



WRITTEN TESTIMONY

BILL NO.: House Bill 1218 – Construction and Expansion of Transmission Lines and Task Force to Develop a Realistic Electricity Plan for Maryland

COMMITTEE: Economic Matters Committee

HEARING DATE: February 21, 2025

SPONSOR: Delegates Buckel, Griffith, Mangione, Miller, Pippy, Reilly, and Tomlinson

POSITION: Favorable

I respectfully submit this testimony in **strong support** of House Bill 1218, which establishes a **Task Force to Develop a Realistic Electricity Plan for Maryland** and prohibits the approval of new transmission line projects for a critical period of review. This legislation is **essential** to ensuring Maryland's energy infrastructure planning is driven by thoughtful, data-backed policies rather than rushed, harmful projects like the Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP). I urge a **favorable report** on this bill to protect Maryland's environment, farmland, and communities from irreparable harm.

The Destruction Wrought by the Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP)

The **MPRP is an environmental and economic catastrophe in the making**. This project, proposed by PSEG Renewable Transmission LLC, would construct a **67.2-mile-long, 500 kV overhead transmission line** through Baltimore, Carroll, and Frederick Counties. The devastating consequences of this project, as detailed in environmental impact studies, cannot be overstated:

- **Massive Land Destruction:**
 - **394.2 acres of forest** would be clear-cut.
 - **522.6 acres of active farmland** would be permanently degraded.
 - **245.8 acres of conservation easements**, including **224.6 acres protected under the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF)**, would be violated.
- **Waterways and Wetlands at Risk:**
 - The project crosses **101 streams and waterbodies**, increasing erosion, sediment pollution, and flood risks.
 - **51.1 acres of wetlands** would be impacted, degrading natural flood control systems.



- The project threatens **endangered species habitats**, including those of the Indiana Bat, Northern Long-eared Bat, and Bog Turtle.
- **Destruction from Access Roads:**
 - **303 access roads, each 16 to 25 feet wide**, will carve through farmland and forests, further fragmenting ecosystems.
 - **140 acres of land will be lost to road construction**, permanently altering hydrology and soil quality.
 - Increased runoff and erosion will harm the Chesapeake Bay watershed.
- **Threats to Maryland's Historic and Scenic Landscape:**
 - **Twelve historic sites and two historic districts** lie within the proposed route, jeopardizing Maryland's rich heritage.
 - Overhead lines and steel towers, some up to **195 feet tall**, will destroy scenic vistas, undermining tourism and property values.

The Economic and Social Costs of This Project

Maryland's rural economy **depends on its farmland, natural beauty, and thriving communities**. The MPRP's destruction will have long-term consequences:

- **Farmland Irreversibly Damaged:** Compacted soil and hydrological disruptions will **permanently reduce agricultural productivity**.
- **Plummeting Property Values:** Home values near transmission lines **drop by 45%**¹ disincentivizing new residents and investment.
- **Lost Tourism and Recreation Revenue:** Outdoor recreation, a vital economic driver, will suffer as scenic landscapes are **marred by industrial infrastructure**.

HB1218: A Critical Step to Protect Maryland's Future

House Bill 1218 is **not just necessary—it is urgent**. By prohibiting the approval of new transmission projects for a set period, this bill **ensures that Maryland develops a**

¹ *The Electrifying Factor Affecting Your Property's Value*, Wall Street Journal (August 15, 2018), <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-electrifying-factor-affecting-your-property-s-value-1534343506> (reporting that vacant lots adjacent to high-voltage transmission lines sell for 45% less than equivalent lots not located near transmission lines. Non-adjacent lots still located within 1,000 feet of transmission lines sell at a discount of 18%).



rational, forward-thinking energy plan that balances reliability, environmental protection, and economic stability.

The Task Force created by HB1218 will:

- Conduct a **comprehensive review** of Maryland's electricity needs.
- Assess **realistic alternatives** to new transmission, such as energy efficiency, distributed generation, and grid modernization.
- Evaluate **the economic and environmental costs** of large-scale infrastructure projects before they are greenlit.

Conclusion

Without HB1218, projects like the MPRP will continue to **destroy Maryland's land, threaten its communities, and undermine its economy**—all without guaranteeing true energy reliability. We cannot allow corporate interests to dictate our state's future at the expense of our farmland, forests, and history.

For these reasons, I **strongly urge** the committee to **issue a favorable report on HB1218**.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

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