Dear Senator Sweeney,

I am writing to ask for your help. As you know, the Pinelands National Reserve is a unique gem in New Jersey. Home to vast forests, historical sites, and thriving agriculture, these 1.1 million acres are not only federally protected, but also managed by the state Pinelands Commission. The Commission is currently attempting to operate with three vacancies on its board. It has been difficult to achieve a quorum over the past couple years, and the agency struggles to address issues such as ensuring clean and adequate water supply for residents and farmers.

I know your strong focus on good jobs has led you to support projects such as the South Jersey Gas pipeline in the past. Since the owners of the BL England plant withdrew from that project, the Pinelands Commission has made it clear that their approval “can no longer be justified” for the pipeline[[1]](#footnote-1). Since then, the BL England site is considered to have great potential for projects such as transmission of wind energy. Most recently, on September 14, 2020, the Upper Township Committee passed a resolution about the plant, directing the Planning Board to determine if the area is eligible for Condemnation Redevelopment Area designation, noting that “present conditions… may be detrimental to the safety and welfare of the community”[[2]](#footnote-2).

Without a full Pinelands Commission, the transformation of the BL England site, and others like it, into something that could benefit the residents and yield good jobs could be held up at the agency if it is unable to function efficiently. Our National Reserve cannot be managed appropriately unless Governor Murphy’s nominees to the Commission are subject to a vote in the Senate. This process will allow the candidates’ qualifications to serve on the Board to be fully vetted by representatives of New Jerseyans.

Please, for the sake of your constituents and all New Jersey residents, allow the Pinelands Commission nominees to move through the confirmation process.

Sincerely,

1. See letter from Pinelands Commission to South Jersey Gas Company on March 6, 2019 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See Township of Upper Resolution No. 244-2020, adopted September 14, 2020 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)