

To the Honorable Chair Barve and all members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

RE: HB0704: Prohibiting a person from constructing a magnetic levitation transportation system within 2 miles of certain property; prohibiting units of State and local government from taking certain actions related to the construction of a Maglev within 2 miles of certain property; establishing that the prohibitions under the Act do not apply if certain approvals have been obtained; authorizing counties to adopt local laws for the use of certain land under certain circumstances; etc

I am writing in favor of HB0704 for the following reasons:

1. Forests and natural green spaces, are needed for a healthy environment.

The Greenbelt Forest Preserve along with National Park Lands of the Parkway, the Patuxent Wildlife Research Refuge, NASA Goddard Space Flight Center and the sensitive areas of Beltsville Agricultural Research Center are essential for Prince Georges County's environment.

- These areas support important ecosystem services of carbon sequestration, wetland functions, stormwater mitigation and essential filtering of water and air.
- These areas provide essential wildlife habitat.
- These areas comprise the center of the larger area referred to as the *Green Lungs of the Chesapeake*. This range of forested acres is essential for balancing out the massive development already in place in Maryland through their valuable ecosystem services.
- These areas are important for essential research.

2. Human health relies on access to forests and natural green spaces.

- Human health improves when people have access to forests. (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2793342/#:~:text=Forest%20environments%20promote%20humans'%20mental,both%20psychological%20and%20physical%20rehabilitation.>)
- Recreation in healthy forests and natural green spaces is a basic right and important for human health.

3. Public lands belong to the public; they are not here for the profit of private corporations. These lands were put aside for specific reasons of providing protection

to wildlife habitat and essential biodiversity, providing healthful recreation and important research. Forests are also essential for climate resiliency.

Specific to the Greenbelt Forest Preserve: this forest exists today because thousands of local citizens fought for over 60 years to protect it from several efforts to develop it and use it for various projects. This forest represents a legacy of citizen intervention. To destroy the Greenbelt Forest Preserve is to destroy not just the ecosystems and the many benefits local citizens receive from it, but it also destroys the legacy of all those thousands of citizens who worked so steadily and intensively to preserve it. Do not take this preserve away from those who worked for it and from those human and wild lives who benefit and depend immeasurably from having access to the forest.

4. The NO BUILD option will allow the environmental health of our forests and green spaces to continue to benefit the health of citizens of Prince Georges, and to manage the challenges of air and water quality, stormwater, wetland functions and climate change.

Thank you for your consideration of these points. In light of these crucial issues, I believe the state is correct to protect these public lands – and in so doing will protect the legacy of those citizen activists and those who rely on the existence of these lands. The State needs to protect its public lands.

Sincerely,

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