



## WRITTEN TESTIMONY

**BILL NO.:** House Bill 1406 – Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity – Environmental Impact Analysis and Existing Burden Report

**COMMITTEE:** Economic Matters Committee

**HEARING DATE:** February 21, 2025

**SPONSOR:** Delegates Behler, Fennell, Foley, and Turner

**POSITION:** Favorable

**Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and Members of the Economic Matters Committee,**

I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of House Bill 1406, which strengthens environmental review and burden analysis for major energy infrastructure projects in Maryland. This legislation is vital to ensuring that projects seeking a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) undergo rigorous assessment of their environmental and community impacts before they are approved.

### **The Urgent Need for HB1406: Addressing Environmental and Public Health Threats**

Maryland's energy infrastructure cannot be built at the expense of our environment, farmland, and communities. HB1406 ensures that new transmission lines and generating stations are subject to comprehensive environmental impact analyses and existing burden reports, allowing decision-makers to fully evaluate the short- and long-term effects of these projects.

The **Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP)**, a proposed 67.2-mile-long, 500-kV transmission line, provides a stark example of why stronger environmental review is needed. The destruction caused by this project, as documented in environmental reports and analyses, highlights the necessity of HB1406's provisions.

### **Environmental Devastation from Transmission Infrastructure**

The MPRP threatens Maryland's ecosystems, agricultural land, and water resources. According to environmental impact assessments:

- **Massive Deforestation & Land Destruction:**
  - 394.2 acres of forest will be clear-cut.
  - 522.6 acres of farmland will be permanently degraded.



- 245.8 acres of conservation easements, including 224.6 acres under the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF), will be violated.
- **Waterways & Wetlands at Risk:**
  - The project crosses 101 streams and waterbodies, increasing sediment pollution and erosion.
  - 51.1 acres of wetlands will be impacted, degrading flood control systems and threatening water quality.
- **Harmful Access Roads:**
  - 303 access roads, each 16 to 25 feet wide, will carve through forests and farmland, further fragmenting ecosystems.
  - 140 acres of land will be lost to road construction, worsening soil compaction, drainage issues, and habitat destruction.
- **Wildlife Habitat Loss:**
  - The project will disrupt habitats of endangered species, including the Indiana Bat, Northern Long-Eared Bat, Bog Turtle, and Monarch Butterfly.
  - Increased noise and deforestation will interfere with breeding and foraging patterns.

## **Economic and Social Costs to Marylanders**

Beyond environmental damage, large-scale transmission projects have devastating effects on communities:

- **Property Value Decline:**
  - Home values near high-voltage transmission lines drop by as much as **45%**, discouraging homeownership and economic development.
- **Agricultural Losses:**
  - Soil compaction and hydrological disruptions from heavy construction will **permanently reduce farmland productivity.**



- The destruction of Maryland’s rural landscape will harm local farmers, many of whom rely on preserved land to sustain their livelihoods  
Impact of Access Roads.

- **Public Health Risks:**

- Dust, air pollution, and noise from construction equipment will affect respiratory health, particularly among vulnerable populations such as children and the elderly  
Impact of Access Roads.

## **How HB1406 Provides Necessary Protections**

House Bill 1406 would ensure that projects like MPRP undergo:

- 1. Comprehensive Environmental Impact Analysis:**

- Requires applicants to provide a full assessment of environmental and public health risks, including impacts on water, air, soil, and ecosystems.
- Identifies irreversible damage and requires mitigation plans to prevent harm  
hb1406F.

- 2. Existing Burden Report for Affected Communities:**

- Mandates a detailed assessment of existing pollution, traffic, noise levels, and proximity to environmental hazards in impacted communities.
- Ensures that overburdened areas are not further subjected to environmental injustices.

- 3. Stronger Public Oversight and Accountability:**

- Enhances public participation in project approvals by requiring transparency and community input.
- Prevents companies from using “public necessity” as a blanket justification for environmental destruction.

## **Conclusion: A Vote for HB1406 Is a Vote for Maryland’s Future**

The destruction planned under the MPRP illustrates why Maryland must strengthen its review process for major energy infrastructure projects. HB1406 ensures that new projects undergo meaningful environmental and public health scrutiny before being approved.



We cannot allow corporate interests to dictate Maryland's future at the expense of our farmland, forests, and communities. I urge the committee to issue a **favorable report on HB1406** to protect Maryland's natural resources and the well-being of its residents.

**Thank you for your time and consideration.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

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