



Maryland Energy Administration

TO: Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and Members of the Environment & Transportation Committee
FROM: MEA
SUBJECT: HB 460 - Solar Energy - Construction of Generating Stations in Priority Preservation Areas and Study
DATE: February 10, 2026

MEA Position: LETTER OF CONCERN

The Maryland Energy Administration respectfully submits the following letter of concern for House Bill 460.

The Maryland Energy Administration appreciates the intent behind this bill and the General Assembly's longstanding commitment to preserving Maryland's agricultural land. Protecting priority preservation areas is a critical component of sustaining Maryland's rural economy, safeguarding working lands, and maintaining the character of our agricultural communities. MEA supports these goals and actively works alongside State and local partners to balance land preservation with responsible energy planning.

At the same time, MEA has concerns about the practical impacts of HB 460, particularly the reduction of the allowable acreage of solar energy generating stations in priority preservation areas from 5% to 2%. This change may significantly strain the State's ability to deploy cost-effective solar projects at scale and pace needed to address rising energy costs and growing electricity demand.

Maryland is facing an energy affordability and availability challenge driven by increased demand, aging infrastructure, and broader regional market pressures. Utility-scale and community solar projects play an important role in helping to stabilize energy prices, diversify the generation mix, and reduce long-term costs for ratepayers. Limiting siting flexibility in areas that have already undergone extensive local planning and preservation review may slow project development, increase costs, and place additional pressure on Maryland customer bills.

Importantly, just last year the legislature passed the Renewable Energy Certainty Act. The legislature engaged in conscious conversations and negotiations with lawmakers, and agricultural and solar stakeholders, and striking a careful balance by capping solar development in priority preservation areas while preserving the vast majority of protected farmland. Reducing that cap further risks undermining this balance, particularly in counties where alternative suitable land is limited due to environmental constraints, zoning restrictions, or grid interconnection realities. In these areas, priority

preservation zones may represent some of the few viable locations for projects that can be brought online efficiently and affordably.

Our sincere thanks for your consideration of this testimony. For questions or additional information, please contact Megan Outten, Policy manager, at megan.outten@maryland.gov or 443.842.1780.