

My name is Barbara Baker, and I live in Woodbine in Western Howard County.

I am here to speak in favor of Howard County Bill CB59-2026 to put a place a pause on approvals of solar farms in the County, because the lack of clear standards, processes, transparency and alignment with Maryland State law has opened the Western portion of the County to rapid growth that can have significant community impact and change the overall rural nature of Western Howard County.

Under the current regulations, a landowner, who does not have to be an owner operator of the farm, can lease 16 acres or 20% of the farm's acreage to a solar energy company for a solar farm. There are at least 15 such solar farms currently in various stages of the development process, many of these are on agricultural preservation land. These 15 proposed solar farms are likely just the tip of the iceberg, because current county regulations do not put a limit on the number of solar farms permitted in an area. This will have a significant impact on existing communities and change the aspects that entice people to visit and live in Western Howard County.

A pause in the approvals is necessary to consider:

- Agricultural Preservation Land usage –
 - Maryland State does not allow solar farms on agricultural land preserved under Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation, but Howard County is allowing it on County farmland preserved through the county program.
- Status of landowner –
 - Lack of owner/operator clause opens the area to corporate takeover, rather than helping the small farmer
- Community impact –
 - The current process for approval of 2 MW solar farms lacks transparency to the public. Most neighboring homeowners do not know until the public notice to attend a community outreach meeting (euphemism for the meeting to inform the community that the project is happening). This is well after

plans are drawn and the solar company has dedicated funds to the project. This is “too little too late” for community engagement or public transparency

- Limitations on growth –
 - Not only is Howard County the only county to allow solar on preservation farmland, it is also only 1 of 4 counties that did not create a priority preservation area to limit solar on preserved farmland.

Thank you for your time

Statement of Doug Siglin on Council Bill 59-2026

Chair Jones, Vice-Chair Rigby and Councilmembers, I am Doug Siglin. I am a retired environmental policy person based in DC and Annapolis. My family and I have lived in southwest Howard County for more than two decades.

The bottom line is that I ask you to reject Council Bill 59.

In the past few years, Howard County has become state leader in climate progress and particularly in solar energy development. The County signed the largest solar power purchase agreement of any Maryland county, a project that meets more than half of County government's electricity needs and is projected to save close to ninety million dollars over its life. This year, the County became the first jurisdiction in Maryland to develop its own community solar. Solar generation across the County has grown by nearly forty percent in two years, to more than 150 megawatts. That is environmental leadership worth protecting now and into the next administration.

It is also how the County keeps a promise it has made to its residents. Howard County committed to cut greenhouse gas emissions sixty percent by 2030 and to reach net zero by 2045. We spent significant funds to develop a technically sophisticated Climate Forward plan showing us how to get there. A key element is decarbonizing the energy supply by, among other things, eliminating barriers to solar development. The plan calls for pairing that solar development with battery storage, so we can cut emissions and stay powered when the grid goes down.

Council Bill 59 goes the opposite way, freezing solar projects over one megawatt for up to a year. Where our climate plan says to remove the barriers, this bill builds new ones. We are only a few years from 2030. We have no room to slow down.

If the state's new solar law raises questions that our county staff hasn't yet understood, they should study them. But we do not need a moratorium, or a mass meeting, or forced new legislation to do that. We have talented professional staff who can learn while the projects keep moving. Howard County doesn't need more work or more barriers. It needs more investment and more action.

Like so many others, my family moved to Howard County for the thoughtful, progressive community it offers its residents. Progress towards cheap, clean, healthy energy is a big part of that. Please keep moving forward. Thank you.

CB-59

TO: The Members of the Howard County Council

We are DeEtte and Howard Smith and reside at 17479 Timberleigh Way, Woodbine. We have lived in Western Howard since 1991 and raised three daughters here.

