

Boyds Civic Association
P.O. Box 285
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February 25, 2025

Senator Brian J. Feldman
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Maryland Senate Bill 931; House Bill 1036 - Renewable Energy
Certainty Act
Testimony - House Economic Matters Committee Hearing 2/28/25, 1:30p

Senator Feldman,

Good day, my name is Dan Seamans, a resident of Boyds, MD since 1960, living on farmland and later in the Ag Reserve.

Like Members of the Boyds Civic Association and many other Montgomery County residents, I am opposed to any regulation allowing solar installations in the Ag Reserve on soil Types I or II.

The establishment of Montgomery County's Solar ZTA 20-01 in the Ag Reserve Zone in 2021 restricted solar installations on these Prime Soils, but allowed solar installations on Type III soils, also a USDA Prime Soil. The Mont. Co. Solar ZTA thereby provided a major concession to help facilitate solar energy production, while still preserving the purpose of the Ag Reserve. Other provisions of the Solar ZTA 20-01 restrict solar facilities in stream beds, on erodible slopes and where trees need to be removed, important environmental protections.

Maryland Legislation passed in 2022 intends to Regulate solar projects state wide via Maryland's Public Service Commission. It allows the solar projects size to increase from 2 MW to 5 MW and would allow installations on the best soils, Types I and II, in conflict with Mont. Co's Solar ZTA.

Current problems with solar projects, and restrictions on their construction, are fairly conclusively recognized to be caused by grid location and

capacity. Utility companies must approve a project's connection to their grid. A solar power project is best located within 0.25 to 0.40 miles from a power line of suitable capacity, due to conditions of electrical efficiency. Connection approvals have therefore been very limited in the Ag Reserve due to grid conditions there, rather than by Mont. Co's Solar ZTA 20-01.

Maryland and the MD Public Service Commission should seriously consider the conundrums involved in solar projects in Mont. Co's Ag Reserve. The goals of Montgomery Co.'s Solar ZTA was to protect the best soils in Ag Reserve **and** allow solar facilities. There should not be an override of its well-considered provisions.

The areas of soil Types I and II in the Ag Reserve do not contain the only available open spaces for feasible solar installations in the county. A few of these are:

- 1.) There is considerable open space on commercial rooftops and parking garages.
- 2.) There are many open spaces near high tension power lines county-wide that could upload power from larger or smaller solar production facilities.
3. There is enormous space in Rights of Ways under the network of high-tension power lines for solar installations tailored to conditions there.

Many locations exist where such facilities can be placed that are at, or nearer to, where the power is consumed, a more efficient distribution method.

Maryland should consider increased subsidies for home and commercial solar installations and subsidies for battery storage related to solar generated power. Stored power can mitigate weather-related fluctuations and provide supplemental power during times of peak usage.

In truth, I am enthusiastic about solar energy as a clean alternative to fossil fuels. I spent most of the last 45 years burning wood as renewable alternative heating, obtained from dead or dying trees in my woods. I recently curtailed it, due to its carbon foot print. Solar has become the leading alternative, especially with commercial recycling of panels occurring now.

However, allowing solar on the best soils in the Ag Reserve is not wise. Attempting to eclipse Mont. Co's Solar ZTA should not be prompted by current grid conditions in one locale, nor because the timeline set for achieving higher solar energy production is not on track at the moment.

Thank you for hearing this testimony.

Sincerely,

Dan Seamans,
President
Boyds Civic Association