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**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 0034**

To: The Committee on Energy, Education, and the Environment  
From: Rebecca Sparks

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee on Energy, Education, and the Environment:

I am writing to ask you to please support SB0034. This Bill would protect vital ecosystems and require that the updates we need in our energy systems are made sustainably, with true vision for the future and accountability from the companies leading the way. I grew up in rural Baltimore County. My life has been shaped by my connection with nature, dedicated to understanding the ecosystems that support us, and devoted to protecting them. I led the Hereford High Envirothon team to the state championships, I graduated from the Boston University Department of Earth & Environment with an award for Outstanding Achievement, I am now a Manager at Irvine Nature Center in Owings Mills, and I am a certified Maryland Master Naturalist. I have a deep understanding of how vital our wild spaces are for the health of our communities.

I also know that Maryland is facing daunting challenges when it comes to supplying enough energy to meet growing demands. I urge you all to see that jeopardizing natural resources is not the way forward. We can meet this challenge with the implementation of renewable energy production, increased regulations on large tech companies and data centers, and comprehensive improvements to existing infrastructure. Forests, farmland, and conservation easements provide irreplaceable ecosystem services and once they are gone, we will not get them back. Ecosystem services refer to the benefits given to us by natural systems simply through their existence: water filtration, oxygen production, carbon fixation, food production, soil development, and groundwater recharge to name a few. The intrinsic value of this land must be protected from growing corporate greed. We are in the midst of the climate crisis – when faced with challenges, will you choose to sacrifice the natural resources we have left, that increase our resilience to extreme climate events, or will you offer them on a silver platter to those who would watch us burn as long as they turn a profit? I believe that Maryland can become a national leader in comprehensive sustainable energy reform without sacrificing our conserved land. Please take the first step by voting yes on SB34.

Thank you for your time,  
Rebecca Sparks