

SB630 Testimony.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Christopher West

Position: FAV

CHRIS WEST
Legislative District 42
Baltimore and Carroll Counties

Judicial Proceedings Committee



Annapolis Office
James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 322
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3648
800-492-7122 Ext. 3648
Chris.West@senate.maryland.gov

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.

CHRIS WEST
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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.

HWE Written Testimony - SB 630.pdf

Uploaded by: Harris Eisenstein

Position: FAV

February 17, 2026

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Testimony in support of SB 630 Overhead Transmission Lines and Eminent Domain – Property Value - Damages

Dear Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee:

I am Harris Eisenstein, a Maryland attorney focusing on eminent domain and related litigation. I strongly support SB 630.

For fifteen years, I have represented Maryland citizens and businesses facing government takings of their private property by eminent domain. This power is rooted in the Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which reads in relevant part: “nor shall private property be taken for public purpose, without just compensation.”

Although Maryland condemners must pay “just compensation,” state law does not allow condemnees to recover a truly *just* amount for the life-changing loss of property rights. SB 630 is a crucial step forward.

Currently, a condemnee may recover the value of land and improvements taken by eminent domain, plus any loss in value to whatever property remains post-take. Md. Code Ann., Real Prop. §§ 12-104, 12-105. Legal and expert fees are generally not recoverable, even though condemners’ initial offers often fall short of just compensation. These below-market offers force private citizens to hire attorneys and experts to develop the true value of the property taken. As a result, even if the compensation increases, the net recovery is reduced by any money spent on attorneys and experts. This is unjust.

SB 630 addresses this inequity, especially for those in Baltimore, Carroll, and Frederick Counties at risk of losing property rights to a planned 70-mile transmission line known as the Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (“MPRP”). If the MPRP sponsors gain eminent domain authority, a question before the Maryland Public Service Commission, they will acquire property rights to install high-voltage, above-ground power lines across Maryland.

The MPRP is the first of many proposed transmission projects. SB 630 will protect citizens in the path of such projects by allowing them to recover the market value of the land taken *plus* all legal, expert, and related fees they incur. Considering that most condemners force citizens to fight for fair compensation, expanding the scope of recovery to include litigation expenses levels the playing field.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H. Eisenstein", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Harris W. Eisenstein

I strongly support SB0630.pdf

Uploaded by: James Werner

Position: FAV

James Werner
13234 Old Annapolis Rd
Mt. Airy, MD 21771
James.werner@jhu.edu
301-980-9267
Feb 17, 2026

Testimony in support of SB0630
To: Judicial Proceedings Committee

Dear Chair Smith and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

My name is Jim Werner and I live in Frederick County. I'm writing to express my support for SB0630. If the MPRP is approved, many homeowners will see their property values drastically decline. Those property owners directly affected will receive compensation. However, owners who are indirectly affected, will also see their property values decline. They should not have to suffer financial loss at the hands of this new property line.

I strongly support SB0630 to make sure that all property owners who are impacted by any new transmission line are compensated for the loss of property values whether they are directly or indirectly impacted. I respectfully urge you to support and pass this bill. No Marylander should lose property value simply because a new powerline is built on a neighboring property and not directly on their property.

Thank you for considering this important issue.

Sincerely,

Jim Werner
Mt. Airy, MD

SB 630 - Em Domain - FAV - REALTORS.pdf

Uploaded by: Lisa May

Position: FAV



Senate Bill 630 - Overhead Transmission Lines and Eminent Domain - Property Value - Damages

Position: Support

Maryland REALTORS® supports SB 630 as a fair and necessary update to Maryland's eminent domain framework.

This bill recognizes the real-world impacts that infrastructure projects can have on nearby homeowners—even when no physical taking occurs on their property. Properties located adjacent to overhead transmission lines routinely experience diminished market value due to visual impacts, perceived health and safety concerns, and buyer hesitation.

