



Maryland Grain Producers Association

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House Bill 460 - Solar Energy - Construction of Generating Stations in Priority Preservation Areas and Study

MGPA Position: **Support**

Committee: E&T

Date: February 10, 2026

The Maryland Grain Producers Association (MGPA) supports House Bill 460 because it recognizes the growing competition for productive agricultural land from utility-scale solar development and takes a measured step to protect Maryland's agricultural land base.

Maryland's grain farmers depend on access to fertile, contiguous farmland to produce corn, soybeans, wheat, and other crops that form the backbone of the state's agricultural economy. These acres support not only grain producers, but also Maryland's poultry and livestock industries, which rely heavily on locally grown feed. When productive farmland, particularly land designated by counties as Priority Preservation Areas, is converted to non-agricultural use, that land is often removed from food and feed production permanently. The grading required for industrial solar installations removes any chance that soil will return to fruitful production.

In recent years, grain farmers across Maryland have faced increasing pressure from solar development competing for the same limited acreage. Lease rates offered for solar projects far exceed what agricultural production can support, distorting land values and rental markets and making it more difficult for working farms to maintain or expand operations. Solar companies are offering up to \$4,500 per acre in land rent while most farmers can offer \$200 at most. This is troubling as 60+ percent of Maryland's farmland is leased. For every acre taken out of agricultural production, there is a seven-fold negative economic impact on the local economy.

This dynamic is especially concerning in Priority Preservation Areas, which were specifically designated to protect the most productive agricultural lands for long-term farming use. HB 460's reduction of the allowable percentage of Priority Preservation Area land that may be used for solar development from 5 percent to 2 percent helps restore balance between renewable energy goals and agricultural land preservation. This means that once a county reaches 2 percent of their PPA in solar, the Public Service Commission can no longer override a local planning and zoning decision with a Certificate of Public Necessity.

The bill ensures that solar development does not disproportionately displace high-value farmland that is essential to Maryland's food and feed system and rural economy. MGPA also supports the bill's requirement to study the long-term environmental impacts of solar photovoltaic system disposal. For these reasons, the Maryland Grain Producers Association respectfully urges a **favorable report** on House Bill 460.

For more information, please contact:

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