

ORAL Testimony - 2 minutes

Mason Farms Produce LLC

February 28, 2025

SB0931

In OPPOSITION

Good afternoon. My name is Katherine Mason Kraszewski and I am a fifth-generation, certified organic farmer in Queen Anne's County. Our farm specializes in grains and vegetables, and for the past 125 years, my family has lived, worked, and thrived on the same tract of land.

The bill being debated today represents a direct infringement on the rights of farmers to manage their own land. It must be our decision, and our decision alone, as to what our fields are used for, whether it's growing crops, raising livestock, or pursuing alternative energy solutions that benefit us. While solar energy is an important renewable resource, forcing us to abandon productive agricultural land for large-scale solar projects would ruin our livelihoods, disrupt our food production, and negatively impact our rural economies.

To be clear, I do understand the benefits of solar energy. Our farm installed solar panels a decade ago, and for most of the year, that energy takes care of our operation. However, it was our decision. It was not forced upon us in any way.

Many family farms operate on tight margins, and they rely on the use of all their land for agricultural activities. A bill that limits farmers' rights would inevitably diminish their ability to continue farming or even drive them out of business. And once our farmland is gone, there is no way to get it back.

The dedication and investment it takes to earn a living in the agricultural industry is no small feat. Rather than forcing farmers to give up control over their land for solar energy projects, the bill should encourage voluntary and mutually beneficial arrangements. To put it simply, do not let our farms and rural communities suffer and become obsolete at the hands of this bill. Thank you.