

BILL NUMBER: Senate Bill SB 853
**Public Utilities – Transmission Siting and Electricity Demand
- Limitations and Reporting Requirements**

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy and Environment

HEARING DATE: March 6, 2025

POSITION: Favorable with Amendments

My name is Elizabeth Law. I am a professional power engineer. I was a transmission planner for Con Edison of NY and worked for 10 years for FERC in the Office of Electric Reliability.

Power demand from hungry hyperscale data centers spurred PJM to award PSEG the contract to build the Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP) transmission line. Federal Law allows PSEG to receive a guaranteed right of return on transmission lines built in “Greenfields”. However, when a utility reconductors a transmission line to carry more power it is considered “maintenance”. Naturally, the bottom line of any utility points to building through farms and protected land rather than evaluate the use of existing right of ways.

SB 853 offers a solution to Maryland residents suffering the unintended consequences from these haphazard situations. The bill requires protection and innovation, including:

- Utilities shall use existing right of ways for high voltage transmission lines or provide substantive evidence that this is not possible. Transmission lines in greenfields must be 0.25 miles from an existing right of way.
- Utilities shall provide a yearly report of their power demand forecast, plans to supply the demand, actions to interconnect with renewable generation owners at the distribution level

and grid enhancements like dynamic scheduling to increase efficiency. In other states this is known as an integrated resource plan (IRP)

- The Public Service Commission (PSC) is authorized to provide a yearly report to the General Assembly of the statewide condition of our power supply and recommend implementation in keeping with our existing legislation to reduce greenhouse gasses, promote environmental justice, and ensure energy efficiency and reliability.

As a transmission planner, accurate information was crucial to performing my job. Elected officials are no different. Other states require utilities to provide reports – often called Integrated Resource Plans. The utilities have this data available. It needs to be shared with the PSC and elected officials so that Maryland can plan not just react.

PJM does not consider socio-economic impacts when it awards contracts. The information from the utilities' interconnected resource plans will enable Maryland's officials to ask PJM the important questions and recommend actions that will be best for Maryland. We can work beyond the siloed constraints and dictates of PJM by enhancing our distribution system. This will require input from and closer involvement with state utilities.

PSC involvement with the utilities could accelerate initiatives. These include:

- Demand response - in this program utilities contract with customers to reduce power consumption during high load periods. Next Era in Florida was able to cancel plans for nuclear power plants, substations and transmission lines –saving ratepayers those increases.
- Utility scale batteries store power to use at peak times. This reduces or eliminates the need to build expensive and polluting gas generators. This technology is available now.

- Integration of Tier 1 renewable resource projects need to be accelerated. These projects have been slow to reach their potential in Maryland. Greater communication between the PSC and utilities could address implementation roadblocks. Sometimes a crisis creates opportunities. Let's make use of the current power crisis.

I ask for a Favorable Report with Amendments.

Thank you,

Elizabeth Law, P.E. (retired)