

March 4, 2025

Opposition to H.B.1270 / S.B.399: Natural Resources - Wildland Areas - Overhead Transmission Lines

Dear Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and Economic Matters Committee Members,

I'm writing to share my strong opposition to H.B.1270/S.B.399, legislation concerning overhead transmission lines through some of Maryland's most unique wildland areas.

It's difficult to understand how this legislation is anything other than a corporate giveaway - a vague and overly broad effort by NextEra Energy and its Maryland legislature supporters - to compromise delicate ecosystems and saddle Maryland taxpayers with at least half the cost of production of transmission lines - all to support massive datacenters in Virginia. The fact that the bill is referred to Economic Matters when it's clearly an environmental attack is highly questionable.

This legislation will in no conceivable way benefit Marylanders, but it will saddle us with both economic and environmental costs.

For instance:

- The preamble stating, "WHEREAS, As a result of an open, transparent, and comprehensive planning process..." is simply false. While legislators seem to know about this 18-24 month process, the public surely does not.
- SECTION 1(b)(2)(II): Adding a NextEra transmission line to run parallel to the existing Potomac Edison line does nothing to express the true scope of the project. These wildlands are Maryland's most sensitive habitat and a significant portion will be cleared and destroyed to accommodate these massive transmission lines. It's worth noting that NextEra simply wants to be able to compete with other energy companies, but rather than pay their competitors for use of existing transmission lines, they've instead created a secret backdoor plan to simply pass the cost onto Maryland taxpayers.
- SECTION 2: "That it is the intent of the General Assembly that nothing in this Act shall be construed as a recommendation that a proposed NextEra Energy Transmission MidAtlantic, Inc., transmission line be issued a certificate of public convenience and necessity from the Public Service Commission." Please don't insult our intelligence with language suggesting this is simply one step in a process that ultimately ends with the Commission. It's actually the legislature's collective job to protect wildlands - as outlined in statute - and not give away those protections while hiding behind some non-existent process for influencing the Commission. The effort to hand over our wildlands to an energy company (again - to maximize huge profits for NextEra and fund something in another state) begins and ends with this legislature.
- SECTION 3: "AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect October 1, 2025." In this so-called "open, transparent, and comprehensive" planning process that hasn't included a single member of the public, it's insulting to then suggest that it's ready

to go into effect on October 1. This is just additional evidence that the planning certainly has been happening for some time - but behind closed doors.

This legislation ignores the intent of wildlands protections - something upheld since the early 1970s. It also ignores the need for additional environmental impact analysis and stays silent on any potential environmental consequences the project may cause. In a time when our environment and ecosystem is more fragile than ever before in history, during a time when the Maryland climate is changing, we're seeing more high-speed winds and dry conditions that increase fire risk, we should be looking toward energy alternatives and environmental resilience. Yet, the committee is entertaining legislation strictly focused on maximizing profits for NextEra.

I urge committee members to protect Maryland wildlands and reject this lobbyist-written legislation outright.

Sincerely,

Leslie McGorman
Maryland resident

cc: Del. Hinebaugh
Del. Moon
Del. Wilkins
Del. Charkoudian
Sen. Smith