We are in attendance tonight to support Howard County Bill CB59-2026, being introduced by Councilman Yungmann this evening to *pause* solar panel installations, particularly on farms in Preservation and on private land around the County in general. Our reasons are many and we believe are worthy of consideration by the Council, and you are certain to hear many of those tonight during public testimony.

One of our primary concerns—and there are several—has to do with the very meaning of the term “Farmland Forever”. We can certainly appreciate the plight of the relatively small, family-owned and operated farms in trying to remain viable in this ever-shifting economic environment. One of the Program’s original goals was to provide additional tax incentives to these farmers in exchange for the promise to maintain these properties as working farms essentially *ad infinitum* rather than sell-out to developers in order to survive. So far, so good.

The current legislation in Howard County permits solar panel installations on no more than 20% of a farm in Preservation, solely as a means of providing the resident farmer with a stable source of income through the sale of that power to the local utilities. The language of that bill is also specific in defining the possessor of that land as the owner and operator, **not** an investor who neither farms the land nor lives on it.

We are **not** opposed to solar—only a Luddite or a thorough-going climate change denier would think in those terms. Clean energy is indeed the wave of the future, and it’s clear from the existing legislation that the State and the County agree. However, our County in its enthusiasm to embrace solar power failed to take into account the impact of these projects on the surrounding properties. True, there do exist requirements to “hide” and “obscure” these installations as much as possible so as not to degrade the surrounding viewshed, but it failed to address where on these properties such fields of panels should be placed to have the least impact on surrounding residences.

The Woodbine Solar Project, located immediately behind our homes, would embrace some 16 acres of panels standing approximately 11.5 feet in height, placed within a few feet of our property lines. Over the course of two well-attended community meetings on the issue we were given vague assurances that the required plantings would effectively hide those acres of panels, but such vegetation will take years if not decades to reach the height required to effectively mask these tall, industrial panels. In the meantime, we will have lost one of the best selling points for our homes as it will have ceased to back on an actual well-known and appreciated working farm. When you’re in your mid-70’s, this becomes a real issue.

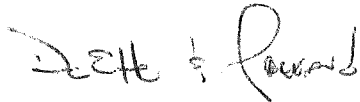
As one local real estate agent put it, “*Might as well back to a loading dock at a Walmart*”.

The current owner claims that he plans to have cattle graze under these panels. Cattle require water and that means a well. Additionally, the panels will need to be cleaned periodically—more water. Dry wells are not unknown out here, and we are concerned that the amount of water required will negatively impact the aquifer that we all depend on.

And then there is the environmental impact in terms of run-off and erosion. The project maps what we have been shown indicate a proposed drainage system that would make an ancient Roman engineer blush in embarrassment. Rt 94/Woodbine Road that serves as the farm's eastern boundary regularly floods during heavy rains because the current infrastructure is inadequate to the task. Poorly-controlled run-off can only make matters worse.

The bottom line here is this: this is effectively an industrial operation on Preserved farmland that provides no benefit, immediate or otherwise, to the surrounding community. There are altogether too many unanswered (and ignored) questions that need answers, and the best way of achieving that end is to vote in favor of this Pause.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "DeEtte & Howard".

DeEtte and Howard Smith

I am Jeanne Bolton, a member of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Columbia and a resident of Howard County for 38 years. I am requesting that Council members reject **CB59-2026**.

First I want to thank the council for all their hard work—particularly the work you have done to help the county meet Howard County's Climate Forward Plan. I have been proud to be in a county that is in the forefront of helping mitigate our climate crisis.

I have slept better at night knowing that we are doing everything we can do to protect my children and grandchildren from the ravages of climate change.

SO WHAT ARE YOU THINKING!! —even considering this bill that would put the brakes on this important work.

I'm not a scientist or policy analyst but it's a no brainer that the county's solar projects make abundant sense..

#1 Obviously solar is a huge part of our efforts to combat climate change.

#2 Solar project provide critical additional income for struggling farmers.

