



Date: 7 May 2020

Subject: **HCCA Testimony to Howard County Solar Task Force**

My name is Stu Kohn and I am the President of the Howard County Citizens Association, HCCA. We are steadfastly against any solar on designated Howard County Agricultural Preservation properties.

What is PRESERVATION? It is, “The act, process, or result of preserving something.” What is SACRED? It is, “Deserving to be respected and honored.” These two definitions should be fully respected and there should not be any exceptions. HCCA has been working with the Concerned Citizens of Western Howard County, the Greater Highland Crossroads Association, and residents who would be drastically affected by Solar Facilities on Agricultural Preservation. They bought their properties on good faith regarding the surrounding Preservation land. They deserve to be treated better than this! For those who bought into the Agricultural Preservation program have been financially compensated for relinquishing their rights to develop the land for non-agricultural uses. It is simply not logical or ethically proper to allow the land to be given over to Commercial Solar Facility (CSF) development. Why should the taxpayers of Howard County be penalized for other’s gains? Will this money be paid back with interest? If the decision is to allow CSF then shouldn’t the County be reimbursed for taking the land out of agricultural use? A precedent for this is the requirement for the land owner to reimburse their County when land is used for Ag Pres residential lots.

Why is Howard County the only County in the State that allows CSF development on Agricultural Preserved land?

The Council Bill – CB55-2019 on Page 3 states, “These conditional use petitions, if considered and approved under the present criteria in the Zoning Regulations, could lead to development which would be incompatible with surrounding agricultural uses.” This says it all.

Mr. Ted Mariani the President of the Concerned Citizens of Western Howard County stated when he testified in October 2019 on CB55, “Deferring further action on all pending cases dealing with Commercial Solar Facilities (CSF) until the State Task Force has presented its final report to the Governor, which must occur within one year of the date of the Order, (no later than August 2020) is both prudent and logical. This bill would allow ample time for Howard County to reexamine its policy on the development of CSF’s are in conformance with State policy and protects our vital Agricultural resources.”

In CR133-2020 the Resolution which created the Task Force it stipulates that its findings and recommendations to the County Council and the County Executive occur on or before July 1, 2020. You are to supplement those findings and recommendations once the Governor's Task Force on Renewable Energy and Siting (Executive Order 01.02.2019.09) has issued its final report due in August.

The interim report by the Maryland Task Force was submitted to the Governor in early December, giving an early glimpse into what we can expect from its final version, and what the conversations have been to date. The report included numerous recommendations aimed to help in-state solar growth. Its goal was to

- Recognize the need to desired vs. undesired solar siting locations.
- Maximize available rooftop and parking lot space for solar installations.
- Recognize the need to educate local governments concerning the rational of development for sustainable energy.“

On page 15 of the report it states, “Continuing to educate the public on how the landowner can utilize the program to bring renewable energy to the farm may assuage community concerns that solar energy developers are consuming agriculture lands without proper regard for the community or broader industry.”

A profound quote from Theodore Roosevelt reads as follows: “Here is your Country. Cherish these natural wonders, cherish the natural resources, cherish the history and romance as a sacred heritage, for your children and your children's children. Do not let selfish men or greedy interests skin your Country of its beauty, its riches or its romance.” If you substitute the word “County” for “Country” is this Howard County?

Please respect the meaning of Agricultural Preservation. Do not undo the clear intent of Howard County’s outstanding program which was supposed to be in perpetuity to protect and preserve our precious and sacred farm land.

Stu Kohn  
HCCA President