiving and dangerous.

The sponsors of this bill and the cross bill SB0399 have misrepresented the views of many of the Garrett County citizens that they claim to represent. In his presentation of the cross bill SB0399, Senator McCay perpetuated several disturbing falsehoods, along with the representatives from NextEra Energy, the company that stands to benefit from this bill. He suggested that the 50 meetings held have involved the community and represent real outreach. This is false. They have not had any meetings that were publicized and open to the public. The citizens of Garrett County have not had an adequate chance to express their concerns. Senator McCay and NextEra have provided economic benefit estimates with no explanation of the assumptions behind the numbers, so it is impossible to analyze those generous estimates and know if they have any connection to the real financial impact to Garrett County. Further, they suggest that the bill will not even matter if the project does not receive regulatory approval, when in fact, the bill would change the regulatory rules in NextEra's favor. The exemption that the bill would provide is vital to NextEra's vision for their transmission lines. There have been no public discussions of alternative routes and use of existing right of ways. This is big business manipulating the facts, dodging questions, and not providing sufficient information to evaluate this bill or their building plans.

Just days ago my household received a postcard from NextEra promoting an online survey. At first, I was pleased to be able to have a chance to express my opinion. But upon reading the brief survey, I realized that it was written in such a way that responses could easily be manipulated and it did not provide a way to express my concerns or opinions. I declined to complete it.

I support Maryland's clean energy goals, but allowing industry to build in our most protected lands is an abomination.

I have not been able to get a clear answer as to why new power lines cannot be strung along existing transmission towers. I realize that the owner of the existing large transmission towers is not NextEra Energy, but why wasn't the contract given to the existing ROW owners so that more state or private land would not be industrialized? Why not utilize existing ROWs? If actual dialog had been happening, I might know the answer to some of these questions.

My husband and I purchased our property in 2007 specifically because of the abundance of protected lands all around it. We border New Germany State Park and live in walking distance of Savage River State Forest. Our home, along with these state lands and the three targeted Wildlands are all within NextEra's "Routing Study Area". We will be directly impacted if this bill passes.

You have a responsibility to protect the natural resources of Maryland. I am afraid that some public officials are just being swayed by false narratives perpetuated by industry. We need more energy, but that doesn't mean that this is the only way to solve that problem. Industry lobbyists and public relation specialists are always going to overestimate economic benefits and power grid benefits, while simultaneously underestimating environmental degradation. Blasting through protected Wildlands

would be much cheaper and easier than negotiating and paying for land leases elsewhere. NextEra does not care about clean energy, they do not care about global warming, they do not care about our environment, they do not care about Garrett County's economy, and they do not care about Marylanders' quality of life.

Our public officials are supposed to protect the people. We depend on you to carefully weigh all of the issues and make a reasoned decision. Please consider these issues carefully.

Please vote NO on HB1270.

Respectfully submitted,  
Christine Campe-Price  
Grantsville, MD