#3 Stopping solar projects would greatly hurt solar manufacturing and installation companies—that already have been under financial assault by the federal government.

And last but not least—a stoppage or slow down of the county project to provide solar to low income families would be devastating to our most vulnerable residents who are barely holding on paying for food, utilities and housing. They need our help now—not in a year.

Please reject CB59-2026 Donald Trump wants to kill solar. Don't be on his side and give him help. Be there for us and our children and grandchildren.

Thank you!

Respectfully submitted by:
Jeanne Bolton
7546 Red Cravat Ct.
Columbia, MD 20146



HoCoClimateAction.org
Howard County, Maryland

Testimony: CB59-2026 - Solar Collector Facilities - Temporary Hold

Hearing Date: Sept. 22, 2026

Bill Sponsor: Councilmember David Yungmann

Submitting: Liz Feighner for Howard County Climate Action

Position: Unfavorable

I'm Liz Feighner, a 34-year resident of Laurel, District 3, and I'm testifying for [HoCo Climate Action](#) which is a [350.org](#) local chapter and a grassroots organization representing approximately 1,400 subscribers. We are also a member of the [Climate Justice Wing](#) of the [Maryland Legislative Coalition](#). The climate crisis is playing out before our eyes catastrophically across the globe, and solar is one of the key answers here. Therefore, I respectfully request that you vote unfavorably for CB59, an irresponsible bill.

Howard County released its [Climate Action Plan](#) in 2023, committing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 60% by 2030 and to achieve net zero by 2045. To date, we have achieved a 26% reduction in our community-wide greenhouse gas emissions, with the annual rate of these reductions increasing from 2.7% to 3.7%. To date we have installed 180MW of solar which is about 41% of our goal of 437MW of solar by 2030. Any delays make these goals less attainable.

The Trump administration is working to block solar-energy deployment and other renewables and boost profits of oil and gas industry polluters. The Big Ugly Bill set strict deadlines for solar projects to qualify for federal investment tax credits, which can account for as much as 30% of project costs. The proposed delay due to CB59 will jeopardize meeting these deadlines in order to qualify for the incentives. It would make those projects more expensive to build without the federal tax credits and more importantly, less likely to build at all. In addition, PJM's mismanagement, our regional grid manager, has created huge delays for renewable energy projects and we can't afford any more unnecessary delays. Fortunately, Howard County had the foresight to enter into landmark solar-power purchase agreements in 2020 and in 2026 that will save county taxpayers more than \$100 million in energy costs over the next two decades and combat rising energy costs.

Solar is substantially cleaner and cheaper than conventional fossil fuels or nuclear electricity and the quickest to deploy. Delaying solar development will be detrimental to

our pocket books and to our fight preventing the worst impacts of the climate crisis. As Bill McKibben has said: Winning slowly is the same as losing. We must stick to our goals for the sake of ourselves, our children and grandchildren by accelerating key solutions such as solar, not unnecessarily delaying them.

I respectfully request that you reject CB59 as it is not only an irresponsible bill but is contrary to state law ([HB1036](#)). Section [§7-218](#) of the Public Utilities Article says explicitly that local jurisdictions may not adopt laws or regulations that prohibit the construction or operation, or deny site development plans, of solar energy generating stations that meet the state law's requirements and furthermore must expedite the review and approval of site development plans that meet those requirements.

Respectfully Submitted,

Howard County Climate Action
Submitted by Liz Feighner, Steering and Advocacy Committee
www.HoCoClimateAction.org
HoCoClimateAction@gmail.com



HoCoClimateAction.org
Howard County, Maryland

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Bill Sponsor: Councilmember David Yungmann

Submitting: Liz Feighner, Ruth Alice White for Howard County Climate Action

Position: Unfavorable

Updated Testimony – Oct. 4, 2026

*We are writing to **oppose CB59 even if amendment 1 passes** as the proposed amendment does not change the detrimental effect this legislation will have on solar projects urgently needed in Howard County.*

