

Rebecca Sparks  
1401 Medfield Ave  
Baltimore, MD 21211  
[SparksR@ExploreNature.org](mailto:SparksR@ExploreNature.org)  
443-605-3620  
February 7, 2025

### **Testimony in Opposition to Senate Bill 0399**

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,

My name is Rebecca Sparks and I am writing to voice my strong opposition to Senate Bill 0399, which would jeopardize environmental protections for Maryland's wildlands in favor of infrastructural development. 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.

Ecosystem services provided by wild spaces include water filtration, air purification, temperature regulation, nutrient fixation, and food production. All of this for free - simply by keeping ecosystems intact and respecting existing protections. You stand to destroy these services for the sake of short term profit if you approve SB 0399. Legislation like this paves the way, quite literally, for the steady degradation of Maryland's conservation efforts at a time when we need our green spaces most.

If Maryland is concerned about the reliability of our energy infrastructure, clearing protected lands for additional overhead transmission lines is not the answer. That would only lead to a loss of the ecosystem services listed above, loss of habitat for vulnerable species, and would make us more vulnerable to the failings of outdated power infrastructure (ex: overhead transmission is vulnerable to extreme weather, which will only worsen with time).

I respectfully urge you to oppose SB 0399 and instead, dedicate yourselves to truly sustainable solutions. We need robust investment in renewable energy generation and distributed energy solutions, and we need to reduce energy demands through passive-element designs and the regulation of tech industries. You were put in office by people who believed in your vision for Maryland's future. You have a responsibility to Maryland's citizens, Maryland's youth, to protect

our unique and irreplaceable ecosystems. If you sacrifice that future for unsustainable, short term profit, then you are neglecting your duty as elected officials.

Electricity powers much of our lives, but we cannot eat electricity. Electricity does not create the air we breathe. It does not create or sustain diverse ecosystems. Only the land can do that. Only the soil can nourish our bodies, only the trees can fill our lungs and clean our water. I urge you to expand the scope of your compassion, to deepen your respect for your ecosystems, to imagine a bold and vibrant future that truly represents what your people want - a Maryland that is as beautiful and thriving as the one we grew up with, one that we can pass on to our children with pride, one that we've looked after.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this matter. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please reach out.

Sincerely,  
Rebecca Sparks