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Testimony: SB 584: Favorable

Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

For the record, I am Mary Ann Lisanti, a resident of Harford County, in support of SB 584.

From my experience in local and state government, major transmission projects require a careful balance between protecting the reliability and affordability of the electric grid and ensuring that communities are meaningfully engaged in decisions that affect their homes and property.

During my time in the House, I worked closely with communities, utilities, the Public Service Commission, and many of you on the Transource project in northern Harford County.

In that CPCN process, landowners raised significant impacts, including routing and agricultural preservation concerns that were simply not required to be examined under the statutory criteria at that time.

That experience exposed gaps in the law.

In response, I sponsored HB 1126, and this body passed it unanimously in both chambers. That legislation strengthened the criteria the PSC must consider before approving new overhead transmission lines, including alternative routes, environmental impacts, and the use of existing easements.

That was an important step in strengthening the integrity of the process.

Today, we are entering another era of major transmission expansion in Maryland. Projects related to the Brandon Shores retirement and other regional reliability upgrades will affect communities across multiple counties, from Harford to Baltimore, and from Anne Arundel to Western Maryland and the Eastern Shore as lines pass through and within our State.

Last year, when I began working with former constituents in Harford County on Brandon Shores-related transmission upgrades, it became clear that procedural gaps remain. Public meetings on that project occurred after the deadline to intervene had already passed, leaving landowners without a viable means to participate in the process.

While current law requires notice, it does not clearly ensure that landowners are formally advised of their right to intervene, how to do so, and the applicable deadlines. Too often, the notice resembles a general informational or marketing document rather than a clear legal notice of rights.

Therefore, when clarity is lacking, meaningful participation suffers.

SB 584 addresses that procedural gap.

It does not undermine reliability. It strengthens public confidence in the process we have created.

Just as we strengthened substantive review in 2018, we have the opportunity today to strengthen procedural fairness by ensuring people understand how to participate in a complex regulatory process that affects the very place they live and raise their children.

I respectfully urge a favorable report.

Thank you.

Mary Ann Lisanti