WRITTEN TESTIMONY

BILL NO.: Senate Bill 953 – Construction and Expansion of Transmission Lines and Task Force to Develop a Realistic Electricity Plan for Maryland
COMMITTEE: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
HEARING DATE: March 6, 2025
SPONSORS: Senators West, Lewis Young, Ready, and Watson
POSITION: Favorable

I am writing to express my strong support for **Senate Bill 953 (SB953),** which establishes the **Task Force to Develop a Realistic Electricity Plan for Maryland** and imposes a **temporary moratorium on the construction or expansion of transmission lines**. SB953 is a critical step toward ensuring **energy security, economic growth, and the protection of Maryland's natural resources and farmland**.

Maryland's Overreliance on Imported Electricity Harms Consumers and Businesses

Maryland currently imports **40 percent of its electricity** from out-of-state sources, making us highly dependent on **PJM Interconnection's volatile capacity market**. This reliance on external power generation leads to:

- **Higher electricity rates** for Maryland consumers and businesses.
- **Grid instability and supply risks**, as we remain vulnerable to fluctuations in out-of-state generation.
- **Lost economic opportunities**, as Maryland fails to develop and sustain local energy generation that could create **jobs and revenue within the state**.

At a time when Maryland seeks **economic growth and new business investment**, our excessively high utility rates have become a deterrent for companies looking to relocate or expand operations. Businesses need predictable and affordable energy to thrive, but Maryland's current system puts us at a competitive disadvantage compared to states with greater energy self-sufficiency.

The Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP): An Unnecessary and Destructive Transmission Expansion

The proposed **Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP)** exemplifies why SB953 is necessary. This transmission project, designed to expand the power grid without fully considering alternatives like upgrading existing lines, poses serious threats to Maryland's economy, environment, and communities.

The MPRP project would:

- **Destroy hundreds of acres of farmland, forests, and conservation easements**, violating Maryland's commitment to land preservation.
- **Devalue private properties**, particularly in rural and suburban communities, diminishing generational wealth and harming local economies.
- **Threaten the Chesapeake Bay watershed** by increasing erosion, runoff, and habitat destruction.
- **Bypass cost-effective upgrades to existing infrastructure** in favor of new transmission lines that guarantee corporate profits but impose costs on Maryland residents.

Instead of rubber-stamping new, unnecessary transmission lines, Maryland must focus on **optimizing existing energy infrastructure**, ensuring grid resilience, and supporting **locally generated electricity** to reduce dependence on external power sources.

The Economic Importance of Agriculture and the Threat of Transmission Expansion

Agriculture is a cornerstone of Maryland's economy, contributing billions annually and sustaining **rural jobs, food security, and land conservation**. The MPRP project and similar large-scale transmission expansions directly threaten this industry by:

- **Fragmenting farms and making land unusable for production**.
- **Increasing financial burdens on farmers**, who must cope with land devaluation and restricted operations.
- **Reducing local food production**, increasing reliance on external supply chains, and undermining Maryland's agricultural heritage.

By halting unnecessary transmission expansion, SB953 protects Maryland farmers, rural communities, and the state's agricultural economy.

Why SB953 Is Critical for Maryland's Future

SB953 does not prevent responsible energy infrastructure development—it ensures **smart, long-term planning** that prioritizes Maryland's energy security, economic growth, and environmental stewardship.

This bill:

- **Establishes a Task Force** to study Maryland's realistic electricity needs through 2040.
- **Requires an analysis of in-state energy generation opportunities**, reducing reliance on expensive, out-of-state power.
- **Explores cost-effective solutions like grid modernization, nuclear expansion, and energy storage**, ensuring affordable and stable electricity for Marylanders.
- **Temporarily pauses transmission expansion** to prevent irreversible damage before a comprehensive energy plan is developed.

Conclusion: Put Maryland Back in Control of Its Energy Future

SB953 is a common-sense, forward-thinking approach that ensures Maryland does not continue to sacrifice farmland, ratepayer dollars, and energy independence for the benefit of out-of-state utilities.

By passing SB953, we can:

- **Create a stable and affordable energy future** for Maryland.
- **Protect farmland and rural economies from unnecessary transmission expansion**.
- **Attract new businesses and jobs by lowering electricity costs** and ensuring a more self-sufficient energy system.

I strongly urge this committee to support SB953 and take decisive action to put **Maryland back in control of its energy future**.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,
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