

From: [Montgomery County Farm Bureau](#)
To: kumar.barve@house.state.md.us
Cc: [Lonnie Luther](#); [Paula Linthicum](#); [Criss, Jeremy](#); [Colby Ferguson \(cferguson@mdfarmbureau.com\)](mailto:cferguson@mdfarmbureau.com); [Scheffel, Mike](#)
Subject: MCFB Input Blue Ribbon Solar Land Use Commission
Date: Friday, April 9, 2021 11:34:55 AM
Attachments: [MCFBInputBlueRibbonSolarLandUseCommission.pdf](#)

[EXTERNAL EMAIL]

Dear Delegate Barve:

Please find attached a letter regarding the proposed Blue Ribbon Solar Land Use Commission study results. The Montgomery County Farm Bureau seeks to protect our Agricultural Reserve. These study results could negatively impact our agricultural land.

Please do not hesitate to contact the MCFB, to provide further information on this matter. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Kim Smith

Kim Smith
Secretary
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April 7, 2021

Montgomery County Delegation

Dear Senators and Delegates:

Montgomery County Farm Bureau (MCFB) seeks to protect the Agricultural Reserve from widespread solar installations that will erode the 93,000 acres specifically designated for agricultural land use in our County. Recent House amendments to the Climate Solutions Now bill are a concern. The proposed Blue-Ribbon Solar Land Use Commission study results could negatively impact vital agricultural land use in the Agricultural Reserve.

As you are aware, by 2030 the 50% Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) would include 14.5% in-state solar. MCFB acknowledges the need to conduct a solar siting study to understand how Maryland will meet that goal. However, it is imperative that the statewide goal be met without solar installations permanently removing prime and productive agricultural land from utilization. Land used to grow food. It is important for the study to emphasize ways to increase solar development on impervious surfaces and land not used to produce food. Both the State and Counties own thousands of land acres in Maryland. Perhaps that is the first source for siting solar.

MCFB applauds the recent County Council passage of ZTA 20-01 mandating solar installations as Conditional Use on Class III and above soils and excluding Class I & II soils where most food is grown. ZTA 20-01 is consistent with the Maryland Farm Bureau Policy that does not support commercial solar energy facilities being built on prime and productive farmland specifically priority preservation areas. The Agricultural Reserve is Montgomery County's Priority Preservation Area. It needs to be protected.

Solar installations like other utilities (cell towers, etc.) are not accessory to the individual farm business and require Conditional Use approval. Conditional Use approvals include review by an independent hearing examiner who ensures master plan consistency and compatibility with the nearby land uses. This review is the *only* process to legally evaluate and approve commercial solar projects in accordance with the 1980 AROS Master Plan and the legislative intent of the Agricultural Reserve Zone (AR Zone). Solar as a Conditional Use is a compromise that meets County climate goals while protecting farmland, forests and water quality.

I urge you to ensure a fair and equitable evaluation of any proposed solar siting study. A Commission with adequate agricultural stakeholder representation. We all need to work together to meet renewable energy goals without putting farmers out of business and consumers without local food sources.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lonnie W. Luther', written over a horizontal line.

Lonnie Luther
President
Montgomery County Farm Bureau