

My name is Judy Gifford. My husband and I own and operate a grass based dairy farm in Kennedyville on Maryland's Eastern Shore. I am a come here not a from here. When I moved to Montgomery County in 1996, I knew nothing about the Eastern Shore until I met my husband who was from Chestertown. The first time I visited Kent County, I was smitten by the wide open spaces, charming towns and villages and thriving farms and businesses. My arrogance about the Western Shore (with its traffic and overdevelopment) versus the Eastern Shore with all its natural beauty was quickly debunked.

The Renewable Energy Certainty Act puts a bullseye on those beautiful and productive open spaces. SB-0931 was written by and for the solar industry under the guidance of Senate President Ferguson who works for CI Renewables. The people most impacted by the bill were excluded from discussions but perhaps it matters little. Farmer have been ignored and kicked to the curb every time we have been in discussions with Director Paul Pinsky, Director, Maryland Energy Administration.

Because the bill was drafted in a bubble, serious and irreparable consequences were not addressed. It is clear to me that the massive destruction of the most fertile, climate friendly land in the United States for unreliable solar energy miles away from the end user is mad.

As a result of a lack of common sense and ideological zeal, the Maryland legislature has enacted energy policies that are clearly not working. Maryland has implemented a string of misguided energy policies most notably the Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) in 2004. The RPS arbitrarily mandated that 14% of our energy production must come from solar, forcing us to sacrifice our economic prosperity, livelihoods an irreplaceable land for the sake of a negligible reduction in carbon emissions.

The mandate fails to take into account the fact that climate change policy is a collective action problem meaning any real success in lowering emissions depends on global cooperation. As the US and neighboring states delay meaningful reductions, Maryland's already minuscule contribution becomes even more irrelevant. Meanwhile real solutions remain sidelined while the solar industry and its allies reap the financial rewards.

Senate President Ferguson introduced SB-0931 with the promise to "spur immediate growth in renewable energy and storage deployment to strengthen our distribution grid... and lower electricity bills for low-income Marylanders." This is wishful thinking.

The massive land grab in this bill will not reduce rates for low-income Marylanders nor will it make energy more reliable. While the marginal costs of solar may be lower, solar production is intermittent and can only function in a system balanced by other providers which makes Maryland vulnerable to astonishingly high rates.

The claim that batteries are the solution to solar's intermittent production belies the fact that most long life batteries today have only enough storage capacity for 6-8 hours. The batteries are huge and their footprint will destroy even more land and add to the cost of energy.

The bill fails to address the huge costs and disruption associated with strengthening our distribution grid. Costs to upgrade transmission lines will be permanently built into rate payers utility bills. Higher energy costs will drive businesses out of the state while allowing hundreds of millions of solar panels on thousands of acres of land will destroy the \$82 billion dollar agricultural economy.

Giving wealthy out-of-state solar companies tax breaks while the state is experiencing a deficit of more than \$3 billion, much of which will be passed on to counties as well as residents, makes no sense and will further stagnate our struggling economy. Landowners are already deluged with offers from solar companies on a daily basis and yet this bill limits taxes on these massive projects when the state is eliminating countless programs such as Project Open Space which includes the Maryland Land Preservation Funds.

As they open the floodgates of unbridled development in rural Maryland, Senator Feldman and Delegate Wilson claim the Renewable Energy Certainty Act "will deploy solar generation and battery storage by removing unnecessary roadblocks." I guess they consider those of us testifying against this senseless bill roadblocks. I am not insulted, rather I am proud to stand up for our land, our communities, our way of life and against giving our resources away to out-of state solar companies.

I urge you to give an unfavorable recommendation

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