



## SUPPORT for HB40

1/28/2026

Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and Honorable Members of the E&T Committee:

My name is Benjamin Ford, and I serve as the Miles-Wye Riverkeeper for ShoreRivers. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of House Bill 40.

ShoreRivers works to protect and restore the rivers, creeks, and wetlands of Maryland's Eastern Shore. Our mission is rooted in science, public health, and stewardship. HB 40 strengthens Maryland's oversight of major transmission projects by requiring applicants for certificates of public convenience and necessity for overhead transmission lines to provide detailed analyses of routing alternatives, advanced transmission technologies, and environmental impacts. It ensures that the Public Service Commission has the information needed to evaluate whether proposed projects truly serve the public interest.

For the Environment and Transportation Committee, this bill is especially important because of its direct connection to **land conservation, habitat protection, and transportation and utility corridors**. Transmission lines often follow or intersect existing roadways, rights-of-way, and rural landscapes. Without strong review standards, these projects can fragment wetlands, convert productive farmland, and degrade forest buffers that protect water quality.

HB 40 helps prevent unnecessary impacts on sensitive lands by requiring developers to demonstrate that less damaging alternatives have been fully considered. This includes upgrading existing infrastructure, using advanced technologies to increase capacity, and avoiding ecologically significant areas wherever feasible. These safeguards are essential for protecting tidal marshes, forest interiors, and agricultural preservation areas that are central to Maryland's environmental and transportation planning goals.

Scientific and economic evidence shows that poorly sited infrastructure imposes lasting public costs through increased flooding, habitat loss, water pollution, and reduced agricultural productivity. Thoughtful siting and early environmental analysis reduce these risks and minimize future mitigation and restoration expenses borne by taxpayers.

Importantly, HB 40 does not delay needed grid improvements. Instead, it promotes efficient, coordinated planning that aligns energy infrastructure with transportation corridors, land-use priorities, and environmental protection standards. This approach strengthens community trust while supporting long-term system reliability.

Maryland has invested heavily in restoring the Chesapeake Bay, preserving farmland, and strengthening climate resilience. Allowing avoidable damage to sensitive landscapes from major

### ShoreRivers

Isabel Hardesty, Executive Director  
Annie Richards, Chester Riverkeeper | Matt Pluta, Choptank Riverkeeper  
Ben Ford, Miles Wye Riverkeeper | Zack Kelleher, Sassafras Riverkeeper

utility projects undermines that investment. HB 40 reinforces the principle that infrastructure development must proceed in harmony with environmental stewardship.

On behalf of ShoreRivers and the communities we serve, I respectfully urge the House Environment and Transportation Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 40. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'B. Ford', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

**Benjamin Ford, Miles-Wye Riverkeeper**, on behalf of ShoreRivers