



February 2, 2025

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Testimony on: SB399 “Natural Resources – Wildland Areas – Overhead Transmission Lines”

Position: Oppose

Hearing Date: February 11, 2025

Valleys Planning Council, a non-profit that conserves land and resources, preserves historic character and maintains the rural feel and land uses in northwestern Baltimore County, urges a favorable report on SB189, which would prohibit the State or its instrumentalities or political subdivisions from using eminent domain to take privately owned property that is subject to a perpetual agricultural or conservation easement.

SB399 seems to want to rewrite history so that transmission lines that would provide energy for data centers in Virginia could be approved by the Public Service Commission. Maryland land that has already been protected and designated as a wildland area would be exempted from that protection if it's part of a proposed transmission line.

Language from the Annotated Code of Maryland that provides for wildland areas says, “The wildland areas shall be administered for the use and enjoyment of the people of Maryland in a manner that will leave them unimpaired for the future use and enjoyment as wildlands, to provide for their protection, preservation of their wildland character, and for gathering and dissemination of information regarding their use and enjoyment as wildlands.” This bill flies in the face of that intent. Existing wildlands will certainly not be unimpaired for future use and enjoyment, protection, or preservation.

The disruption from construction of a transmission line to the entire wildland area would be inevitable. The continuing disruption due to more fragmentation of the wildland is also inevitable. This bill means Maryland would agree to sacrifice yet more of its precious undeveloped land. Instead of using an existing right-of-way owned by Potomac Edison, a parallel right-of-way is proposed by NextEnergy.

How many Marylanders will benefit from this bill? Maybe some Marylanders will be hired to build the line. Once the work is done, those jobs are over. And once the land is developed, it's lost forever.

This bill sets a terrible precedent, making it entirely too easy to grab protected land for transmission lines or anything else an out-of-state energy company could make money from.

SB399 is bad for Maryland and bad for Marylanders. Valleys Planning Council asks for an unfavorable report on SB399.

Respectfully submitted by

Renée Hamidi

Executive Director

Valleys Planning Council

118 W. Pennsylvania Avenue

Towson MD 21204