***RECA was passed in 2025**, so Howard County has been operating under this law for over a year. If any supposedly issues exist with this law, then those should have been addressed during the 2026 Maryland legislative session. Any delays now will effectively kill many of the solar projects seeking to proceed and would likely make energy more expensive for Howard County consumers.*

*The Trump Administration passed the Big Ugly Bill and imposed strict deadlines for completing a solar project. If these deadlines are not met, then solar projects will lose the federal investment tax credits (ITC). **Many projects have a deadline to be operational by December 31, 2027 (only 15 months from now) and could lose out on 30 – 50% of the cost of the project. Projects intended to benefit the low-to-middle income (LMI) households would lose out on 40 - 50% of the costs, practically killing the projects and causing LMI households to lose out on discounted electricity rates of 25% or more.** At a time when many households are struggling, they would be denied this needed and urgent relief. (Details on the Big Ugly Bill's restrictions are at the end of this testimony.)*

While we applaud that the amendment removes the moratorium, unfortunately it specifies that any projects on ALPP easement properties must go through a conditional use process. Any proposal that imposes a conditional use process for ANY property is prohibited by state law. Passing this bill invites legal actions that would waste time and taxpayers funds to defend this bill which is quite clearly contrary to the Maryland code.

***We urge the council to reject CB59** if it requires a moratorium or imposes a conditional-use process that is quite clearly contrary to the Maryland code and costly to Howard County households.*

As long-time residents of Howard County, we are testifying for [HoCo Climate Action](#), a [350.org](#) local chapter and a grassroots organization representing approximately 1,400 subscribers. We are also a member of the [Climate Justice Wing](#) of the [Maryland Legislative Coalition](#). The climate crisis is playing out before our eyes catastrophically across the globe, and solar is one of the key answers here. Therefore, we respectfully request that you vote unfavorably for CB59, an irresponsible bill.

Howard County released its [Climate Action Plan](#) in 2023, committing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 60% by 2030 and to achieve net zero by 2045. To date, we have achieved a 26% reduction in our community-wide greenhouse gas emissions, with the annual rate of these reductions increasing from 2.7% to 3.7%. To date we have installed 180MW of solar which is about 41% of our goal of 437MW of solar by 2030. Any delays make these goals less attainable.

The Trump administration is working to block solar-energy deployment and other renewables and boost profits of oil and gas industry polluters. [The Big Ugly Bill set strict deadlines for solar projects to qualify for federal investment tax credits](#), which can account for as much as 30% of project costs. The proposed delay due to CB59 will jeopardize solar projects meeting these deadlines in order to qualify for the incentives. It would make those projects more expensive to build without the federal tax credits and more importantly, less likely to build at all. In addition, PJM's mismanagement, our regional grid manager, has created huge delays for renewable energy projects and we can't afford any more unnecessary delays. Fortunately, Howard County had the foresight to enter into landmark solar-power purchase agreements in 2020 and in 2026 that will save county taxpayers more than \$100 million in energy costs over the next two decades and combat rising energy costs.

Solar is substantially cleaner and cheaper than conventional fossil fuels or nuclear electricity and the quickest to deploy. Delaying solar development will be detrimental to our pocket books and to our fight preventing the worst impacts of the climate crisis. As Bill McKibben has said: Winning slowly is the same as losing. We must stick to our goals for the sake of ourselves, our children and grandchildren by accelerating key solutions such as solar, not unnecessarily delaying them.

I respectfully request that you reject CB59 as it is not only an irresponsible bill but is contrary to state law ([HB1036](#)). Section [§7-218](#) of the Public Utilities Article says explicitly that local jurisdictions may not adopt laws or regulations that prohibit the construction or operation, or deny site development plans, of solar energy generating stations that meet the state law's requirements and furthermore must expedite the review and approval of site development plans that meet those requirements.

