

# **SB318\_BrooksB.pdf**

Uploaded by: Benjamin Brooks

Position: FAV

**BENJAMIN BROOKS**  
*Legislative District 10*  
Baltimore County

Education, Energy, and the  
Environment Committee  
Energy Subcommittee

Chair, Joint Electric Universal  
Service Program Workgroup



**THE SENATE OF MARYLAND**  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 318**  
**State Capital Program – Covered Projects – Public Engagement and Community**  
**Outreach Requirements**  
**(Community Engagement and Outreach Act of 2026)**  
Budget & Taxation Committee  
February 4, 2026

**Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and Members of the Committee:**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 318, Community Engagement and Outreach Act of 2026. SB 318 is in direct response to concerns raised by community members during the Patapsco Valley State Park Radio Tower project, which highlighted a significant gap in Maryland law. While local governments are often required to engage residents on projects that affect their communities, state agencies are not consistently held to the same standard. As a result, communities can be left out of the decision-making process for state projects that have substantial and lasting impacts on their neighborhoods, environment, and quality of life.

SB 318 creates a targeted outreach standard, ensuring that community members within one mile of the project's footprint are notified and given the opportunity to provide input when a project meets defined criteria.

Meaningful community input is not an obstacle to effective government, rather, it is a critical component of it. Early and transparent engagement helps identify local concerns, improves project outcomes, and builds public trust. When residents feel heard, projects are more likely to move forward with fewer conflicts, delays, and unintended consequences.

SB 318 establishes a clear, reasonable framework to ensure that state agencies seek and consider community input when undertaking projects that directly affect local residents. It promotes accountability, transparency, and equity, while respecting the expertise of state agencies and the lived experience of the communities they serve.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge a favorable report on SB 318.

With kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Benjamin T. Brooks".

Benjamin Brooks

# **Doug's testimony for SB318 transparency.pdf**

Uploaded by: Douglas Bogner

Position: FAV

Reference: SB31  
Senatet 8udget & Taxation Committee

Favorable Tesitimony from  
Douglas N. Bogner  
11 Basswood Ct  
Catonsville, MD 21228

Chair and Committee members,

This legislation is overdue. Baltimore County and I suspect many other counties require public engagement. This bill fixes this disappointing lack of transparency.

# **Mary Curtier Written Testimony in support of SB318**

Uploaded by: Mary Curtier

Position: FAV

## Testimony in support of Senate Bill 318

### Maryland General Assembly, Budget and Taxation Committee,

I fully support Senator Brooks legislation, SB318, to require “public engagement and community outreach” for future State Capital Projects. Several communities: Patapsco Woods; Oak Forest; Winners Circle; Foxhall Farms; College Hills, etc., were impacted by not being informed of the Hilton Radio Tower Project until it had been approved and was waiting to be added to the BPW board Agenda for funding. Our communities found out about the project due to a FIA request, triggered by white bands on trees that were to be felled, near the entrance to the Hilton Area of Patapsco State Park. The lack of public notification and lack of transparency understandably led to discontent among the community and frustration at the lack of process to voice our comments to appropriate organizations.

Once we found out about the project, it was an uphill challenge to inform the affected communities. As we found out more information, fliers were created and hand delivered to hundreds of residents. To address this challenge we faced, I especially support the public notification of future projects (in a local newspaper, online notices, mailings).

One of our fliers encouraged a letter-writing campaign which led to a public meeting. This legislation will ensure there will be a public meeting, and a public comment period, thus taking that responsibility from the residents and placing it on the project managers. This is a much more streamlined and concise way to inform the public.

In summary, keeping the community engaged in the process will go a long way in fostering understanding of the project’s goals and allow feedback on how it will affect their community. Senator Brooks legislation will ensure there is more visibility, public engagement, and public notification for future Capital Projects.

Thank you,  
Mary T. Curtier  
Resident, Patapsco Woods

# **Testimony in favor of Senate Bill 318\_ Sheldon Sm**

Uploaded by: Sheldon Smith

Position: FAV

## Testimony in favor of Senate bill 318 (Resident Sheldon Smith)

Thank you for allowing me to speak today on behalf of Senate bill 318. My name is Sheldon Smith. I'm an attorney and I reside in Catonsville MD.

