

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

Dear Senators and Delegates,

**I am a lifelong resident of Caroline County and am a fourth generation farmer. My family on my mother's and father's side have been farming here for over 100 years. We look forward to continuing that for many generations to come.**

My family and I live in a community of farmers, friends, and neighbors who share a deep connection to agriculture. We are already witnessing our land being overtaken by solar panels, knowing that the likelihood of this farmland ever returning to productive use is nearly nonexistent. SB0931 and HB1036, which would accelerate this destruction, represent the greatest single threat to Maryland farmland and agriculture in the state's history.

Everyone involved in any aspect of the agriculture industry agrees that this will destroy agriculture in the state as we know it. When the land base used by agriculture is reduced to a breaking point below which it will not support the infrastructure supporting the ag industry, the whole system will collapse. Once the numerous industries supporting agriculture are gone, it will be almost impossible to bring them back. Using large amounts of land for energy production is not in the best interest of this region economically or environmentally.

If a solar project is discontinued on a property, it is not likely to be farmed ever again and may not be able to be developed with houses either. The negative impact of solar panels and battery storage on the land is irreversible. This is further reason that this is too big of a risk to take. The possible production of renewable energy will be far less positive to the state and the region than producing food and fiber on the land.

Furthermore, it is wrong to override local control of planning, land use decisions and taxation in favor of state control. Local elected officials inherently know what is best for their county and should be able to control what goes on there. Land use decisions are based on comprehensive plans that were developed over time with local public comment

and input. These solar panel projects that purchase and lease land put land use in the control of the state of Maryland through the Public Service Commission. This is an extreme and threatening overreach of government into private property rights, and will ultimately be exposed. The problem is that by the time this is exposed for what it is, you will have destroyed the agricultural industry in the in the process.

For decades, the state of Maryland has supported open space and wise growth policies, allowing counties to meet their changing needs in a timely manner. These bills would quickly and dramatically change the economy and nature of counties. Please reject SB0931 and HB1036, written by individuals that will not see the consequences of this legislation and have no regard for our precious and irreplaceable farmland. These lands should not be sacrificed for solar panels and risky, environmentally harmful battery storage units.

I urge you to give an unfavorable recommendation.

Sincerely,  
John Saathoff  
Ridgely, MD