

Francis J. Hickman
10057 Perkins Hill Road
Chestertown, MD 21620

Senator Brian Feldman, Chair

Delegate C.T. Wilson, Chair

Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee &
House Economic Matters Committee

Dear Senators and Delegates,

Our family farms and manages farms for others on the Upper Eastern Shore. We are fortunate to be working on some of the most productive soils in the country. For the last 4-5 years we have been inundated with letters, visits, and phone calls from solar acquisition companies. Their aggressive requests offer income numbers that cannot compete with production agriculture. They can offer these because of the already generous state and federal subsidies.

SB0931 and HB1036 will not only increase the incentive but give these private companies an advantage over any other use- preemption from local county planning review, no buffer/landscape requirements, and even more galling to exempt these projects from personal property or state and local real estate taxes.

Our county has spent the last 3 years updating our county Land Use Ordinance (LUO). Our professional planning staff, hired consultants, state of Maryland planning staff and hundreds of citizens have spent hours crafting a LUO that allows for residential growth, commercial/ industrial uses (including solar), and agriculture in specific zoning districts while respecting our rich cultural heritage as specified in our Comprehensive Plan.

Preempting local zoning, imposing a one-size-fits-all landscaping plan, and eliminating the local authority to tax for these sprawling projects—despite their immense cultural and historical impacts on farming communities—is unfair and unacceptable.

Please reject SB0931 and HB1036, crafted by the lobbying interests and legislators that have no regard for our precious and irreplaceable farmland.

I urge you to give an unfavorable recommendation to these bills.

Sincerely,

Kent County, Maryland