I strongly support the proposed legislation under Senate bill 318. This bill requires a public engagement plan and community outreach activities for certain State projects, as defined in the legislation. I strongly support this legislation.

Some background. I'm involved in a community's effort to change the location of a proposed 348 ft radio tower that is proposed for installation in Catonsville by the State agency, Maryland IT department. This project is in Senator Brooks' Legislative District, and I believe was the impetus for the proposed legislation.

The Maryland State IT department has proposed installing a 348 ft radio tower in Catonsville on Hilton Ave, near the Patapsco State Park to provide radio coverage to the Patapsco River valley for public safety. Estimated project value is \$3M to 3.5M. While we have no objection to establishing better radio coverage in the river valley, we do object to the Maryland IT department's decision to place the tower so close to numerous residential areas. This massive 348 foot (equivalent to a 30 stories high building) will be a permanent eyesore that will damage the residential character of the surrounding communities. The river area to be covered is 90% non-residential, yet the Maryland IT Department instead chose a residential area for the tower location, and we believe there are other locations that would have less community impact.

Our efforts to find another location for this tower continue, however I'm not here to talk about the actual tower location issue, but rather to discuss the community engagement process (or lack thereof) that was followed for this Tower project, as follows:

1) There were no public hearings or public notifications about the proposed tower at the onset of the project. Community members only found out about the project through Public Information Act (PIA) requests for documentation. **Point #1: the public should not be required to DISCOVER a State project, rather the State should have the responsibility to notify the community about major projects that affect their community The proposed legislation now establishes a requirement for such community engagement and outreach.**

2) Once we obtained the PIA documents, we were able to begin email discussions with the State's IT department. In these email exchanges the IT department provided the following statements: "community meetings for these types of projects are typically scheduled near the completion of the engineering phase.", and another statement provided: "local county zoning appeal processes do not apply" (which also means that local county public notifications requirements do not apply). This is the crux of the issue. The State IT department (and I believe

other State agencies) believe that they are not required to engage the public at the beginning of these types of projects.

**The proposed legislation corrects this interpretation and now specifically requires a public engagement plan and community outreach activities for these types of projects.**

3) The initial approval of the project was May 2022, yet the first public meeting was not held until July 24, 2025, some 38 months into the project. By that time, the site had been selected, inter-department agreements between IT and DNR were completed, an archeological study was complete, a contractor was selected, and detailed blueprint drawings of the tower at that location were created. Basically the project was “cooked” so there was little ability to address changes or the community’s concerns. At the July 24, 2025, and the subsequent November 6, 2025 public meetings, the IT Department took a defensive position, that basically defended their decisions and closed off discussion about changes or concerns.

**Public engagement for these types of projects should occur much earlier in the process, so that the public is informed and their feedback and objections can be heard. The proposed legislation now establishes a public engagement plan and community outreach activities process.**

4) I believe that Government agencies at all levels should be transparent and forthcoming with their plans for significant infrastructure projects that will affect communities. This public engagement should be early in the process so that the public is aware of the project and their suggestions or objections can be heard and acted upon.

This early engagement process also benefits elected officials who may not be aware of the project, and who need an early “heads up” that there are potential community concerns.

Finally, early engagement also benefits the agency so that they are aware of changes or objections early in the process at a time when project changes can still be made. By proceeding without this early public feedback, they take the risk of having to start the process all over again, all because of their lack of early public engagement and outreach.

Sheldon Smith  
712 White Oaks Ave  
Catonsville MD 21228  
Email: [Sheldonsmith460@gmail.com](mailto:Sheldonsmith460@gmail.com)  
Phone : 410-371- 6566

# **Tom Written Testimony in support of SB318.pdf**

Uploaded by: Thomas Curtier

Position: FAV

## **Supporting Testimony for Senator Brooks Senate Bill 318**

Maryland General Assembly  
Budget and Taxation Committee,

I fully support Senator Brooks Senate Bill to provide Public Outreach and Community Engagement for future State Projects. Our community was totally unaware of the Hilton Tower LMR Radio Project. The size and scope of this project (details below) was a total shock to residents. The project had been in the works for years and the plans were completed, only waiting for funding. The community only found out about the project due to bands on some trees in the park which led to a community FIA request which allowed procurement of the Project Details.

