

Testimony in Support of SB 951

Presented by Bryan Price

Maryland State Senate Hearing on SB 951

Chair, Vice Chair, and Esteemed Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 951 (SB 951). My name is Bryan Price, and I am a Maryland resident committed to ensuring that our state pursues a responsible and sustainable energy future. SB 951 is a landmark bill that challenges the status quo of transmission expansion by allowing Maryland's investor-owned utilities to own and operate their own power generation and transmission infrastructure. This structural change could significantly reduce the need for massive new high-voltage transmission lines like the Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP), which threatens farmland, forests, and rural communities.

For years, Maryland's reliance on PJM Interconnection, a regional transmission organization that dictates the need for new transmission projects, has left our state vulnerable to overbuilt, unnecessary infrastructure that serves out-of-state interests more than Maryland's own residents. SB 951 reverses Maryland's long-standing separation of electricity generation and transmission operations, allowing investor-owned utilities such as BGE, Pepco, and Potomac Edison to once again generate power and manage their own transmission networks. By doing so, Maryland's utilities will be able to meet their own reliability needs without waiting for PJM's approval, reducing the justification for new transmission expansions like MPRP.

The citizens of Maryland genuinely trust and value local companies such as BGE. Unlike PJM, which operates from a distance with little accountability to Marylanders, BGE and other local utilities have deep roots in our communities, providing reliable service for generations. These companies understand the unique energy challenges Maryland faces and have demonstrated their commitment to balancing affordability, reliability, and sustainability. Unlike PJM, which prioritizes large-scale, long-distance transmission projects that serve corporate interests, BGE and Maryland utilities are directly accountable to local regulators and ratepayers. By restoring the ability of local utilities to generate and transmit their own electricity, SB 951 ensures that energy decisions remain in the hands of those who know Maryland best: Marylanders themselves.

The MPRP, a proposed 70-mile, 500,000-volt transmission line, is a perfect example of why SB 951 is necessary. PJM and Exelon have argued that MPRP is essential to meet future

energy demand, but recent developments prove otherwise. The latest PJM TEAC meeting confirmed that the MPRP will bypass Maryland entirely, instead connecting Virginia to Pennsylvania without terminating at a single Maryland substation. This revelation confirms that Marylanders were expected to sacrifice land, property rights, and environmental integrity for a project designed to benefit out-of-state interests. SB 951 gives Maryland the authority to shift away from PJM-driven projects and focus on localized energy generation and transmission solutions that prioritize Maryland's needs.

Currently, PJM has unchecked authority over Maryland's energy decisions, dictating transmission expansion that often results in the destruction of farmland, the abuse of eminent domain, and the forced acquisition of private property. SB 951 disrupts this model by enabling Maryland utilities to generate their own electricity and manage their own transmission infrastructure. This change will help reduce the reliance on long-distance energy imports and allow Maryland to develop more sustainable, community-focused solutions.

The overreach of PJM is not unlike what we have seen in other industries, particularly regarding Maryland's watermen and rockfish management. Just as Maryland's independent watermen have been subject to restrictive regulations dictated by regional consortiums that fail to consider the unique dynamics of the Chesapeake Bay, Maryland's energy policy has been dictated by PJM, an organization that does not have our best interests at heart. These consortiums, much like PJM, claim to act in the best interest of all stakeholders but often prioritize large, corporate interests while ignoring the realities faced by local communities. SB 951 is an opportunity to break free from this flawed system, returning control over our energy policy to those who know and care about Maryland most.

Shifting the focus to local energy generation is one of the most impactful aspects of SB 951. Rather than depending on high-voltage transmission lines to import power from distant states, Maryland utilities could instead invest in distributed energy resources such as solar, small-scale natural gas, and nuclear generation. By promoting microgrids and local reliability solutions instead of transmission sprawl, SB 951 provides a pathway to greater energy independence while minimizing environmental disruption.

Beyond reducing unnecessary transmission projects, SB 951 also protects Maryland's natural and agricultural landscapes. Under PJM's current model, high-voltage transmission lines require vast swaths of land, leading to the destruction of forests and farmland. These projects impose severe financial and emotional burdens on affected landowners, many of whom have lived on and cultivated their land for generations. SB 951 prioritizes upgrading existing infrastructure over building new lines, ensuring that Maryland does not become a pass-through for corporate-driven energy projects at the expense of its communities.

This bill also helps curb the abuse of eminent domain. Under the current system, landowners are frequently forced to surrender their property for transmission projects that do not directly benefit them. By enabling Maryland utilities to take ownership of both generation and transmission, SB 951 reduces the need for these projects and strengthens the argument for more sustainable, community-based energy development.

As someone who has spent years fighting against the MPRP, I have seen firsthand how unchecked transmission expansion harms landowners, farmers, and conservationists. My ancestors, who were among Maryland's original settlers, built their lives around principles of stewardship and responsible land management. Their commitment to farming, sustainability, and preservation helped shape Maryland into the state it is today. Allowing transmission projects like the MPRP to move forward disregards this legacy and sets a dangerous precedent for future infrastructure overreach.

We have an opportunity to change course. SB 951 empowers Maryland to reclaim control of its energy future by ensuring that decisions about power generation and transmission serve Marylanders first, rather than the financial interests of PJM and large transmission developers. Rather than continuing to rubber-stamp projects like MPRP, we must invest in localized, resilient energy solutions that respect landowners, protect natural resources, and keep energy costs affordable for consumers.

I urge the committee to support SB 951 and take a bold step toward an energy future that prioritizes Maryland's residents, landscapes, and long-term sustainability.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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