

Ladies and Gentlemen of the state legislature-

My name is Tyler Wolf and I am a lifelong resident of Frederick County and a first generation farmer. I would like to voice my opposition to SB0931. I do understand that we live in a growing area with a growing need for electricity, however, I do not believe expanding solar on farmland is the answer to our problems. As a first generation and relatively beginning farmer, access to land is one of, if not the largest challenge I face. As solar arrays continue to devour the farmland in my area at an even higher rate than development, it makes land access more and more challenging.

While our growing population continues to need more energy, it also needs more food. Where is this food going to be produced if we devote too much of our land to energy generation? While the current percentage of land occupied by solar may not seem significant, the laws of supply and demand then make the remaining land more expensive and less affordable to our agricultural producers. Many people lament that the younger generation does not want to work hard and continue to farm, but this simply isn't true. There are many of us who would like to start, grow, or maintain farm operations, but have a hard time overcoming the challenges of land access. This causes many farm operations to stagnate, cease, or not begin in the first place. How are we supposed to keep farming as our land becomes overrun with homes and solar generation facilities? This is not a problem limited to young and beginning farmers, however. I have spoken with other, well-established farmers in my area who are facing the same challenges and wondering how to move forward.

I understand that power generation is a necessity, but I believe there are better ways to go about it. As I regularly drive around the 70/81 corridor in Hagerstown, I see countless warehouses being constructed on what was farmland. If we are going to remove that land from production, why are we not developing programs to make it have multiple uses, and cover the roofs of these buildings with solar panels? It is already occupied ground that would then become useful for multiple purposes.

Ultimately, I believe the authority to approve solar projects needs to be at the county level, to ensure these projects fit the community, not from state legislators that may have several hundred miles between them and the areas where these facilities are proposed. Thank you for considering my concerns.

Tyler Wolf