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Testimony in support of HB0631 - Eminent Domain - Agricultural and Conservation
Easements - Prohibited Taking

To: Economic Matters Committee
From: Elizabeth (“Betsy”) and Michael McFarland

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

Economic Matters Committee

We are residents of Adamstown, Maryland, writing to express our strong **support for HB0631** – Eminent Domain – Agricultural and Conservation Easements – Prohibited Taking. This bill is critical in ensuring that the State and its instrumentalities or political subdivisions cannot seize property that is protected under perpetual agricultural or conservation easements.

As longtime Maryland residents and homeowners in Frederick County, our property lies directly in the proposed path of the Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP), which is currently under review by the Maryland Public Service Commission. This project is deeply concerning for many reasons, including potential loss of home value, devastation of forested areas and wetlands on our property, and safety risks associated with living in close proximity to high-voltage power lines.

PSEG has made it clear that they intend to use eminent domain to seize our land. To protect our property from being unjustly taken and destroyed, we have filed a petition to intervene at the Maryland PSC.

While our land is not currently under a conservation easement, it is located within the Sugarloaf Treasured Landscape Area and the Carroll Manor Rural Legacy Area—both designated for their ecological and historical significance. Additionally, our property is

classified as FEMA Flood Zone A, Forest Interior Dwelling Species (FIDS) habitat, and Targeted Ecological Area (TEA).

Allowing eminent domain to be used against conservation easements and environmentally sensitive lands is not only unjust but also counterproductive to Maryland's long-standing environmental and conservation goals.

We strongly urge you to support HB0631 to ensure that Maryland's natural landscapes, private property rights, and conservation efforts remain protected from unnecessary and irreversible destruction.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Betsy and Michael McFarland