

February 28, 2025

SB0931 Public Utilities – Generating Station – Generation and Siting
Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
Statement in Opposition of SB0931

Stephen Kraszewski - Organic Farmer, Queen Anne's County, MD

As an organic grower I understand the time and effort that is involved in transitioning ground to meet organic certification requirements. I also realize with care, stewardship, and acceptance of the challenges that facilitate sustainable agriculture I can make the payoffs worthwhile. **Long-term goals require long-term investments.**

At Mason Farms Produce LLC, I follow a simple philosophy: Adapt, Adopt, and Action. This approach drives our thinking forward, providing the motivation to do better; we build resilience through trial and error, learning from failures and teaching lessons to hand down to the next generation.

We extend and diversify our rotations. We use novel techniques to plant crops, control pests, sow cover crops and build soil health. Our aim is investment through innovation and vice versa. Organic farmers use traditional / cultural farming practices to lay the groundwork in our fields, but we also glean from new ideas to face the future. Public and private sectors like UMD Extension and Chesapeake Bay Foundation have made great strides in their outreach programs to educate and support Maryland's farmers. Organic farms like ours rely heavily on their programs, resources, and experience to navigate the challenges we producers face.

Their efforts and investments have allowed us the means to thrive both economically and environmentally. Without agricultural grant funding, financial support or facilitated learning we are at a disadvantage and I'm certain our farming plans would be short-lived.

A long-term investment, as I mentioned before, requires predictability, consistency, accountability, and communication. The State of Maryland has made these same investments to buttress its #1 industry; funding that is facilitated and directed through our largest public institutions: MDA and NRCS. Our farm has a history of participation in many publicly funded agricultural initiatives:

- MACS State Cost Share
- EQIP Federal Cost Share
- Cover Crop Program
- Soil Conservation
- Nutrient Management

These stalwart initiatives and investments won't mean much in the face of solar energy projects that disrupt, weaken and erase the land they were meant to manage.

Producers in the path or in close proximity to unchecked, expanding energy infrastructure projects will be at a disadvantage – the friability of their once certain livelihoods will result in a hedge against innovation; what’s more likely is a rush towards quick payoffs and fast returns.

Productive lands require investment to thrive – this bill introduces such turmoil and uncertainty that farmers will have to accept short land leases, never willing to steward the land for fear of losing their investment. This is particularly true for organic operations like ours who seek longer land agreements in order to see economic and environmental efforts bear fruit.

From the standpoint of a family-owned operation the fallout from large subsidized solar projects, unchecked by local stakeholders, could be tremendously negative. I urge this committee to reject the inherently misguided provenance of this legislation – **SAY NO TO SB0931 AND GIVE THE FARMERS THE CHANCE TO GUIDE THEIR OWN FUTURE!**

Again, I urge you to give an unfavorable recommendation.

Respectfully,
Stephen Kraszewski, Organic Farmer
Mason Farms Produce LLC
Queen Anne’s County