

February 26, 2025

To: Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

From: Marshal Cahall – Chesterville Bridge Farm, LLC

RE: Opposition of SB0931 / HB1036 - Public Utilities - Generating Stations - Generation and Siting (Renewable Energy Certainty Act)

As a 35-year-old third-generation farmer in Maryland operating a diverse agricultural business cultivating over 2,300 acres of land, utilizing both convention and organic production systems, I submit written testimony in opposition of SB0931 / HB1036 - Public Utilities - Generating Stations - Generation and Siting (Renewable Energy Certainty Act). This legislation would place an undue burden on rural counties, Maryland Farmland, and Maryland's Agricultural Industry as a whole, as well as codify the state's ability to preempt county and local zoning laws, thereby circumventing each county's comprehensive planning process.

The state of Maryland has created a challenging energy environment by simultaneously increasing energy demand and decreasing energy supply through years of legislation and policy decisions that have changed the energy industry and outlook. It's no secret, higher energy prices are hurting businesses and state residents across the board, and we're all feeling the pain of increasing costs. Increasing energy production and working towards clean energy production are important goals, but these goals have led to high prices and now seek to threaten our rural communities, family farms, and Agriculture - our state's largest commercial industry.

SB0931 / HB1036 would take away our county's rights to decide where solar panels could be sited in their communities, take away the rights of the county to appropriately tax these commercial energy generation facilities, and change rural communities forever. Counties spend a significant amount of time and resources every few years to complete comprehensive planning that shapes the future growth and allows residents voices to be heard – this bill would circumvent that process and eliminate the input of residents. The bill will also create an unfair advantage for solar companies competing with Maryland Farmer's for access to land, which will have a cascading effect on the rural businesses that are supported by those farmers.

While I support the effort to expand clean and affordable energy production in Maryland to meet the state's growing energy demand, it cannot be at the expense of rural communities, family farms, and Maryland's Agricultural Industry. SB0931 / HB1036 is a blatant example of state government overreach that will lead irrevocable harm to our state's rural communities. I respectfully oppose SB0345 / HB1036 and urge an unfavorable report by the Committee.

Sincerely,



Marshal Cahall

Chesterville Bridge Farm, LLC