

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Sophie Sultenfuss, and I am a senior in high school, proudly growing up on a third-generation farm on the Eastern Shore. I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB0931 and HB1036, as these bills pose a serious threat to Maryland's farming community and the generations of families who have dedicated their lives to the land.

Farming is more than just a profession—it's a way of life. From an early age, I have spent countless hours riding in the passenger seat of a tractor, listening to the wisdom of my father and other local farmers. These conversations have shaped my deep appreciation for the hard work, dedication, and sacrifice that go into maintaining our fertile land. However, large-scale solar farms threaten to strip future generations of these experiences, replacing our rich, productive soil with industrial energy production.

Some may argue that farmland can simply be repurposed for industrial use, but those of us who work the land know better. The Eastern Shore boasts some of the most fertile soil in the nation, strengthened by centuries of careful stewardship and crop rotation. This productivity supports not only local farmers but also the larger agricultural economy, including the poultry industry. If farmland is lost to solar panels, the ripple effect will be devastating—grain supplies for feed manufacturers will dwindle, impacting chicken farmers, processing plants, and countless jobs across the region. Prices for chicken and eggs will rise, and entire communities will suffer.

The negative impacts extend beyond farming. The Chesapeake Bay's ecosystem, which provides a critical habitat for waterfowl, deer, and other wildlife, will be disrupted. The hum of solar panels will replace open fields where birds once nested, directly affecting hunters, boaters, and conservationists who rely on these natural spaces. Our region's heritage—rooted in both agriculture and the great outdoors—will be irreversibly changed.

Farming is not just a business; it's a network of livelihoods that supports families, local businesses, and the environment. Nine out of ten times, farmers reinvest their earnings into farm supply stores, feed stores, seed manufacturers, and crop insurance companies. The loss of farmland to solar development will not only jeopardize individual farms but also the businesses and communities that depend on them.

I urge you to consider the long-term consequences of these bills, or join me in my opposition to them. The future of Maryland's farming community, our economy, and our environment is at stake. Please stand with us in preserving our land, our livelihoods, and our way of life.

Sincerely,
Sophie Sultenfuss