Based on the size and scope of the project, the community embarked on hand-delivering fliers, sending emails, a letter-writing campaign, and Facebook posts which led to Senator Brooks arranging a meeting between residents and DoIT. Again, it was a monumental task (another set of hand-delivered fliers and Facebook posts) to get the word out to residents of the meeting. The onus should not be on the community to find out about State Projects, then the added responsibility to organize residents, create and distribute fliers, writing letters, sending emails, etc. to obtain information about State Projects and find a legislative representative to hold meetings. The onus should be on the State. *This bill will ensure that the public is adequately notified of such State projects in the future.*

Holding a public meeting engages the community so they have an adequate understanding of the need for the project and assurances that adequate due diligence was done when determining the final project plans.

Allowing a public comment period will allow the residents the ability to ask questions and gain a better understanding of the project and have an opportunity to ask questions and voice concerns.

State Projects should be advertised, and the public be allowed to comment.

Project Details: This is only provided to give an understanding of the size and scope of the project that led Senator Brooks to draft this legislation.

- 348' tower, its height requiring Blinking red/white lights, to alert aircraft. Tower will be located <1000' from a residential neighborhood.
- Tower Compound: 80' x 80' compound surrounded by a 10' chain link fence topped with barbed wire, housing the tower, a generator, 120-gallon propane tank, and shed.
- Tower Compound will be located less than 100' feet off of Hilton Ave, entrance to Hilton Area of Patapsco State Park viewable by cars, bikers, runners, walkers, and campers
- The State's balloon tests show wide ranging visibility to ~1200 homes.

Sincerely,  
Thomas H. Curtier,  
Catonsville Resident

# **Ammendment to Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Kathleen Bogner

Position: FWA

SB318 Favorable Testimony with ammendments as follows:

**COMMENT 1:** Page 1 line 23 (Section 1.A.2) change area

Currently reads:

Radius of 1 mile from the project footprint.

Recommend:

Radius of 2 miles from the project footprint.

**COMMENT 2:** Page 3 Line 14 (section B.2.I) change time

Currently reads:

Providing notice by mail at least 45 days prior to

Recommend:

Providing notice by mail at least 180 days prior to

**COMMENT 3:** Page 3 line 19 (Section B.2.IV). Insert two additional methods for notifications between B.2.III and B.2.IV

**COMMENT 3A:**

Add a new additional bullet (IV)

Recommend:

Posting a physical sign in the vicinity of the area to be built upon.

**COMMENT 3B:**

Also add a new additional bullet (V)

Recommend:

Notifying the associated County Council Representative of the proposed covered project.

Kathleen Bogner  
11 Basswood Ct  
Catonsville, MD 21228

# **Written Testimony for Bill 318 Public Engagement.p**

Uploaded by: Kathleen Bogner

Position: FWA

**Supporting Testimony**  
for  
**Maryland Senate Bill 318**  
State Capital Program – Covered Projects –  
Public Engagement and Community Outreach Requirements and Community  
Engagement and Outreach Act of 2026

Kathleen Bogner  
11 Basswood Court  
Catonsville, MD 21228  
(443)388-2696  
Kathleen.A.Bogner@gmail.com

January 29, 2026

Maryland General Assembly  
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

Many of us in Catonsville are grateful that Senator Brooks is submitting this bill for your consideration. We appreciate his willingness to listen to his constituents and take action to fix what became clear to all of us is a broken system. I strongly support this bill.

The impetus behind this bill stems directly from the widespread disappointment among Catonsville neighbors regarding the lack of insight into a recently proposed communications tower for the Patapsco State Park Hilton Area. While the gap coverage is a valid safety need, almost universally folks felt surprised and frustrated that the State wasn't more forthcoming about their multi-year long planning effort. In fact, it wasn't until neighbors noticed ribbons on trees (likely to mark them for removal) before we were even aware something was being planned for the area. There were no signs posted explaining the plans nor when a public hearing would be held. There were no flyers, no emails, no notice to the neighboring HOAs, no notice in the local papers, nor posts on local social media. The State eventually held a meeting in another county that we heard about just in time only after filing a request under the Maryland Public Information Act.