Respectfully Submitted,

Howard County Climate Action

Submitted by Ruth Alice White, Liz Feighner, Steering and Advocacy Committee

www.HoCoClimateAction.org

HoCoClimateAction@gmail.com

Rules for federal investment tax credits (ITC):

Federal ITC ended Dec. 31, 2025 for residential solar due to the Big Ugly Bill but are still available for commercial solar. The Big Ugly Bill put more restrictions on commercial solar with shorter deadlines than the Inflation Reduction Act had instituted.

- If you “start construction” (physically or a putting down a “safe harbor” 5% deposit of final costs) by Dec. 31, 2025, you have 4 years to complete the project and fall under the old rules of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) for domestic content/foreign content – Prohibited Foreign Entity (PFE). Putting down a “safe harbor” deposit is for only systems less than 1.5 MW. If larger than 1.5 MW, then only physical work qualifies as starting construction.
- Projects that start construction after Dec. 31, 2025 but before July 4, 2026 still qualify under the old timeline of 4 years, but must meet the more restrictive PFE requirements to qualify.
- **Projects that commence after July 4, 2026 must be placed in service by December 31, 2027 to access investment tax credits.**

[Here is some information provided by L4GG about all of this](#). Any delay for those projects that started after July 4 would probably kill the project due to the loss of fed tax credits as those could be as much as 30 - 50% of the cost of the system and harm the Low-to-Moderate community.

LMI households in our area would lose out on utility bill savings that come with discounted community-solar subscriptions which could be 25% or more. Any community solar farm that meets certain criteria for serving a LMI community are eligible for an additional 10 - 20% bonus on top of the federal ITC of 30%. Any delay in meeting strict deadlines will be costly to the LMI community if these projects are cancelled due the loss of the federal ITC which could be 50% of the total cost of the project.

Testimony: CB59-2026 - Solar Collector Facilities - Temporary Hold

Hearing Date: Sept. 22, 2026

Bill Sponsor: Councilmember David Yungmann

Submitting: Liz Feighner, D3

Position: Unfavorable

I'm Liz Feighner, a 34-year resident of Laurel, District 3, and a member of HoCo Climate Action. I'm testifying as a concerned citizen and activist about the climate emergency. We see the climate crisis happening right before our eyes, and solar is one of the key answers in preventing the worst impacts of the climate crisis.

Therefore, I respectfully request that you vote unfavorably for CB59 with or without amendment 1. This bill would essentially kill many solar projects in the works as a delay will threaten the viability of these projects whether or not the amendment passes.

Howard County released its Climate Action Plan in 2023, committing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 60% by 2030 and to achieve net zero by 2045. To date, we have achieved a 26% reduction in our community-wide greenhouse gas emissions, with the annual rate of these reductions increasing from 2.7% to 3.7%. To date we have installed 180MW of solar which is about 41% of our goal of **437MW of solar by 2030**. Any delays make these goals less attainable.

The Trump administration is working to block solar-energy deployment and other renewables and boost profits of oil and gas industry polluters. The Big Ugly Bill set strict deadlines for solar projects to qualify for federal investment tax credits, which can account for as much as 30-50% of project costs. The proposed delay due to CB59 would make those projects more expensive to build without the federal tax credits and more importantly, less likely to build at all.

Many projects have a **deadline to be operational by December 31, 2027 (only 15 months from now) and could lose out on 30 – 50% of the cost of the project.**

Projects intended to benefit the low-to-middle income (LMI) households would lose out on 40 - 50% of the costs, practically killing the projects and causing LMI households to lose out on discounted electricity rates of 25% or more. At a time when many households are struggling, they would be denied this needed and

urgent relief because many in the county are only concerned about their own viewshed.

In addition, PJM's mismanagement, our regional grid manager, has created huge delays for renewable energy projects and we can't afford anymore unnecessary delays. Fortunately, Howard County had the foresight to enter into landmark solar-power purchase agreements in 2020 and in 2026 that will save county taxpayers more than \$100 million in energy costs over the next two decades and combat rising energy costs.

