Rich Levels Grain, Inc.
Galena, Maryland

Written Testimony of Rob Davis
Farmer, Rich Levels Grain
Board Member, Maryland Grain Producers
Co-Founder, Farmers Alliance for Rural Maryland
Before the Senate and House Committees
Opposition to Senate Bill 0931 and House Bill 1036

February 26, 2025

Dear Senators Feldman & Kagan, Delegate Wilson & Crosby, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Rob Davis, and I am a 7th-generation grain and poultry farmer on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. I serve as a board member of the Maryland Grain Producers and co-founded the Farmers Alliance for Rural Maryland (F.A.R.M.) to advocate for responsible land-use policies that protect Maryland's agriculture industry.

I strongly oppose Senate Bill 0931 and House Bill 1036 because they strip local governments of their authority over land use and accelerate the conversion of some of the most productive farmland in the country into industrial solar fields.

Maryland's Farmland is Among the Most Productive in the Nation

Maryland farmers are world-class food producers, operating on some of the best soils in the country with ideal climate conditions for growing high-yield crops.

- Our region's ability to efficiently produce grain, poultry, and livestock is unmatched due to our climate, soil quality, and proximity to key agricultural markets.
- Unlike other states, Maryland farms can grow, process, and distribute food within a few hours of major urban centers, including Baltimore, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, New York, and Boston—reducing food transportation costs and emissions while ensuring a stable, local food supply.

Maryland agriculture is not just efficient—it is sustainable. Farmers on the Delmarva Peninsula have developed a closed-loop agricultural system that maximizes nutrient recycling and energy efficiency:

- Manure from chickens fertilizes corn and soybean crops, reducing the need for synthetic fertilizers.
- On one of our farms wash-water from an egg facility irrigates fields, improving soil health and conserving water.
- The corn plant itself is a natural solar panel, converting sunlight into food while sequestering carbon.
- That corn feeds our poultry, which in turn produces eggs and meat that sustain families across the country.
- In my own case, this entire process happens within a 10-mile radius of my home farm—a beautifully orchestrated balance of nature, technology, and responsible land stewardship.

Maryland farmers have spent generations perfecting this agricultural system—yet SB 0931 and HB 1036 threaten to disrupt this balance by replacing fertile cropland with industrial solar panels.

Replacing Farmland with Solar Hurts Maryland's Food Supply

- My family's farming operation consists of about 5,000 acres (mostly leased), where we grow corn, soybeans, wheat, and barley, along with managing six chicken houses.
- 100% of our electricity needs are already offset by just 1.5 acres of solar panels that we installed last year. Peak solar production lines up with our peak demand, in the summer when we are running fans to cool chicken and pumping water to irrigate crops. We don't need 400-acre solar fields on farmland to meet our energy goals.
- The Delmarva Peninsula is a corn-deficit region, meaning we already import grain from the Midwest to support poultry production.
- When a 500-acre farm near us was converted to solar panels, that land stopped producing 100,000 bushels of corn per year—which means, for the next 30 years, the poultry industry will have to import an additional 100,000 bushels annually from the Midwest. That's at least 100 additional tractor-trailer loads of grain per year, increasing transportation emissions, fuel costs, and reliance on out-of-state supply chains—all while Maryland's own land sits covered in solar panels instead of growing food.

This is a dangerous and unnecessary shift away from local, sustainable agriculture.

We Support Renewable Energy—But Not at the Cost of Farmland

Maryland Farmers are not opposed to renewable energy—we are already using it responsibly. But solar projects should be sited in appropriate locations:

- Rooftops and parking lots
- Brownfields and abandoned industrial sites
- Utility corridors and degraded land

Farmland should never be the first choice for large-scale solar installations. Once it is paved over with panels, it will never return to food production.

Respectfully,

Rob Davis