

Senator Brian Feldman, Chair
Delegate C.T. Wilson, Chair
Members of the Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee &
House Economic Matters Committee

Dear Senators and Delegates,

I am writing to ask for your support in keeping our farmland secure so that we can continue to cultivate the health of our communities both locally and nationally through food production. Most take for granted that these valuable acres often sought after for development are critical for food production. If we don't continue to preserve these acres we risk losing the greatest aspect of national security, food.

My family and I share a deep connection to agriculture, we are farmers working tirelessly every day to ensure our nation's food supply. We ourselves have risked everything to purchase the land we own, not as an investment to cash in one day or to have taken out from under us by the government, but to create a legacy where future generations continue the commitment, we make in securing our nation's food supply. We are already witnessing the development encroaching on our rural areas the pressure that creates. The significant pressure we have faced in recent years has been the impact of solar companies and the offers they are making to neighboring landowners. This drives up land rents and purchase value crippling a farmers' ability to compete for productive land. We realize that the likelihood of this farmland ever returning to productive use is nearly nonexistent once solar fields are erected. SB0931 and HB1036, which would accelerate this destruction, represent the greatest single threat to Maryland farmland and agriculture in the state's history.

As I write this, I can appreciate how for those so far removed from farming it is easy to take all these implications for granted. I am sure the overall impact these bills have to where your food comes from has not once crossed your mind. So long as you walk in the grocery store and there's food on the shelves to purchase, the origin likely doesn't matter to you. I am asking that you take some time to consider what our state looks like if significant acres of our farmland disappear to solar fields and development that comes with these projects. Vesting sole authority over the siting of farmland-destroying solar and battery storage projects with the Public Service Commission in Baltimore—rather than with local communities—disregards those most directly impacted.

Preempting local zoning, imposing a one-size-fits-all landscaping plan, and eliminating the local authority to tax for these sprawling projects—despite their immense cultural and historical impacts on farming communities—is unfair and unacceptable.

Maryland farms feed our local communities, the state's urban centers, our nation, and the world. Maryland farming is a major financial engine and employer for Maryland. Please reject SB0931 and HB1036, crafted by the lobbying interests that have no regard for our precious and irreplaceable farmland. These lands should not be sacrificed for unsightly solar panels and risky, environmentally harmful battery storage units.

I urge you to give an unfavorable recommendation.

Sincerely,
Megan Fry
Kent County