Solar is substantially cleaner and cheaper than conventional fossil fuels or nuclear electricity and the quickest to deploy. Delaying solar development will be detrimental to our pocket books and to our fight preventing the worst impacts of the climate crisis. As Bill McKibben has said: Winning slowly is the same as losing. We must stick to our goals for the sake of ourselves, our children and grandchildren by accelerating key solutions, not unnecessarily delaying them.

During this time of incredible economic stress on the agriculture community, solar can help farmers continue farming. Agrivoltaics is a bonus, putting land under solar arrays to use for crops or grazing. 3000MW of solar on ag land affects less than 1.5% of all farmland in Maryland. In contrast, development has destroyed almost half of all farmland in Maryland over the past 50 years. Farms with consistent solar income are less likely to need to sell out to developers.

I respectfully request that you vote unfavorable for CB59 as it is not only an unwise bill but contrary to State law (HB1036). Section §7-218 - (h) states the local jurisdictions may not adopt laws or regulations that prohibit the construction or operation; or deny site development plans of solar energy generating stations that meet the state law's requirements.

Respectfully Submitted,

Liz Feighner

Testimony in Support of Council Bill 59 of 2026

Solar Collector Facilities Temporary Hold

Mike McAllister | 15254 Ridge Hunt Drive, Woodbine, MD 21797

Good evening. I'm Mike McAllister. My family lives in Woodbine beside Circle D Tennis Club. Please pass CB59.

Circle D entered Howard County's agricultural preservation program in 1990 under easement HO-90-14-E. Taxpayers paid for lasting development restrictions. Even a proposed tenant house needed Agricultural Land Preservation Board approval in 2005. Now a commercial solar facility is proposed beside my home.

Section 3 of Maryland's Renewable Energy Certainty Act says existing obligations and contract rights "may not be impaired in any way by this Act." The County's implementation memo says qualifying solar projects no longer need conditional-use approval, yet expressly preserves the County's rights under its easements. It calls for Agricultural Board advisory comments.

So what does Circle D's easement permit? Who decides? And what happens if the Board objects? Those answers should be public before the County approves the project.

The economic stakes are real. A 2025 study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences examined 8.8 million property sales and 3,699 solar sites. It estimated residential values within three miles fell 4.8 percent on average, while agricultural and vacant land values within two miles rose 19.4 percent.

Those figures do not predict my home's value. They expose the potential imbalance: one property owner gains a commercial opportunity, while neighboring families face a risk to their homes without sharing in the proceeds.

Then there is the five-percent threshold. State law limits solar development within certain Priority Preservation Areas established before 2025. Howard County has zero qualifying acres, despite decades of investment in preserving farmland. That protection does not presently operate here.

Solar can deliver public benefits. But statewide benefits do not erase local obligations or the risks borne by individual families. Responsible energy development includes stewardship of what taxpayers already bought.

CB59 creates the time to identify what authority the state preempted, what rights the County still holds, and how residents can participate before approvals proceed. Approving projects first would turn that review into an explanation after the fact.

Please pass CB59. Tell us what Farmland Forever means before allowing preserved land to become a commercial power site.

Thank you.

Testimony in Support of CB59-2026 by Shannon Singleton

I stand today in support of the proposed moratorium legislation, CB50-2026. I am a resident of Woodbine in Western Howard County. My neighbors and I are personally affected by a proposed solar project on a 133-acre preserved farm near or adjacent to our homes. But I am not speaking today in specific opposition to that solar farm. Instead, I want to focus my testimony on this proposed legislation, which provides a much-needed opportunity to consider and instill a proper process, and will undoubtedly have County-wide effects. The General Assembly's enactment of HB-1036 has upended the process of solar development in Maryland and the exact mechanisms by which any given application should proceed are unclear and often contradictory when comparing State and County law. I support Mr. Yungmann's proposal, because it would institute a temporary pause on solar farm approvals to allow Howard County to analyze, develop, and implement a clearer and more transparent process, including the County's review and approval process as it relates to zoning, permitting, public works, and environmental review, as well as clarify when the public has an opportunity for meaningful input.

