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TESTIMONY ON SB#/0189- POSITION: FAVORABLE

Eminent Domain – Agricultural and Conservation Easements – Prohibited Taking

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#/0189, Eminent Domain – Agricultural and Conservation Easements – Prohibited Taking

This bill is a companion to other bills dealing with the attempt to create the Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project. This project proposes to construct a high-voltage electricity transmission line across approximately 70 miles of land, cutting through Baltimore, Carroll, and Frederick Counties. The company contracted to oversee the project and build the power line, the Public Service Enterprise Group, (PSEG), cannot begin work until granted approval by the Maryland Public Service Commission (PSC).

Many of the affected jurisdictions through which the lines would be strung have issued strong opposition to the project and the taking of valuable agricultural privately owned land or conservation easements to accomplish this goal. It is an environmental justice bill.

This bill will protect our farmers from eminent domain seizures of their land to complete the MPRP. The bill is focused on prohibiting the State or any of its instrumentalities or political subdivisions from taking privately owned property that is subject to a perpetual agricultural or conservation easement.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB#/0189.