



**FOREVER**  
MARYLAND

**Enhancing and Advancing Land Conservation**

Testimony on SB 399

February 7, 2025

Natural Resources – Wildland Areas – Overhead Transmission Lines

Kristen Kirkwood, Chair, Forever Maryland

**Position: Unfavorable**

**Forever Maryland** represents the land trust community and works to promote and enhance land conservation statewide through education, advocacy, and outreach to permanently protect working landscapes and healthy ecosystems for all Marylanders. As written, SB399 would undermine the intent and integrity of Maryland’s designated wildlands which were established by the state with the promise to “leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wildlands, to provide for their protection, [and] for the preservation of their wildland character.”

The designated wildlands referenced in SB399 have a Type 1 designation as primitive areas which by its size and location is in effect untouched by urban civilization and can offer the experience of solitude and self-reliance. Type 1 wildlands are usually lands located at higher elevations that protect watersheds and are ecologically vulnerable to human interferences. Although some wildlands do contain remnant buildings or utility rights-of-way, the very designation of a wildland is to prohibit further expansion — and to retire structures pre-dating designation to be removed after their expected period of usefulness.

This bill sets a dangerous precedence for industrial development in Maryland’s designated wildlands, which by statute are meant to afford the highest level of protection and to remain in a primitive state. At a minimum, such an action requires ample time for study and public engagement which is currently lacking at this time.

**We respectfully urge an unfavorable report on SB399.**