

Testimony in Support of HB 1337

Presented by Bryan Price

Maryland House of Delegates Hearing on HB 1337

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 1337 (HB 1337). My name is Bryan Price, and I am a Maryland resident deeply invested in ensuring that our eminent domain laws provide full and fair compensation to those whose property and livelihoods are disrupted. HB 1337 is a critical measure that expands the definition of "just compensation" to include lost profits for businesses and farms impacted by government takings.

Under current Maryland law, property owners are compensated only for the fair market value of their land when it is seized through eminent domain. However, for businesses and farms, the impact of losing land extends far beyond the physical property itself. The loss of critical acreage, storefronts, or operational space can result in decreased production, severed supply chains, and, in some cases, the complete inability to continue operating. Despite this reality, Maryland law does not currently require compensation for lost profits in eminent domain cases. HB 1337 corrects this imbalance by ensuring that property owners are truly made whole.

HB 1337 provides a structured framework to ensure that lost profits are fairly and accurately assessed. To qualify for compensation, businesses and farms must demonstrate the actual amount of lost profits, proving that the financial harm is a direct result of the government taking. The bill also requires that these claims be substantiated through sound accounting principles to prevent inflated or speculative losses. Additionally, to maintain fairness in the process, the bill ensures that lost profits are not double-compensated through other relocation or reimbursement programs.

The importance of this legislation cannot be overstated for Maryland's small businesses and family farms. When a farm loses a critical section of its land to a transmission project or highway expansion, the losses go far beyond the price of the land itself. Farmers may experience decreased crop yields, the loss of livestock space, or disrupted supply contracts, which can have long-term financial repercussions. Likewise, when a small business is displaced, it does not just lose its building, it loses its customer base, its goodwill, and often the very foundation upon which it was built. HB 1337 ensures that

these financial realities are considered and that businesses are not left struggling in the aftermath of government takings.

This issue is especially relevant given the potential impact of the Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP), a proposed 70-mile, 500,000-volt transmission line that would cut through Baltimore, Carroll, and Frederick counties. If approved, the MPRP would force farmers, small businesses, and other property owners to sacrifice land that is essential to their livelihoods. Compensation for land alone does not account for the ripple effects of such disruptions. A dairy farm that loses key grazing land may not be able to sustain its herd. A small business forced to relocate may struggle to re-establish its customer base. Without HB 1337, these financial hardships would fall entirely on the property owners, rather than being accounted for as part of just compensation.

PSEG's ambitions do not stop with the MPRP. The company has already signaled its intent to expand transmission projects across Maryland, including the Eastern Shore, where additional farmland is at risk of being seized for similar large-scale infrastructure projects. If left unchecked, these projects will displace even more farmers and threaten the agricultural foundation of our state. Maryland's farmers are already facing mounting challenges, from unpredictable weather patterns to rising operational costs. The last thing they need is to be forced into eminent domain battles that do not properly account for their financial losses. HB 1337 ensures that those affected by these projects receive the compensation they deserve—not just for their land, but for the long-term economic harm these projects cause.

This issue is personal for me. I grew up in the Future Farmers of America (FFA), where I learned firsthand the value of land stewardship and the importance of protecting our agricultural communities. Farming is more than an industry, it is a way of life, one that requires generations of dedication, investment, and care. When eminent domain is used irresponsibly, it does more than take land; it dismantles entire family legacies and disrupts the foundation of rural communities. Maryland must ensure that those who feed our state and care for our land are not left financially ruined by projects that serve corporate interests over local communities.

The human cost of eminent domain takings extends beyond financial loss. As someone directly impacted by the threat of the MPRP, I have witnessed the anxiety and uncertainty that these projects create. Landowners are not just losing property; they are losing stability, security, and often, the futures they worked tirelessly to build. For many small business owners and farmers, their land is not just an asset—it is their identity, their livelihood, and their legacy. HB 1337 ensures that when the government takes property, it fully acknowledges and compensates for the complete impact of that decision.

By supporting HB 1337, the Maryland General Assembly can stand with property owners, ensuring that they are not forced to bear the financial burdens of eminent domain alone. This bill represents a necessary step toward fairness and accountability in eminent domain proceedings, ensuring that no Marylander is left struggling because of a government taking.

I urge the committee to support HB 1337 and advocate for a more just and equitable compensation process for those impacted by eminent domain.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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