Finally, after the three or four of us who attended the meeting realized the severity of the impact to the community, we worked to get the word out to our neighbors. We started a letter writing campaign to our elected officials. We printed off flyers and hand

delivered to hundreds of homes. We painstakingly built email lists. We posted on social media. Eventually, we heard Senator Brooks would host a meeting for the community to hear (again) from the State Planners. Once again, we delivered flyers, sent emails, and posted on social media to alert neighbors about the meeting. This time the meeting was standing room only with more than 100 folks in Catonsville. The lack of engagement up to this point was just plain infuriating. It wasn't appropriate. It wasn't professional. It wasn't neighborly.

Prior to the first meeting when we reached out to the State Planners and asked among other things if there was an appeals process. Their response implied that since the project was to be done by the State on State land, they would not have an appeals process and further they noted that they would not need to follow local zoning regulations. At the first meeting the handful of us learned that the tower would be nearly 348' (that's nearly 35 stories tall), was to be built less than 80' from the roadside with barbed wire fencing and less than 1000' from residential properties. They did however share the results of the balloon visibility tests they conducted to see how widely the proposed 348' tower could be potentially seen throughout Catonsville. The Tower would clearly effect hundreds and hundreds of home and park visitors. They knew that it would likely be problematic, which may have influenced their decision to provide limited notice about the public meeting, the choice of venue located outside town, and waited until the plans were final. They didn't bother to properly develop alternatives. It felt arrogant and bullying.

I understand the State Planners were probably working hard and just trying to do the right thing, but their judgement was off. That's why we need laws, rules, and regulations, so that we are all accountable and we know our left and right limits. As we learned through this experience, we cannot just assume that someone would do the right thing. We need to expect it, because we require it. It shouldn't be this hard to simply know what is going on in our neighborhood with our tax dollars.

Please approve this bill so future Maryland residents can be afforded simple courtesies. Transparency doesn't mean the State has to make everyone happy, but they should do the right thing and to include being good neighbors.

Sincerely,

Kathleen A. Bogner

Sincerely yours,

Kathleen A Bogner

**SB 318\_MAA\_UNF.pdf**

Uploaded by: Tim Smith

Position: UNF



Senator Guy Guzzone, Chair  
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee  
3 West Miller Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

February 4, 2026

**RE: SB 318 – UNFAVORABLE** – State Capital Program - Covered Projects - Public Engagement and Community Outreach Requirements (Community Engagement and Outreach Act of 2026)

Dear Chair Guzzone and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Asphalt Association (MAA) represents approximately 110+ members, including 20 material producers, contractors, engineering firms, and associate members, supporting a 7,000-person workforce. MAA actively collaborates with regulatory agencies to advocate for the asphalt industry, ensuring fair regulations at both the state and federal levels. Additionally, we support adequate funding for Maryland's multimodal transportation system.

Senate Bill 318 would require state agencies proposing certain capital projects to develop extensive community engagement and outreach plans before a project may proceed. These plans would mapping affected areas, identifying environmental and public health considerations, and meeting detailed outreach and notice requirements.

Respectfully, MAA opposes SB 318 because we have concerns these mandates would add additional procedural hurdles to already complex capital projects, resulting in delays and increase administrative burdens. The requirements could be used to stall or cancel critical infrastructure investments that are essential to public safety and economic vitality. The Department of Transportation already conducts outreach for major projects, and SB 318 risks duplicating or conflicting with existing processes. This would divert limited agency resources away from project delivery and construction.

For these reasons, we respectfully ask for an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 318.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Tim E. Smith'.

Tim E. Smith, P.E.  
President  
Maryland Asphalt Association

**SB318\_USM\_INFO.pdf**

Uploaded by: Andy Clark

Position: INFO



**SENATE BUDGET AND TAXATION COMMITTEE**  
**Senate Bill 318**  
**State Capital Program – Covered Projects – Public Engagement And**  
**Community Outreach Requirements (Community Engagement And**  
**Outreach Act of 2026)**  
**February 4, 2026**  
**Information**

Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to provide information regarding Senate Bill 318, which establishes new statewide requirements for community engagement and outreach for certain State capital projects. As introduced, Senate Bill 318 requires units of state government proposing “covered projects” – including construction, installation, or substantial alteration of physical infrastructure with potential impacts on noise, visibility, environmental conditions, or community character – to prepare a community engagement plan, conduct specified outreach within a one-mile radius, and submit a project-specific report to the Department of Budget and Management (DBM). DBM must then compile these reports and submit an annual summary to the General Assembly beginning December 1, 2027.