My testimony is not a matter of NIMBY opposition, but rather a matter of requesting good governance. The County needs to appropriately balance the development of alternative energy sources like solar with the need to preserve the County's agricultural history and soil productivity, and it needs to ensure that all interested stakeholders can easily determine what processes must be followed and how public input can be meaningfully solicited for any developments proceeding directly before the County. However, I cannot extricate ourselves entirely from the specific effect of this sort of development via the Boarman farm proposal, so I will explain our history. I am part of a

Testimony in Support of CB59-2026 by Shannon Singleton

group of homeowners adjacent to a 133-acre farm in the County's Ag Land Preservation Program. Many of my neighbors have lived in these houses for three decades or more, and our initial review of the project documents presented to us in public meetings showed that 11.5-foot-tall panels would be installed a hundred feet from backyard property lines. We will be affected more than most by this project, but many other proposed solar projects will affect numerous people more than most. Any given project could be the biggest impact in the world to the neighboring properties, particularly if those properties are sited in areas with land protections like the ALPP, or historic sites/scenic routes, or simply a long history of agriculture and/or animal husbandry.

The lack of clarity regarding the approval process for proposed solar facility installations in our County is contrary to core "Open Howard" principles, including the objectives to improve government transparency, promote civic engagement, and improve the quality of life for all County residents. We have struggled to understand what the County's approval process is in light of HB-1036 and the preemption of certain regulatory duties of any county including Howard. For example, HB-1036 requires solar developers to "mitigate the visual impact of the solar station on preserved land." But what does it mean to "mitigate the visual impact of the solar station on" Forever Farmland? Should solar developers be required to place solar stations on more secluded areas of the farm? Similarly, Howard County's own Internal Memo dated July 11, 2025, discussing the impact of HB-1036, states that if the property housing the proposed solar project is in the County's ALP program, then the project is still required to go to the Agricultural Preservation Board.

Testimony in Support of CB59-2026 by Shannon Singleton

But when? What factors or criteria are being applied by the Ag Board when reviewing solar projects on Forever Farmland? Is there an opportunity for public input before the Ag Board? What is the outcome of that Ag Board review – are they making a recommendation to the DPZ? These are all reasonable questions and there is presently a very unreasonable lack of clarity on the answers.

There are currently 15 proposed solar projects at various stages of development in Howard County, including proposed solar farms on Forever Farmland. We understand that state legislators may address unintended consequences of HB-1036 in the next state legislative session to rectify that oversight, which a moratorium will work in tandem with to give the General Assembly time to resolve those issues. If the County charges forward at this point, it will be elevating swift development and a desperate scramble for vested development interests versus proper review of short- and long-term environmental impacts on watersheds and the Chesapeake Bay, preservation of agricultural farmland, and balance of stresses on a substandard electrical service network.

I will also note that, before the passage of HB-1036, Howard County required that in order for a solar project to be placed on preserved farmland, the owner was required to be personally farming the land (i.e., not simply leasing it out for others to farm). While the County cannot directly control state law, it can and should still maintain this provision for solar farm projects on Forever Farmland, because otherwise it is incentivizing corporate buyouts of preserved farmland for non-farming activities.

Testimony in Support of CB59-2026 by Shannon Singleton

All interested stakeholders can work together to balance the interests of renewable energy and preservation of agriculture. We *have* to figure out a way, since both interests are necessary for Howard County's long-term success. We should not sacrifice either for the sake of the other. If there was ever a time to press a "pause" button, it's right now, when we have nebulous local regulations, volatile state regulations, and the capacity to stabilize both within the next year. Good governance demands it.