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Judicial Proceedings Committee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 19, 2026
The Maryland State Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Senate Bill 630 – Overhead Transmission – Reserve Accounts and Reserve Studies – Alterations

Chair Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

Senate Bill 630 is intended to help Maryland property owners who find themselves in the path of overhead transmission lines and who are forced to defend the value of their property in court. It has two principal components.

Before describing those two components, let me briefly describe the problem this bill seeks to address. When the government or a utility exercises the power of eminent domain, the property owner does not have a choice. The land is taken. The only remaining issue is how much compensation will be paid. While our Constitution promises “just compensation”, current law does not always ensure that the property owner actually receives it in practice.

First, SB630 addresses the problem of litigation costs in condemnation cases.

Imagine the following scenario: a parcel of land is reliably appraised at \$100,000. But the condemning authority alleges in its filing that the land is only worth \$75,000. If the landowner accepts that figure, they lose \$25,000 in value. If they go to court to prove the true value, they may incur \$20,00-\$30,000 in legal fees and expert witness costs. Even if the court ultimately rules the land is worth the full \$100,000, the landowner must subtract their legal expenses from that award. In practical terms, they may end up receiving far less than fair market value simply because they exercised their right to challenge the government’s number.

SB630 corrects that inequity. If the final ruling in a condemnation proceeding establishes a value greater than what the condemning authority alleged, the property owner will receive not only the court-determined fair market value, but also reasonable attorney’s fees and expert witness costs. In short, if the owner is forced to go to court to obtain fair value, they will not be financially penalized for doing so. They will be made whole.

Second, SB630 addresses the impact of overhead transmission lines on neighboring properties.

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Current law compensates only the owner of the property directly taken or burdened by the transmission line. But what about neighbors?

Picture a small home located immediately beside the property where a towering steel transmission structure is installed. That family's land is not formally taken. Yet they now live in the shadow of a massive overhead line. The visual intrusion is constant. The character of the property changes. Prospective buyers may be deterred. The fair market value may decline.

Under current Maryland law, that adjacent property owner receives nothing, despite the fact that their property has demonstrably diminished in value.

SB630 provides a remedy. If a neighboring property owner can demonstrate that the construction of an overhead transmission line has reduced the fair market value of their property, they may seek compensation for that loss. This is not speculative or emotional harm; it is measurable economic damage.

This bill does not halt infrastructure projects. It does not prevent the construction of transmission lines. It simply ensures that when the government exercises one of its most powerful authorities- the power to take or significantly impact private property- Maryland residents are fairly compensated for real economic losses.

Senate Bill 630 is about equity. It is about ensuring that property owners receive true just compensation, not a reduced amount after litigation expenses, and not zero compensation when their property value is materially diminished next door.

I appreciate the Committee's consideration of Senate Bill 630 and will be happy to answer any questions the Committee may have.