

Testimony in Support of SB0037

Presented by Bryan Price

Maryland State Senate Hearing on Regional Transmission Organization (RTO) Transparency Act

Senator Hestor and Esteemed Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding Senate Bill 37 (SB0037), a critical piece of legislation designed to promote transparency and accountability in Maryland's energy policy. My name is Bryan Price, and I am here as a concerned Maryland resident deeply committed to ensuring that our state's transition to clean energy is both effective and equitable. Additionally, this bill holds personal significance for me from a religious perspective. As a member of the Religious Society of Friends (commonly known as Quakers), one of our core beliefs is that all business and economic dealings be conducted fairly, openly, and honestly—a principle that has served us well for nearly 400 years.

As I testified regarding SB0316, my life—like that of many Marylanders—has been upended by the looming threat of the Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP). The root causes of projects like the MPRP stem not only from flawed local processes but also from opaque decision-making within Regional Transmission Organizations (RTOs).

Having interacted with representatives from other communities where corporations have used eminent domain, often under fabricated reasoning for corporate gain, a disturbing pattern emerges. Deals are made in secret, and under the cover of night, families and communities are upended before they have time to properly organize, explore their options, or even become aware of their rights.

One of the most frustrating aspects of this process has been witnessing contradictory information, facts, and justifications presented by PSEG at information sessions, in the media, and within their own documentation. Like many others, I am tired of having to discern whether we were "lied to then" or are "being lied to now."

Corporations like PSEG already have numerous advantages over the citizens of Maryland: political influence across party lines, in-house legal teams, familiarity with regulatory processes, and substantial financial resources.

This bill does not ask for anything unreasonable—only that citizens have access to the truth. We are simply asking for the means to ensure that corporations such as PSEG are held to their word, conduct their business dealings transparently, and do not exploit legal frameworks to seize property for fraudulent purposes behind closed doors.

SB0037 aims to dismantle the structures that enable unnecessary, costly, and community-disruptive transmission projects. It requires utilities to disclose their votes within RTOs, shedding light on decisions that often favor large-scale, unnecessary projects. This bill ensures that utilities can no longer operate behind closed doors, making decisions that profoundly affect Maryland communities without public scrutiny.

While SB0316 seeks to limit new transmission lines and prioritize existing infrastructure, SB0037 targets the very decision-making bodies that authorize these projects. By exposing voting patterns within RTOs, SB0037 helps identify when utilities prioritize profit-driven expansions over smarter, community-centered solutions that benefit the economy.

SB0037 provides regulators and the public with critical insights into how transmission decisions are made at the regional level, creating a more informed, empowered public capable of challenging unnecessary projects like the MPRP. It helps ensure that utilities aren't undermining cost-effective, environmentally friendly, and property-rights-affirming alternatives through their RTO votes. These bills work hand-in-hand to promote smarter, cost-effective energy solutions that respect Maryland communities. SB0037 directly exposes how utility companies influence RTO decisions, enabling accountability for actions that may not align with the public interest.

SB0037, alongside SB0316, represents a comprehensive approach to reforming Maryland's energy landscape. Transparency, accountability, and community empowerment are the cornerstones of responsible energy policy. These bills not only protect Marylanders from unnecessary projects like the MPRP but also ensure that our clean energy future is built on a foundation of fairness and fiscal responsibility.

Thank you for considering this critical legislation. I urge the Committee to support SB0037, reinforcing Maryland's commitment to transparent, community-centered energy policy.

Sincerely,

Bryan S. Price, Jr.