Appraisers, real estate professionals, and homeowners alike understand that proximity matters. Yet under current law, these losses often go uncompensated simply because the transmission line is constructed on a neighboring parcel.

SB 630 appropriately acknowledges that a taking within close proximity—particularly within 300 feet of a residence—can directly and measurably reduce the value of surrounding homes. By expanding what constitutes compensable damages, this bill aligns Maryland law with how property markets actually function. Homeowners should not be forced to absorb financial losses caused by public infrastructure projects over which they have no control.

For these reasons, REALTORS® urge a favorable report on SB 630.

**For more information contact
lisa.may@mdrealtor.org or christa.mcgee@mdrealtor.org**

Testimony in support of SB0630 - Overhead Transmis

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

SB0630_RichardKaplowitz_FAV
02/19/2026
Richard Keith Kaplowitz
Frederick, MD 21703-7134

TESTIMONY ON SB#0630 - POSITION: FAVORABLE
Overhead Transmission Lines and Eminent Domain - Property Value – Damages

TO: Chair Smith, Jr., Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#/0630, **Overhead Transmission Lines and Eminent Domain - Property Value – Damages**

This bill is submitted to attempt to add strong protection against harms that will occur to property owners if the MPRP is permitted to be constructed.

The proposed Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP), a 67-mile high-voltage transmission line traversing Baltimore, Carroll, and Frederick Counties, is projected to have significant negative impacts on property values, with estimates suggesting a decline of up to 40-45% for homes and farms in close proximity to the transmission line. The project is expected to affect hundreds of properties directly, with 65 residential buildings located within 200 feet of the proposed Right-of-Way (ROW) and another 234 within 200-500 feet. ¹

The Valleys Planning Council has declared: ²

Residents who live on or near the proposed MPRP route are opposed to the project, which would create a permanent scar across farmland, preserved land, and residential land. Property owners face the prospect of having their land taken through the use of eminent domain. Sensitive environmental land, wildlife habitat, and historic properties would be damaged.

Others are opposed because bucolic views would be permanently ruined. The loss of permanently preserved land poses an existential threat to land preservation in Maryland.

A decrease in property values. Businesses that are worth less. An increase in the price all Marylanders pay for energy. There are many reasons the MPRP in its current form should not be allowed to move forward.

This bill is submitted to add a financial cost to PJM if they proceed on this project despite the harm it will cause. It will authorize the owner of property used for residential purposes to bring an action to recover damages incurred as a result of the value of the property being diminished from the use of eminent domain to take property and construct an overhead transmission line within 300 feet of the property owner's residence; and requiring that reasonable fees be awarded to counsel for the defendant in a condemnation proceeding and the costs be charged against the plaintiff under certain circumstances.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB0630.

¹ Google AI Search “mprp effects on property values in Maryland”

² <https://www.thevpc.org/latest-news/9432/>

SB630

Uploaded by: Robert Cassilly

Position: FAV

ROBERT G. CASSILLY
Harford County Executive



ROBERT S. McCORD
Director of Administration

February 17, 2026

The Honorable William C. Smith
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Letter of Support for Senate Bill 630 – Overhead Transmission Lines and Eminent Domain – Property Value – Damages

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the citizens of Harford County, I am writing to express strong support for Senate Bill 630.

The power of eminent domain is one of the most significant authorities granted to government and utilities, and with that authority must come a clear and fair commitment to protecting the rights of property owners. While infrastructure improvements are sometimes necessary to meet statewide energy needs, homeowners should not be forced to bear disproportionate financial losses when projects negatively impact their property values.

Senate Bill 630 recognizes an important reality: the impacts of large overhead transmission lines often extend well beyond the land that is physically acquired. Residents living adjacent to or near these projects may experience measurable declines in property value, yet under current law they frequently have limited options for seeking compensation. This legislation restores balance by ensuring that homeowners have a fair opportunity to pursue damages when they are adversely affected by projects implemented through eminent domain.

