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Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Testimony on: SB0034 "Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity - Overhead Transmission Lines - Conservation Easements

Position: Support

Hearing Date: February 13, 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 SB0034, which would require the Public Service Commission to consider the impact of the development of overhead transmission lines on certain properties subject to an existing conservation easement.

Maryland has spent hundreds of millions of dollars protecting and preserving land through conservation easements. Preserving land reduces development, thereby protecting limited natural resources that benefit all Marylanders. We drink cleaner water and breathe fresher air because of conservation easements. We are able to enjoy fresh, locally grown food because of conservation easements. We have access to natural areas and open space because of conservation easements.

The construction and presence of overhead transmission lines erases some or all of the benefit of a conservation easement. Requiring the Public Service Commission (PSC) to require an applicant for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) to minimize the impact on preserved properties on the proposed route or to change the route to minimize the impact on those preserved properties as it considers the CPCN application would help protect Maryland's investment in preserving land and the benefits resulting from preserved land.

Further requiring due consideration of the impact of a proposed transmission line on preserved properties in the alternative route encourages CPCN applicants to avoid preserved properties altogether. In short, this bill affords continuing protection to land judged to be important enough to be preserved. Valleys Planning Council urges a favorable report on SB0034.

Renée Hamidi  
Executive Director  
Valleys Planning Council

**Protect. Preserve. Enjoy.**