

Testimony in Support of SB 0853

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Brenda Myers and I am here today to strongly support Senate Bill 0853 (SB 0853). This legislation is a critical step toward ensuring that Maryland's energy infrastructure expansion does not come at the expense of farmland, private property, and rural communities. As someone deeply concerned about the future of our state's landscapes and communities, I urge this committee to pass SB 0853 to protect our land and promote responsible energy development.

Why SB 0853 Matters

The Maryland General Assembly is considering SB 0853 at a pivotal time. This bill places necessary restrictions on the construction of new overhead transmission lines. Specifically, it prevents the Public Service Commission (PSC) from approving new overhead lines unless it is demonstrated that existing rights-of-way are insufficient. Additionally, if new transmission lines are deemed necessary, they must be constructed within a quarter-mile of an existing transmission corridor, rather than cutting through untouched farmland and conservation areas. This legislation also reinforces local authority over permitting decisions, ensuring that counties and municipalities retain control over their land use.

Stopping the Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP)

SB 0853 is especially important in the fight against the Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP), a high-voltage transmission project proposed by PJM Interconnection. This project threatens to:

- **Seize private land through eminent domain**, forcing property owners to give up their land for corporate gain.
- **Damage farmland and historic preservation areas**, undermining Maryland's agricultural economy and erasing irreplaceable cultural heritage.
- **Lower property values**, as high-voltage lines disrupt rural communities and reduce the appeal of affected areas.
- **Ignore viable alternatives**, such as upgrading existing transmission lines, undergrounding infrastructure, or investing in local energy solutions.

The MPRP represents an outdated and reckless approach to energy development. SB 0853 challenges this mindset by requiring developers to prove that new corridors are

the only viable option, rather than allowing them to indiscriminately carve up Maryland's rural landscapes.

A Smarter Approach to Energy Infrastructure

Opposing unnecessary transmission projects like the MPRP does not mean opposing progress. Instead, SB 0853 promotes a **more responsible and forward-thinking approach** to energy infrastructure by encouraging:

- **Optimization of existing transmission lines**, ensuring that upgrades and modern grid technologies are prioritized over new construction.
- **Consideration of alternative solutions**, such as grid-enhancing technologies, reconductoring, and distributed energy generation, which can improve reliability without new overhead transmission lines.
- **Respect for local communities, farms, and conservation land**, ensuring that energy expansion does not come at the expense of Maryland's natural and historical heritage.

Conclusion: Protecting Maryland's Future

SB 0853 is a necessary safeguard against irresponsible energy infrastructure projects that threaten private property, rural communities, and Maryland's rich agricultural and historical landscape. This bill ensures that transmission expansion is undertaken only when absolutely necessary and in a way that minimizes harm to landowners and the environment.

By supporting SB 0853, we are choosing a future where energy infrastructure development is balanced, efficient, and respectful of Maryland's communities and natural resources. I urge the committee to pass SB 0853 and take a stand for responsible energy planning.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Brenda Myers

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