

Senator Brian Feldman, Chair
Delegate C.T. Wilson, Chair
Members of the Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee &
House Economic Matters Committee

February 26, 2025

RE: SB0931/HB1036 **Renewable Energy Certainty Act**

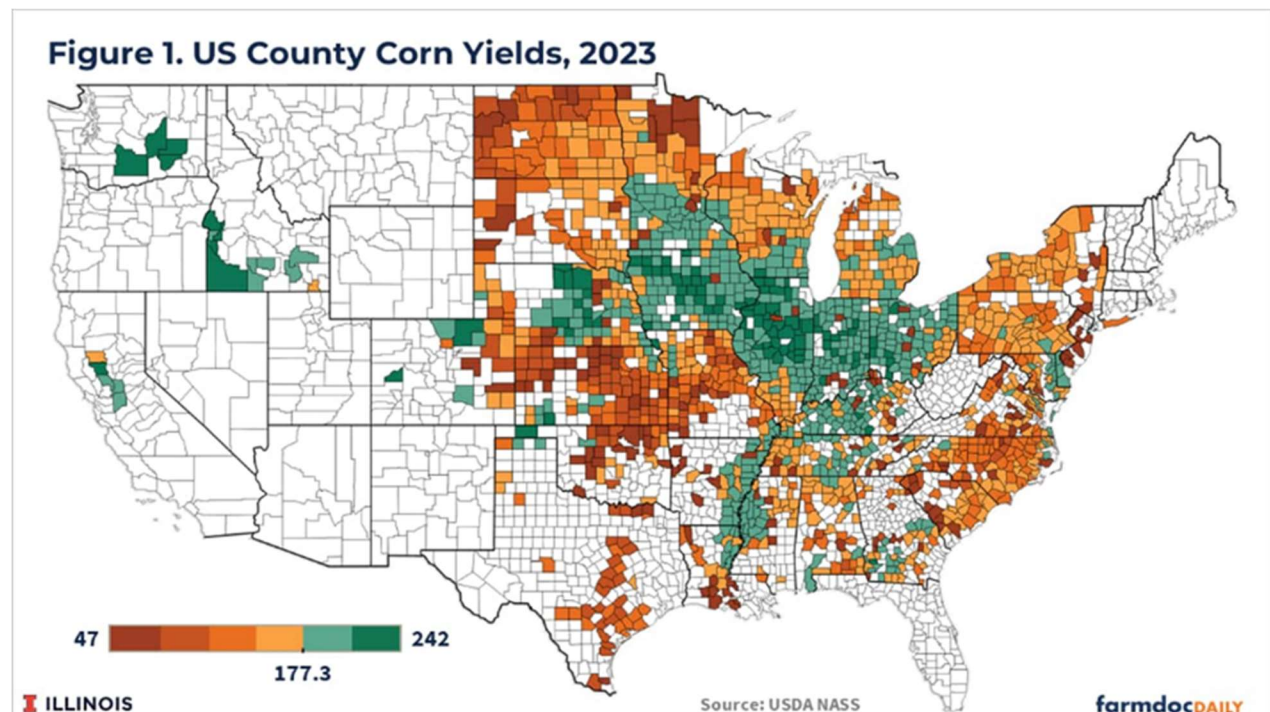
Position: **Opposed**

Dear Senators and Delegates,

We are seventh-generation livestock and grain farmers in Kent County, Maryland and want to carry on our family's legacy into the future. We oppose SB0931/ HB1036 as it would allow state government to override local or county zoning laws to approve solar energy projects. That puts our state's finite farmland at risk. Every year, Maryland is already losing thousands of acres of farmland, and this heavy-handed legislation has the chance to take even more out of production. Since 1950, only 75 years ago, Maryland has lost 2.1 million acres, half of its farmland.

Estimate of the acres needed for solar production to reach the state's 14% renewable fuel carve-out for solar energy range from 30,000 to 100,000 acres. While others argue that this is an insignificant percentage of Maryland's 1.9 million acres of farmland, we disagree. Even though the pace of the farmland loss has slowed in recent years, farmland acres are still decreasing. At what point will too many acres be lost? Maryland still faces development pressure from suburban sprawl and low-density rural development. No more farmland is being created. With fewer acres to farm, it is even more difficult for young farmers like us to compete for farmland to rent or purchase. Additionally, this bill seems to be at odds with our state's historic farm preservation goals as Maryland has consistently ranked as the top 2 or 3 states in the U.S. for Agricultural Land Preservation programs.

The Eastern Shore of Maryland with its lower population density, relatively flat terrain and vast open acres stands to lose a higher percentage of acres from this bill. Solar panels should not be installed on prime and productive farmland. As you can see from the map below representing national corn yields by county, Maryland's Eastern Shore has the largest pocket of highly fertile, productive land on the East Coast. The soils in this area rival the quality of soils in the midwestern corn belt and should be used for its highest and best use- producing food!



All Maryland residents benefit from a strong, profitable Maryland agricultural industry. We need to maintain our farmland acres to continue to produce local, nutritious, delicious food for Marylanders. Remember No Farms, No Food.

Mark Debnam, Millington, MD

Andrew Debnam, Kennedyville, MD

Mitchell Debnam, Still Pond, MD