MARYLAND Association of COUNTIES

Senate Bill 853

Public Service Commission - Transmission Line Siting - Limitations

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Date: March 6, 2025

From: Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 853. This bill limits the placement of new transmission lines to within 0.25 miles of existing transmission lines.

The 2025 Maryland General Assembly is facing a historic number of complex generational challenges. One of the loudest issues to arise has been Maryland's opposition to the Piedmont Reliability Project. The Project, which crosses Baltimore, Carroll, and Frederick Counties, effectively creates an "extension cord" across some of our state's prime agricultural lands, providing Pennsylvania-generated energy to Virginia-based data centers, with little direct benefit to Marylanders. As the General Assembly debates how to address this and other energy challenges, one of the biggest underlying issues will be how to prioritize now competing state priorities (i.e., energy demands and environmental goals).

Since the 1960s, counties and the State have invested hundreds of millions of dollars into conservation, and to date, counties have actively limited development in these preserved areas. The intent of SB 853 is to respond to the Piedmont Project by limiting new transmission lines to within 0.25 miles of existing lines. These are areas where the environmental, economic, and other various impacts have already been accounted for, and where barriers for new development should be relatively low. As transmission infrastructure upgrades may uniquely be accomplished by upgrading existing lines or using existing land, counties join the sponsor in wanting to protect the finite number of conserved lands.

This is commonsense legislation which seeks to address conflicts between Maryland's growing demand for energy and billions invested into other pro-climate policies to date. For this reason, MACo urges the Committee to give SB 853 a **FAVORABLE** report.