Property ownership represents one of the most significant investments families make. When government action or utility projects diminish that investment, citizens deserve transparency, fairness, and a meaningful path to seek relief. SB 630 strengthens confidence in the eminent domain process by reinforcing the principle that the burden of public infrastructure should not fall unfairly on individual property owners.

Harford County Celebrates 250 Years ~ 1773-2023

410.638.3350 | 410.879.2000 | 220 South Main Street, Bel Air, Maryland 21014 | www.harfordcountymd.gov

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The Honorable William C. Smith

February 17, 2026

Page 2

Additionally, by allowing recovery of reasonable legal costs under certain circumstances, the bill helps ensure that residents are not discouraged from defending their rights simply because of the financial barriers associated with litigation.

Harford County supports responsible infrastructure development, but it must be achieved in a manner that respects private property rights and treats residents fairly. Senate Bill 630 strikes an appropriate balance between infrastructure needs and homeowner protections.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 630.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued service to the people of Maryland.

Sincerely,



Robert G. Cassilly

MDFB - Support - SB630 - Overhead Transmission Lin

Uploaded by: Ryan Snow

Position: FAV



Maryland Farm Bureau

3358 Davidsonville Road | Davidsonville, MD 21035
410-922-3426 | www.mdfarmbureau.com

February 19, 2026

To: Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

RE: **Support of SB630 – Overhead Transmission Lines and Eminent Domain – Property Value – Damages**

On behalf of the over 7,000 member families of the Maryland Farm Bureau, I submit this letter in strong support of SB630, relating to overhead transmission lines, eminent domain, and compensation for residential property owners affected by nearby condemnation actions.

SB630 provides important and long-overdue protections for Maryland residents whose property values are harmed when land is taken for the construction of overhead transmission lines. Under the bill, a property owner may bring an action for damages if the condemned property is:

- Within 300 feet of their residence, and
- Taken as part of constructing an overhead transmission line or related infrastructure.

Maryland Farm Bureau strongly supports this approach. Property owners, especially those in rural and agricultural communities, are often disproportionately impacted when large infrastructure projects alter landscapes, diminish home values, or disrupt long-standing land uses. SB630 ensures that residents can seek compensation for diminished property value and may also recover reasonable attorney fees if damages are awarded.

The bill further strengthens fairness and accountability in condemnation proceedings by requiring that:

- When the assessed value exceeds the condemning authority's appraisal, courts must award the defendant's counsel fees and charge certain costs to the plaintiff.
- Similar counsel-fee protections apply on appeal, ensuring fairness at all stages of the process related to overhead transmission line condemnations.

These updates reflect a meaningful shift toward protecting homeowners from bearing uncompensated financial losses associated with eminent domain actions for transmission infrastructure.

For years, Maryland Farm Bureau has opposed unnecessary takings and supported stronger protections for property owners. While past legislation focused heavily on preserved or agricultural land, SB630 expands essential safeguards to residential properties directly impacted by nearby transmission line condemnation decisions. This is a logical and greatly needed extension of property-rights protections.

Maryland residents deserve fairness, transparency, and meaningful compensation when public utility infrastructure harms the value of their homes. SB630 accomplishes exactly that.

For these reasons, Maryland Farm Bureau respectfully urges a favorable report on SB630.



Maryland Farm Bureau

3358 Davidsonville Road | Davidsonville, MD 21035
410-922-3426 | www.mdfarmbureau.com

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tyler Hough". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned below a horizontal line that extends to the left.

