

02/18/2025

Statement in Support of HB0640

I strongly support HB0640, a crucial bill that will ensure greater protection for Maryland's valuable conservation easements. This bill recognizes the importance of these easements in preserving our natural resources, scenic landscapes, and rural character, and seeks to mitigate the potentially detrimental impact of overhead transmission lines.

Currently, utility companies are not sufficiently required to consider the impact of proposed transmission lines on conservation easements. HB0640 addresses this critical gap by mandating that utilities evaluate these impacts and explore alternative routes to minimize harm. This is a common-sense approach that balances the need for reliable energy infrastructure with the vital role conservation easements play in our state.

By requiring this evaluation and consideration of alternatives, HB0640 will:

* **Protect our natural resources:** Conservation easements are designed to safeguard forests, wetlands, farmland, and other ecologically sensitive areas. HB0640 will help ensure these areas are not unnecessarily fragmented or degraded by transmission line construction.

* **Preserve scenic landscapes:** Overhead transmission lines can significantly detract from the scenic beauty of our landscapes. HB0640 will encourage the exploration of alternative routes that minimize visual impacts, preserving the aesthetic value of protected lands.

* **Support rural communities:** Conservation easements often play a vital role in preserving the character of rural communities and supporting agricultural economies. HB0640 will help protect these communities from the negative impacts of poorly planned transmission line projects.

HB0640 is a responsible and necessary step to protect Maryland's investment in conservation. It promotes a balanced approach, recognizing the need for energy infrastructure while prioritizing the preservation of our valuable natural resources and

scenic landscapes. I urge the legislature to pass HB0640 and ensure a more sustainable and thoughtful approach to transmission line planning.

Thank you,

Julie Frye

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