

Testimony in Support of SB 853 Presented by Bryan Price Maryland State Senate Hearing on SB 853

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 853 (SB 853). My name is Bryan Price, and I am a Maryland resident deeply invested in responsible energy planning and infrastructure development. The Maryland General Assembly has an opportunity with SB 853 to take a crucial step toward ensuring that transmission expansion is done thoughtfully and with respect for Maryland's communities, farmland, and historical landscapes.

SB 853 places necessary restrictions on the construction of new overhead transmission lines, ensuring that developers and utilities fully explore existing rights-of-way before creating new transmission corridors. This bill is a direct response to projects like the Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP), an unnecessary and intrusive high-voltage transmission proposal that threatens Maryland's landowners, rural communities, and property values.

Under current regulations, transmission developers have broad authority to carve up landscapes, seize private land through eminent domain, and push forward projects without fully exploring alternative solutions. SB 853 would prohibit the Public Service Commission (PSC) from approving new overhead transmission lines unless the applicant proves that existing rights-of-way are insufficient. Additionally, if new overhead lines are truly necessary, they must be located within 0.25 miles of an existing transmission corridor, preventing the reckless expansion of transmission infrastructure into untouched and protected lands.

The MPRP exemplifies the worst of unchecked transmission expansion. This project would take private land from homeowners and farmers, forcing them to surrender property for corporate gain. It would cut through farmland and historic preservation areas, disrupting Maryland's agricultural economy and cultural heritage. Homeowners in affected areas would see their property values decline as massive high-voltage lines loom over their communities, damaging local economies and reducing funding for already strained public schools that rely on property tax revenue. SB 853 provides a critical safeguard against these harms by ensuring that transmission expansion prioritizes the use of existing corridors rather than unnecessarily encroaching on Maryland's rural and residential areas.

Beyond the financial and legal implications, the MPRP poses a significant human cost. For families in the affected areas, this project has created uncertainty and anxiety about their futures. Homeowners who have worked their entire lives to build stability now face the

prospect of losing their land or watching their property values plummet. Farmers whose land has been in their families for generations fear that transmission lines will render their fields unusable, affecting not just their businesses but their way of life. The stress of fighting against corporate overreach has taken a toll on families, forcing them to dedicate time, energy, and resources to a battle they should never have had to fight in the first place. It is unacceptable that residents must live under the constant threat of displacement and economic instability for a project that has not even been proven necessary. SB 853 provides much-needed relief by ensuring that unnecessary projects like the MPRP face heightened scrutiny before they can move forward.

The necessity of this bill is further emphasized by the failure of transmission developers to consider modern alternatives. Delegate Nino Mangione questioned PSEG representatives about whether they had explored upgrading existing infrastructure rather than building new transmission lines, and their response was revealing: they had not considered it at all. Only after public outcry did they rush to justify their initial plan. This demonstrates a deeply flawed planning process, one in which transmission expansion is prioritized over common-sense upgrades. SB 853 ensures that utilities and developers must first optimize and upgrade existing infrastructure before proposing disruptive new projects.

SB 853 is not about halting progress; it is about fostering responsible and intelligent energy infrastructure development. By encouraging grid-enhancing technologies, reconductoring, and distributed energy solutions, this bill supports a modernized grid without unnecessary land seizures. It reinforces local authority by giving counties and municipalities greater oversight in permitting processes, ensuring that communities have a voice in decisions that directly impact their land and livelihoods.

Maryland must take a leadership role in energy planning that prioritizes efficiency, sustainability, and respect for its communities. SB 853 is a step in that direction. It holds utilities accountable, prevents reckless transmission expansion, and protects landowners from unnecessary and unjustified disruptions.

I urge the committee to support SB 853 and help ensure that Maryland's energy infrastructure grows responsibly, with a focus on modernization, efficiency, and community protection.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Bryan Price

21221 York Road

Parkton, MD 21120

[Bryan.s.price@gmail.com](mailto:Bryan.s.price@gmail.com)

410.302.8074