I support HB631 for the following reasons:

First, Eminent domain must NOT be used to take land under conservation or agricultural easements. Corporations and governments must NOT be allowed to take these lands out of conservation easement because it is the least expensive and most expedient way to get a project completed.

Second, Property owners put their land in these easements to PRESERVE their land and prevent it from being developed. This easement is deeded to the land in perpetuity. If Maryland allows a corporation to use eminent domain to take land for a project constructing overhead powerlines, they are destroying land that its owners intended to protect from destruction by development.

Third, Lands in conservation and agricultural easements is land whose value is in the wildlife habitats, ecosystems and its soil health. These lands need to be protected to ensure the future of natural and rural areas of Maryland.

Fourth, Eminent domain in Maryland appears to be an expedient and low-cost option for getting projects completed. Maryland taxpayers must require that eminent domain is not allowed to take land out of conservation or agricultural easement. The long-term impact on our environment and economy must be kept in front of mind in perpetuity.

Fifth, I fear a 'slippery slope' will be set up whereby it becomes easier for preserved lands to be taken by eminent domain, resulting in more economic devastation for Maryland families, farmers and landowners.

And finally, I own land that is in agricultural preservation easement. The idea that it could be taken out of preservation by eminent domain conjures a specter of financial disaster. The value of the land would plummet, and I suspect I would be expected to pay the state back for the tax credit I received. We put this land in easement to preserve it and prevent it from being turned into housing development. We love this land and intend for our family to enjoy it for generations to come.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Orens

Owner, Bluebird Hall Farm