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United States Senate

COMMITTEES:
ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS
FINANCE
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COMMISSION ON SECURITY
AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

September 24, 2024

Maryland Public Service Commission
6 St Paul St #1600
Baltimore, MD 21202

Dear Members of the Maryland Public Service Commission:

We are writing to express our concerns about the proposed Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project. As you know, PJM Interconnection LLC selected New Jersey developer, PSEG's, plan to build a new 70-mile, 500kV transmission power line in Maryland. We understand and appreciate PJM's goals to improve the region's grid capacity and invest in a resilient and reliable system.

However, as the Maryland Public Service Commission prepares for PSEG to formally submit its application, we respectfully request that the Commission take into account the consequences of the project on the State's agricultural sector, historic heritage, and conservation goals.

The proposed route will impact Carroll, Frederick, and Baltimore Counties, which carry the majority of Maryland's conservation easements and are home to many rural communities. Conservation easements have proven critical to protecting Maryland's farmland and wildlife habitats and in achieving our shared federal, state, and local Chesapeake Bay Watershed restoration goals. They are legally binding agreements that restrict certain types of development on designated lands, ensuring that they remain preserved, in most cases, in perpetuity. Conservation easements, which are predicated on the promise of permanence, enabled Maryland to become a national model for smart growth.

As the Commission evaluates the potential impacts of the proposed transmission line, it is critical it thoroughly assess and explore alternative routes and mitigation strategies that would minimize the project's impact on rural residents and their livelihoods. We urge the Commission to engage with community stakeholders, landowners, and local conservation and preservation organizations to gather insights on how best to lessen the project's impacts. It is imperative the decision-making process reflects a comprehensive understanding of the social and environmental implications of the proposed project, including any impacts on overburdened and underserved communities.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We appreciate your commitment to balancing the need for reliable infrastructure with community input and the preservation of Maryland's unique resources.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Benjamin L. Cardin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "B" and "C".

Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator