

Testimony in Support of HB 1396 Presented by Bryan Price Maryland House of Delegates
Hearing on HB 1396

Chair, Vice Chair, and Esteemed Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 1396 (HB 1396). My name is Bryan Price, and I am a Maryland resident committed to ensuring that our state's energy policies respect private property rights, preserve conservation lands, and prioritize community interests. The Property Rights Protection Act of 2025 is essential legislation that safeguards Maryland's landowners from the unjust seizure of property for projects that serve corporate and industrial interests rather than the public good.

HB 1396 addresses a growing concern over the abuse of eminent domain in energy infrastructure projects. This bill ensures that private land cannot be taken for the construction of power lines or generating stations for wind or solar energy, nor can conservation lands be condemned for such projects. By establishing these protections, HB 1396 upholds the fundamental right of property owners to determine the use of their land without fear of forced acquisition.

The Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP) is a prime example of why this legislation is necessary. The proposed 70-mile, 500,000-volt transmission line would cut across Baltimore, Carroll, and Frederick counties, drastically altering the landscape, devaluing properties, and disrupting communities. The justification for the project centers around rising electricity demand, particularly from data centers; however, this does not warrant the reckless expansion of transmission infrastructure at the expense of landowners. HB 1396 ensures that private citizens are not forced to give up their property for projects that fail to explore less intrusive solutions.

Property rights are a cornerstone of a free and fair society. HB 1396 reinforces these rights by preventing the use of eminent domain for projects like the MPRP. For many Maryland residents, their land is more than just property; it is their livelihood, their heritage, and the foundation of their families' futures. Forcing landowners to surrender their property for high-voltage transmission lines is not just an economic burden—it is a profound violation of personal rights and autonomy.

Beyond individual property rights, this bill is critical for preserving Maryland's conservation lands. Many properties affected by large-scale transmission projects are under conservation easements, established to protect farmland, forests, and historic sites from industrial encroachment. HB 1396 ensures that these protections remain intact,

preventing energy companies from overriding carefully planned conservation efforts in the pursuit of profit.

The human cost of projects like the MPRP cannot be ignored. Landowners who have spent decades building a life on their property now face the devastating possibility of losing it to corporate interests. Farmers fear the loss of productive fields that have sustained their families for generations. Homeowners are left in limbo, uncertain of whether their largest financial investment—their home—will be taken or devalued. The anxiety, stress, and emotional toll of these projects have created an undue burden on hardworking Marylanders, forcing them to fight battles they should never have had to face. The uncertainty disrupts their ability to plan for the future, undermines their sense of security, and takes time away from their families and livelihoods. No Maryland resident should have to sacrifice their well-being for a transmission project that has not been fully vetted for necessity or alternatives.

I have felt this impact firsthand. Since learning about the MPRP, my life has been consumed with fighting for my home and community. Hours that should have been spent with my family, preparing lesson plans, or simply enjoying the land I worked hard to maintain have instead been spent at hearings, researching legal options, and advocating for the basic right to keep what is mine. The emotional and financial toll of this fight is immeasurable, and I am just one of many facing this burden. The MPRP has forced me, my neighbors, and my friends into a state of constant uncertainty—uncertainty about our homes, our futures, and the communities we have built. No Marylander should be placed in this position, and HB 1396 provides the protections necessary to ensure that no one else has to endure this unjust struggle.

Local communities must also have a say in how infrastructure projects impact their surroundings. HB 1396 empowers municipalities by ensuring that the state and its subdivisions cannot override local zoning and land-use policies to accommodate energy developers. The bill promotes sustainable energy expansion by encouraging companies to explore alternatives such as upgrading existing infrastructure, modernizing grid technologies, and deploying distributed energy solutions instead of seizing new land.

The need for this legislation is underscored by the overwhelming community opposition to the MPRP. The Carroll County Board of Commissioners has voiced strong disapproval, citing the project's disregard for property rights and its failure to align with the county's development plans. Likewise, the Maryland Farm Bureau has raised concerns about the impact on agricultural lands, highlighting the potential loss of productive farmland and disruption to the state's farming heritage. HB 1396 gives legal weight to these concerns,

ensuring that energy expansion does not come at the cost of rural communities and landowners.

Maryland has the opportunity to lead in responsible energy planning while prioritizing the rights of its residents. HB 1396 provides a legislative safeguard against unnecessary and harmful infrastructure projects, ensuring that landowners are not forced to bear the costs of corporate-driven expansion.

I urge the committee to support HB 1396 and take a stand for Maryland's landowners, conservation efforts, and community autonomy. This bill is a necessary step in protecting the integrity of our state's landscapes and the rights of those who call them home.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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