



M.C. Keegan-Ayer, District 3 Frederick County Council

Frederick County Council
Winchester Hall
12 East Church Street
Frederick, Maryland 21701
February 28, 2025

Chairman Brian Feldman
Education, Energy and Environment Committee
Maryland Senate

Chairman Wilson
Economic Matters Committee
Maryland House of Delegates

RE: HB1036/SB931 - OPPOSED

Chairman Feldman, Chairman Wilson and Honorable Members:

Thank you for taking to time to hear from us today. I am M.C. Keegan-Ayer from Frederick County and the First Vice President of Maryland Association of Counties. I am here today to **OPPOSE** these bills and to express specific concerns MACo has about bills HB1036/SB931, as currently written. MACo President Jack Wilson and I sent a letter in February to the Chairs of these committees outlining the concerns of the MACo members about these two bills.

Our MACo Legislative Committee, which has representatives from all 24 jurisdictions across the state, voted unanimously to oppose these bills. On that point I need to be clear, to have a unanimous vote to oppose legislation as critical as this, is highly unusual. Normally on an issue of this importance, the members are able to see their way to a “support with amendments” position, which then allows the MACo staff the flexibility they need to work with stakeholders develop compromise language.

Let me also be very clear, we did NOT hear from counties that they are opposed to renewable energy sources or to large-scale utility sized solar arrays – counties need to be able to respond to the concerns of our mutual constituents. Residents want to have a say on livability factors and the “look, smell, and feel” of the communities they call home.

President Wilson and I have met with the leadership of all the counties across the state about this specific issue – the need to embrace green, renewable energy sources, to better meet the power

needs of our constituents as the state transitions away from fossil fuels. In every county the single greatest issue was good neighbor issues, livability issues – how bad actors have negatively impacted the “look, smell and feel” of the communities. One of the primary responsibilities of local elected leaders is to determine how our county grows and what that growth will look like. Our residents, our mutual constituents, want to have input into what their community will look like as it grows – and these bills will upend that ability.

In addition, at a time when all counties are trying to preserve green space, open space and farmland, to meet other state requirements for land/farm preservation, as well as ambitious greenhouse gas and emissions goals, placing solar arrays on farmland must be well-planned so we are not losing the benefits of the carbon-sink capabilities of greenspace and open farmland. And this is where local control becomes so important. Local officials are the most informed about local lands, land benefits and land values. Protecting the best soils, protecting the most productive farmland ensures that critical food production can continue, and can continue simultaneously with the development of these large utility scale solar fields, while continuing to protect our environment. Local control can and will allow this to occur with the necessary input from the residents. It can be a win for all.

MACo has been a committed partner, working with all stakeholders throughout this process to ensure the correct balance of all our needs. We remain at the table, which is why we are here today – to work in collaboration with the Chairs and Members of these committees and the House and Senate to develop compromise legislation where all our constituents feel that their needs and their concerns are being heard and given due consideration.

I appreciate your time this afternoon and thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

M.C. Keegan-Ayer