The University System of Maryland (USM) is comprised of twelve distinguished institutions and three regional centers. We award eight out of every ten bachelor’s degrees in the State. Each of USM’s 12 institutions has a distinct and unique approach to the mission of educating students and promoting the economic, intellectual, and cultural growth of its surrounding community. These institutions are located throughout the state, from western Maryland to the Eastern Shore, with the flagship campus in the Washington suburbs. The USM includes three Historically Black Institutions, comprehensive institutions and research universities, and the country’s largest public online institution. This bill is important to all USM institutions that accept undergraduate students.

The USM appreciates the bill’s intent to ensure early, meaningful communication with communities affected by major State projects. USM institutions already operate under a comprehensive Board of Regents policy governing community notification and engagement during the planning of campus capital projects. Under USM Board of Regents policy ([VIII-10.40 Policy on Community Notification of Capital Projects](#)) each institution must make reasonable efforts to notify adjoining property owners or occupants – as well as local governments within one mile – when planning a new structure or a substantial exterior modification on USM-owned land. The policy emphasizes that campus facilities must be developed not only to meet the needs of students, faculty, and staff but also to reflect the interests of neighboring communities and municipalities. It further underscores that broad participation is essential, and that institutions are encouraged to build substantive relationships with community and governmental partners throughout the master planning process.

Because USM already adheres to this robust, longstanding notification and engagement framework, we believe the System’s existing requirements align with the objectives of Senate Bill 318. For this reason, USM will seek an exemption from the bill’s new statewide process so that institutions may continue operating under the Board of Regents’ established policy. Our policy has proven to be both effective and appropriately tailored to the unique nature of higher education capital planning across our diverse campuses.

We appreciate the General Assembly’s continued interest in strengthening community engagement and welcome the opportunity to provide information to the Committee. We look forward to working with the sponsor as Senate Bill 318 moves through the legislative process.



# **SB0318 - LOI - SHA - Community Engagement and Outr**

Uploaded by: Patricia Westervelt

Position: INFO

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February 4, 2026

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Chair, Budget and Taxation Committee  
3 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

***RE: Letter of Information – SB 318 – State Capital Program – Covered Projects – Public Engagement and Community Outreach Requirements (Community Engagement and Outreach Act of 2026)***

Dear Chair Guzzone and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (SHA) takes no position on Senate Bill 318 and offers the following letter of information for the Committee’s consideration.

SB 318 requires units of State government proposing certain capital projects to complete certain community engagement plans and community outreach activities. The government units must submit annual reports that detail outreach activity to the Department of Budget and Management (DBM). It requires DBM to annually submit a compiled report of the community engagement reports (submitted by each State unit) to the General Assembly and the Legislative Policy Committee.

MDOT appreciates the intent of this bill and takes seriously the input of those who live and work around our projects. The agency strives to encourage meaningful public participation, which involves seeking public input not just in the beginning, but at key points during the planning and execution where input has the potential to shape final decisions.

Currently, all MDOT modes have comprehensive outreach and engagement plans that are uniquely tailored to each project, guided by members of the customer engagement staff. Several elements in the legislation may not be appropriate for any given MDOT project dependent on its scope or size. For example, a radius of one mile may not be the most appropriate distance and may not meet industry’s best practices for some projects. Additionally, the requirement for this type of engagement for any project over \$2 million may capture projects such as minor paving improvements or bus shelter installations.

Further, the legislation does not outline what constitutes the beginning of a project– without knowing the exact stage of project delivery, it may be costly or unnecessary to implement the requirements of the legislation for a project phase in which the type of engagement may be premature. The legislation appears to preclude planning and construction in the same fiscal year by requiring completion of a community engagement plan in the prior fiscal year, an interpretation that could significantly constrain project delivery timelines and delay early public planning.

The Honorable Guy Guzzone  
Page Two

MDOT is committed to continuing conversations with the sponsor about how best to reach our shared goal of robust community participation. The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee consider this information during their deliberations of Senate Bill 318.

Respectfully submitted,

Matthew Mickler  
Director of Government Affairs  
Maryland Department of Transportation  
410-865-1090