



WRITTEN TESTIMONY

BILL NO.: House Bill 829 – Public Utilities – Transmission Lines – Advanced Transmission Technologies

COMMITTEE: House Economic Matters Committee

HEARING DATE: February 20, 2025

SPONSOR: Delegate Charkoudian

POSITION: Favorable

On behalf of **Stop MPRP, Inc.** and the many Maryland residents committed to protecting our environment, farmland, and communities, I submit this testimony in **strong support** of House Bill 829. This critical legislation will ensure that Maryland takes a more responsible, **technology-driven approach to energy transmission**, prioritizing **grid optimization and advanced transmission technologies** over destructive and unnecessary new power lines.

The Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP): A Case Study in Poor Planning

The **Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP)**, proposed by **PSEG** demonstrates the urgent need for the reforms in HB0829. The MPRP would **clear more than 900 acres of Maryland’s forests and farmland**, destroy **wetlands, waterways, and conservation lands**, and disrupt **local communities** while failing to explore alternative solutions.

The **sheer environmental destruction** of the project cannot be overstated:

- **394.2 acres of forest would be permanently cleared**
- **522.6 acres of productive farmland would be lost**
- **101 streams and waterbodies would be crossed, increasing pollution risks**
- **139.6 acres of high-quality, Tier II catchments would be impacted**
- **Endangered species, including the Indiana Bat and Northern Long-eared Bat, would suffer severe habitat loss**

The Hidden Devastation of Access Roads

Beyond the transmission line itself, **the MPRP includes the construction of 303 access roads**, each between **16 to 25 feet wide**, cutting through **Baltimore, Carroll, and Frederick Counties**. These roads will cause **even greater environmental damage**, including:

- **Destruction of an additional 140 acres** of land for roadways alone.
- **Fragmentation of forests and ecosystems**, further stressing wildlife populations.



- **Severe soil erosion and compaction**, making farmland difficult to rehabilitate and increasing flooding risks.
- **Crossing 22 streams and waterways**, increasing sedimentation and water pollution.
- **Threats to federally protected species**, including the **Indiana Bat, Northern Long-eared Bat, and Bog Turtle**.

While PSEG claims many of these roads will be “temporary,” the reality is that construction damage is often **permanent**. **Soil compaction, tree removal, and wetland destruction** create irreversible scars on the landscape, impacting both **wildlife and the livelihoods of farmers**.

How HB0829 Provides a Smarter Path Forward

House Bill 829 directly **addresses the flaws in Maryland’s transmission planning** and would force projects like MPRP to **consider alternatives** before causing unnecessary harm. The bill would:

- **Require a thorough analysis of alternatives** before approving new overhead transmission projects.
- **Mandate consideration of grid-enhancing technologies**, advanced transmission solutions, and undergrounding options.
- **Prevent land seizure through eminent domain unless an urgent need is demonstrated**.
- **Increase transparency** by requiring reports on congestion, alternative solutions, and cost impacts to ratepayers.

Under HB0829, PSEG would have to **demonstrate why the MPRP is necessary** and prove that **existing infrastructure cannot be improved to meet demand**. This **critical oversight** would prevent projects from being greenlit simply because they benefit transmission developers **at the expense of Maryland residents**.

A Call for Action: Issue a Favorable Report on HB0829

The **MPRP is a cautionary tale** of what happens when transmission companies **prioritize expansion over efficiency**. Maryland **must shift away** from outdated, destructive transmission models and embrace **modern technology-driven solutions**—and **HB0829 is the way to do it**.



We **urge** the committee to **issue a favorable report** on **House Bill 829** and ensure that Maryland's transmission future is built on **innovation, responsibility, and respect for landowners.**

Respectfully submitted,

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