Tyler Hough

Director of Government Relations

Please contact Tyler Hough, though@marylandfb.org with any questions

SB630

Uploaded by: Scott Molony

Position: FAV

410 Dotsie Drive
Westminster, MD 21158
Spmolony11@gmail.com
240-818-8546
February 27, 2026

Honorable William C. Smith, Jr, Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee
Honorable Jeffrey D. Waldstreicher, Vice-Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee
Members, Judicial Proceedings Committee

SUBJ: Support with Amendment, SB 630/HB 1244

Dear Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members,

My name is Scott Molony. I am the owner of a residential property in Carroll County, MD located directly adjacent to the proposed Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP) path. I am a former Chief Accountant, Supervisor, Accountant, and Auditor of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), during which I was responsible for policy development and related implementation and compliance underpinning cost-based utility rates. My comments represent my personal expert knowledge and do not represent the position of FERC or any other Federal Government organization.

I strongly support the provisions of HB 1244/SB 630, but respectfully urge and request critical amendments to ensure the bill appropriately achieves its stated purpose, that is, to afford property owners within value diminishing distance to such overhead transmission lines to pursue and receive damages for lost value as a result of such projects. I respectfully request the following amendments:

1. Increase the distance identified in the proposed Real Property Article, Section 12-104(H)(1)(I) from 300 feet to 1000 feet, and
2. Change "residence" in the proposed Real Property Article, Section 12-104(H)(1)(I) to "property" or otherwise define "residence" to include the platted boundaries of the property on which the residence is built.

MPRP, and similarly proposed projects, represents a massive transfer of wealth from Marylanders to a few corporate benefactors with unparalleled detrimental impacts to Marylander property, wealth, and health, without any benefit to Maryland. MPRP places the cost of Virginia's irresponsible data center citing and related power demands principally on the backs of the hundreds of property owners directly on the proposed route and those within value-diminishing distance to it, as well as Marylanders in general through rate increases.

PJM's selection of PSEG, an out-of-state utility company, virtually guaranteed PSEG would propose a wholly greenfield project as well as PSEG's refusal to consider appropriate alternatives (including existing rights- of-way or minimal expansion thereto for additional towers), as such alternatives reduce profits PSEG stands to recognize receive through a guaranteed rate of return on every dollar spent.

My family, and many others adjacent to this and other overhead transmission route proposals, stand to suffer significant losses in property value if such projects move forward. Such loss in property value should be paid by the project developers to property owners and included in the cost of the project for recovery from all ratepayers. The few hundred property owners who are on the route or adjacent to it

should not be forced to subsidize corporate profits and the public at large by suffering uncompensated reduction in property value for such projects.

The requested modifications are wholly appropriate and necessary to ensure property owners adjacent to approved overhead transmission lines are compensated for the certain reduction in property value in the event a CPCN is issued and the project(s) moves forward. All customers, and not just those directly on or adjacent to, a transmission line, should share the full cost of such projects. As it currently stands, only those properties subject to eminent domain, but not those properties adjacent to and suffering significant reduction in property value as a result of being within value diminishing and health detrimental distances, are compensated. Such uncompensated costs are unrecognized project costs, for which only an unfortunate few bear the burden at significant personal financial and generational loss. My home is roughly 370 feet from the proposed MPRP; and as currently written, HB 1244/SB 630 would not provide any relief for the certain, significant reduction in property value my family would suffer if the project moves forward.

Numerous studies demonstrate a clear link between overhead transmission lines and reduced property values for those within 1000 feet or more of such projects. Others demonstrate a causal relationship between overhead transmission, extremely low frequency electromagnetic radiation and detrimental health effects to humans and animals, as well as to crops. Most sources cite the minimum safe distance from high voltage transmission lines to be 700-1000 feet, and some sources recommend a minimum of 1320 feet (1/4 mile), all impacting property values within such distances.

Finally, the requested amendments reduce the likelihood of overhead transmission developers making minor, meaningless route adjustments (e.g. a few feet to a couple hundred feet) solely for the purpose of avoiding the compensation your bill is intended to ensure, but without any real reduction in the diminution of value to adjacent property owners. Property owners within a minimum of 1000 feet from transmission rights-of-way and/or the land acquired for such transmission, will suffer a significant reduction in property value. Such reduction in value should be part of the public burden and the total cost of the project, not just individual property owner burden, if a CPCN is approved.

