



## WRITTEN TESTIMONY

**BILL NO.:** Senate Bill 853 – Public Service Commission - Transmission Line Siting - Limitations

**COMMITTEE:** Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

**HEARING DATE:** March 6, 2025

**SPONSORS:** Senators Lewis Young, Brooks, and Hettleman

**POSITION:** Favorable with Amendments

I submit this testimony on behalf of Stop MPRP, Inc. in strong support of Senate Bill 853 (SB0853), with the adoption of two critical amendments. This bill is essential to protect Maryland's land, communities, and energy future by ensuring greater oversight, transparency, and strategic planning in transmission development while limiting unnecessary and disruptive overhead transmission line construction.

### **PJM's Award of the Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP) and the Importance of SB0853**

PJM Interconnection awarded the **Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP)** before the implementation of **FERC Order 1920**, limiting Maryland's ability to participate in the planning and oversight of this massive infrastructure project. Had **FERC Order 1920** been in place, Maryland would have had **more insight, influence, and control over the project's necessity, siting, and alternative considerations**.

- **FERC Order 1920** enhances **state involvement in long-term transmission planning**, ensuring that states like Maryland can assess the full impact of projects like MPRP **before they are approved**.
- **PJM's approval of MPRP under outdated regulatory frameworks** denied Maryland the ability to require alternative solutions such as grid-enhancing technologies, reconductoring, and undergrounding transmission lines.
- **Without proactive legislation like SB0853**, Maryland remains vulnerable to transmission projects that prioritize corporate expansion over the state's environmental, economic, and land use priorities.



## Key Protections Under SB0853

### 1. Restricts Unnecessary Overhead Transmission Lines

- The bill **prohibits the construction of new overhead transmission lines unless utilities prove that existing rights-of-way are insufficient.**
- If new corridors are needed, they **must be sited within 0.25 miles of an existing transmission line**, reducing environmental and property impacts.

### 2. Reinforces Local and State Authority

- SB0853 **preserves local authority over permitting**, ensuring communities retain control over projects affecting their land and environment.
- It **prevents local governments from being forced to accept transmission line approvals** without due consideration.

### 3. Increases Transparency and Accountability (*Strengthened by the Amendments*)

- **Amendment 1:** Adds **electricity demand reporting requirements**, mandating utilities to submit annual reports to the Public Service Commission (PSC) on:
  - Forecasted electricity demand and expected geographic areas of increased load.
  - Available resources to meet demand, including demand response and distributed energy.
  - Anticipated impacts of federal and state regulations.
  - A list of projects requiring PJM Interconnection approval.
- **Amendment 2:** Requires the **PSC to compile and include this data in its annual reports to the General Assembly** to ensure **greater transparency, accountability, and informed decision-making** in Maryland's energy planning.

### 4. Aligns Maryland's Transmission Planning with FERC Order 1920

- FERC Order 1920 ensures that **states play a central role in regional transmission planning**, but Maryland must **pass SB0853 to protect against projects like MPRP that were rushed through under outdated policies.**
- This bill ensures **future transmission development aligns with Maryland's priorities** rather than defaulting to out-of-state decision-making by PJM and transmission developers.



## **The Urgency to Act: Stopping the MPRP**

The **MPRP threatens private property, devalues properties, and degrades Maryland's rural and agricultural landscapes**. According to project studies, MPRP's proposed **right-of-way (ROW) would impact:**

- 245.8 acres of conservation easements, including 224.6 acres protected under MALPF.
- 51.1 acres of wetlands, including 10.1 acres of forested wetlands.
- 394.2 acres of forested lands.
- 101 stream and waterbody crossings.
- 1,801.7 acres of conserved land within 500 feet of the ROW.

The **destruction of conservation lands, forests, and wetlands for an unnecessary transmission project is unacceptable**. The **PSC must be required to prioritize state interests over PJM's rushed planning decisions**.

**Passing SB0853, with the amendments, is crucial to:**

- Protect Maryland's authority over transmission siting.
- Ensure responsible energy planning that prioritizes existing infrastructure and alternatives.
- Stop projects like the MPRP from advancing without full state oversight.
- Encourage distributed energy solutions that reduce the need for new transmission lines.

## **Conclusion**

By **limiting unnecessary transmission expansion, reinforcing local and state oversight, and aligning Maryland's regulatory framework with FERC Order 1920, SB0853 empowers Marylanders to control their energy future**.

I urge the committee to issue a **favorable report with the two amendments**. Thank you for your time and consideration.



**Respectfully submitted,**

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