

A PETITION RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF RELEASING THE
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT AS IT PERTAINS TO GEORGETOWN'S
SOLAR FARM PROJECT IN CHARLES COUNTY, MD.

Signed By Members of Georgetown University's Undergraduate and Graduate Student Bodies

Attn: President John J. DeGioia
Office of the President
204 Healy Hall
37th and O Streets NW
Washington, DC 20057-1789

June 29, 2019

Dear President DeGioia, Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Chatas, Vice President Kuo, and other senior officials to whom this issue may apply,

In the 2016-2017 academic year, Oris Energy USA won the solar project bid to provide nearly half of Georgetown's electricity. According to an open forum hosted by the Sustainability Policy Coalition of Georgetown University Student Association (GUSA) in February 2019, Georgetown's current power grid consists of 40% nuclear, 25% coal, 25% natural gas, and <5% renewable energy. In a time where reducing carbon emissions is of critical importance, Georgetown's commitment to renewable energy is worthy of praise, but this new solar project is a cause for concern.

According to past conversations with the Office of Sustainability, there are numerous factors as to why the current site, the Nanjemoy Forest, was chosen by Georgetown University. These factors include the area's proximity to Washington, DC and the relative cost of power, which would be less than previous sites, as well as possible scholarships that could be generated for students in the future.

However, Nanjemoy Forest, the site chosen by Origin Energy USA, has sparked controversy. First, the Southern Maryland forest is claimed by the Piscataway tribe as an important piece of land that is important to their culture. This is to say that Georgetown's decision to transition towards renewable energy should not disregard respect for indigenous cultures and peoples. Second, as identified by Audubon Naturalist Society chapters in both D.C. and Maryland, the construction of this solar project could lead to devastating ecological effects. The forest that will be cleared for the site is relatively young and is considered a natural habitat for bird, amphibian, reptile, and shellfish

species. The loss of these habitats could further endanger these already at-risk species. Lastly, the construction of this solar project is projected to contaminate and destroy Tier-2 water sources, the highest level of water quality in the state of Maryland.

The construction of this solar farm is a drastic decision that requires student input, something that was not considered during the bidding process. As student groups and organizations continue to raise their concerns, it is in the best interest of this university to **release the environmental impact assessment results found by the Eastern Research Group** and ensure that Georgetown is being responsible with its efforts. Further, releasing this assessment assures that Georgetown is taking any ecological risks seriously and is being held accountable. The Georgetown community deserves the right to collectively decide whether the rewards of buying renewable energy outweigh environmental concerns that have been raised. We understand that the university is still formulating their opinions, but the student body and the rest of the Georgetown community deserve the same opportunity to have their own opinions. However, this can only be possible if they are given all the information needed to do so. Lastly, we ask that if a date has been set by the university for the public release of this impact assessment that it is made known to the public immediately.

We, the students whose names are listed in this petition, believe that the university should work towards complete transparency regarding this project and future projects that Georgetown is involved in. We hope that the university sees the importance of this issue and that they respond by Friday, July 12, 2019, to Rowlie Flores, the sustainability chair of GUSA, via email at rvf5@georgetown.edu. We look forward to hearing back from you soon.

Sincerely,

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