

Committees: Environment and Transportation
Testimony on: HB0040- Public Utilities – Transmission Lines – Advanced
Transmission Technologies
Submitting: Deborah A. Cohn
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 12, 2026

Dear Chair Korman and Committee Members:

Thank you for considering my testimony in support of HB0040, Public Utilities – Transmission Lines – Advanced Transmission Technologies. As a longstanding Montgomery County resident, I am concerned about electricity reliability and affordability. HB0040 addresses both as Maryland modernizes its electric grid.

Maryland needs to modernize its grid to meet rising electricity demand, integrate less expensive clean energy sources and ensure resource adequacy and reliability. Upgrading the grid is inevitably very expensive. To minimize ratepayer costs, Maryland must ensure it does not overbuild the grid, takes advantage of cost-effective advanced transmission technologies and provides the Public Service Commission (PSC) the tools it needs to minimize costs to ratepayers. HB0040 is designed to achieve these goals.

What are Advanced Transmission Technologies: Advanced transmission technologies (ATTs) include grid-enhancing technologies (such as dynamic line rating, advanced power flow control, and topology optimization), reconductoring of existing lines with high-performance conductors, and energy storage techniques that can be used as transmission. ATTs can be deployed more quickly and improve the capacity, efficiency, reliability and resilience of new and existing lines, typically at lower cost than traditional upgrades or construction of conventional transmission lines. ATTs thus buy time until high technology transmission lines, where needed, can be installed.

Strengthening the Hand of the PSC in Evaluating Specific Applications for Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity: Because publically owned utilities have a monopoly and earn a rate of return on infrastructure investments, ratepayers must rely on the PSC to ensure that utilities are considering all cost-effective alternatives to new transmission capacity. HB0040 strengthens the PSC’s hand, making clear that applicants for a certificate of public convenience and necessity to build a transmission line would need, in addition to providing information on the project’s environmental impact, also to demonstrate that their internal planning processes had evaluated (i) alternatives to the proposed line, including alternative routing options, (ii) the use of ATTs, distribution-level technologies or modifications that could avoid construction of the transmission line, (iii) whether integration of the transmission and distribution system could reduce the need for the proposed new transmission line, (iv) the cost to ratepayers, (v) the impact of strategies to increase customer demand response and energy efficiency improvements, and (vi) the proposal’s impact on resource adequacy. Combined, these requirements could result in better transmission line planning and a much needed upgrade of the electric grid at a lower cost.

Enabling the PSC to Plan for Future Enhancement of the Grid: The PSC currently lacks information it needs to plan for the future development of the electric grid. HB0040 would require utilities to provide that information to the PSC every four years. These reports would disclose (i) areas of transmission congestion or predicted congestion where new transmission or distribution lines might be needed, (ii) actual and projected costs to ratepayers from this congestion, and (iii) various means, including use of ATTs, to relieve this congestion. It would also enable the PSC to consider the economic, environmental and social costs posed by each transmission alternative.

HB0040 is a carefully constructed bill that ensures that (i) utilities and the PSC have the needed information to plan, and (ii) the PSC has the clear authority to supervise the modernization of the transmission and distribution grid in the most cost effective and equitable manner. For these reasons I urge this committee to issue a FAVORABLE report on HB0040.