

Allison Bullock's Testimony Against Maryland Bill HB1036

Good afternoon, Madam Speaker and honorable members of the committee. My name is Allison Bullock, and I am the Vice President of the Anne Arundel Dairy Leasing 4-H Club, proudly representing the youth of our community in Anne Arundel County, Maryland. I stand before you today to oppose bill HB1036, the "Renewable Energy Certainty Act." While we all support sustainable energy, this bill threatens not only our agricultural land but also the communities and programs—like my 4-H club—that rely on that land.

For those who may not be familiar, 4-H is a nationwide organization that empowers young people through hands-on learning in agriculture, STEM, and leadership. Our club, the Anne Arundel Dairy Leasing Club, leases the Navy Farm in Gambrills from the county to provide youth with the opportunity to raise and show dairy cattle. We also share our lease with other organizations, such as the Anne Arundel County 4-H Extension Office and De Novo Farm.

As I mentioned, my name is Allison Bullock. I come from a family of farmers, and agriculture has been a cornerstone of my life. I have been a member of Maryland 4-H since I was eight years old, participating at the local, county, and state levels. Now, at 17 years old and as a junior at Southern High School, I own and operate a business where I raise an average of at least 30-40 livestock animals, ranging from dairy goats to beef cattle.

This bill directly impacts me, my community, and the agricultural way of life in Maryland. It proposes that agricultural land, which is protected by our county, could be overruled by state-level decisions that prioritize solar development. The Navy Dairy Farm in Gambrills is just one example of agricultural land that could be targeted by solar companies. In fact, we have already had to advocate at the county level to prevent solar companies from taking over portions of our lease. As farmers, when we look at open fields, we don't just see unused space—we see vital land critical to pasture rotation, crop growth, and the long-term sustainability of our agricultural future, not land to be taken by solar companies.

Studies from the University of Maryland Extension indicate that the construction and maintenance of solar installations create noise that disrupts livestock, causing stress that negatively impacts their growth and behavior. This issue is not just a concern for large industrial farms—it's a problem for youth like me, who rely on these animals for our educational projects. It's a problem for small farmers who cannot afford to compete with solar companies for land leases. Our animals are more than just livestock; they are part of our education, and the stress caused by these projects directly impacts their health and our ability to succeed.

Additionally, the impact on soil health cannot be ignored. Solar farms compact soil, making it less viable for future agricultural use. A 2023 Maryland Department of Agriculture report on land conversion trends raised concerns that once soil is degraded, it cannot support crops or grazing animals. This is not just an issue for today—it's a threat to our future food security. As food prices rise and we become more reliant on imports, it is critical that we protect the land that sustains us.

This bill threatens not just our education and small farms, but the long-term viability of Maryland's agricultural industry. It jeopardizes our ability to produce food, and it undermines the experiences and opportunities that youth in our community gain from programs like 4-H.

I urge you to listen to the voices of Maryland's farmers and young people. Renewable energy is important, but so is the future of our food, our education, and our communities. This issue is not just about solar panels; it's about the loss of vital agricultural land and the impact on our lives and future generations.

Please vote NO on HB1036.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sources:

University of Maryland Extension on Solar Energy and Agriculture

The University of Maryland Extension has conducted studies on the impact of solar installations on agricultural land, including issues like noise and soil health.

Link: [University of Maryland Extension](#)

Maryland Department of Agriculture - Land Conversion and Solar Development

This 2023 report from the Maryland Department of Agriculture discusses land conversion trends and the impact of solar farms on agricultural soil and farming practices.

Link: [Maryland Department of Agriculture - Land Conversion Trends](#)

American Farmland Trust - Solar Energy and Agriculture

The American Farmland Trust provides insight into the challenges of balancing renewable energy development with the protection of farmland. They emphasize the importance of preserving agricultural land for future food security.

Link: [American Farmland Trust - Solar and Agriculture](#)

National Agricultural Law Center - The Impact of Solar Development on Farmland

This article examines the legal and economic impacts of converting farmland into solar energy sites, including the potential disruption to farming practices and land viability.

Link: [National Agricultural Law Center - Solar Development](#)

Maryland Farm Bureau - Solar Energy on Farmland

The Maryland Farm Bureau has expressed concerns about the conversion of agricultural land to solar farms, particularly for small family farms that may struggle to compete for land.

Link: [Maryland Farm Bureau - Solar Energy](#)