For the foregoing reasons, I strongly support HB 1244/SB 630 and strongly request the stated modifications to the bill to appropriately address the certain diminution in value that will be suffered by property owners adjacent to such projects.

I appreciate and applaud your introduction of this bill. I am happy to discuss my comments and other recommendations about this and other bills.

Sincerely,

Scott Molony

SB 630_HB 1244_ Overhead Transmission Lines and E

Uploaded by: Trudy Tibbals

Position: FAV

SB 630/HB 1244: Overhead Transmission Lines and Eminent Domain - Property Value - Damages: Please vote to **SUPPORT** this bill.

Dear Judicial Proceedings Committee:

I am writing to respectfully, strongly **support SB 630/HB 1244**, concerning *Overhead Transmission Lines and Eminent Domain – Property Value – Damages*.

When private property is impacted by the construction of overhead transmission lines through the use of eminent domain, property owners often experience measurable loss in property value, diminished use and enjoyment of their land, and long-term market uncertainty. While infrastructure development may serve a broader public purpose, individual landowners should not bear a disproportionate financial burden as a result.

SB 630/HB 1244 helps ensure that property owners are fairly compensated when overhead transmission lines negatively affect their property values. Eminent domain authority carries significant power, and with that power comes the responsibility to provide just and equitable compensation.

This legislation reinforces fundamental property rights by recognizing that impacts extend beyond the physical footprint of transmission structures. Visual intrusion, development limitations, and market perception can materially affect value. Providing a clear standard for assessing and compensating damages promotes fairness, transparency, and public trust in the process.

Protecting private property rights while pursuing necessary infrastructure projects is not mutually exclusive. SB 630/HB 1244 strikes an appropriate balance by ensuring that Maryland residents are treated fairly when their property is affected.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to **support SB 630/HB 1244**.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Respectfully,

Trudy Tibbals

SB0630 Seibel.pdf

Uploaded by: Derek Seibel

Position: FWA

February 17, 2026

To: Honorable Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

From: Derek Seibel, 2490 Barrister Dr., New Windsor, MD

Honorable Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

I am writing today in support, with amendments, of SB0630 Overhead Transmission Lines and Eminent Domain - Property Value - Damages. My family is one of thousands of Maryland families whose lives have been derailed following the announcement of the Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP). The proposed path of the MPRP runs directly behind our property to the north, adjacent to the property line of our next-door neighbor to the east, and wraps around in front of our property to the south. This high voltage transmission line would render our house unlivable while simultaneously substantially devaluing the property and making it extremely hard to sell, even at a substantial loss. Despite this diminishment of our property value, we will receive no compensation because our land will not be forcibly seized via eminent domain. Our property is less than 300 feet from the proposed right-of-way, but our home is just over 400 feet from the right-of-way, with my 6-year-old son's room being the closest (followed by my 5-year-old daughter's room, and my 4 month old son's room). Studies have consistently shown that deleterious health effects are possible within 500 feet of high voltage transmission lines. I support the intent of SB0630, but I think the distance should be expanded to 500 feet from 300 feet as most people would not gamble their children's future health by choosing to live within 500 feet of a high voltage transmission line. 500 feet is also an agreed upon metric for community impacts in CPCN applications, with the number of residences within 500 feet of a proposed transmission line being included in routing study impact metrics. Providing the means to receive some compensation for the real property value decrease properties within 500 feet of a transmission line experience would shorten the time it will take to claw our way back to financial stability for those of us who will be forced to move if the MPRP is constructed. I ask that the honorable members of this committee provide a favorable recommendation for SB0630, with the amendment to increase the distance from 300 feet to 500 feet.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input, for your time, and for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Derek Seibel
2490 Barrister Dr

New Windsor, MD, 21776

Drseibel21@gmail.com

(757)871-9093