



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Testimony in Support

HB 908 - Electricity – Community Solar Energy Generating Systems Program

To: Delegate C.T. Wilson, Chair and the Members of the Economic Matters Committee
From: Phil Webster, PhD, Lead Advocate on Climate Change
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland.
Date: February 23, 2023

The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland (UULM-MD) strongly supports **HB 989 - Electricity – Community Solar Energy Generating Systems Program** and urges a FAVORABLE report by the committee.

The UULM-MD is a faith-based advocacy organization based on the Principles of Unitarian Universalism. Two Principles are particularly relevant. The Second Principle, *justice, equity and compassion in human relations* and the Seventh Principle, *respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part*.

Unitarian Universalists believe in *justice and equity in human relations*. This bill will promote equity and justice in two ways. First, 40% of the electricity generated by this bill will be reserved for Low and Moderate Income individuals and families, with discounts of 20-25% when compared to utility rates. Second, it will fix a major obstacle for low-income Marylanders to benefit from Community Solar by adding the option for subscribers to have 'unified consolidated billing' which would make it easier for households participating in ratepayer assistance to subscribe to community solar projects. The current billing system is a major obstacle to low-income Marylanders benefiting from Community Solar because:

1. Energy assistance can be utilized only for charges included on utility statements, but Community Solar providers must bill separately, unlike other non-utility electricity providers who bill their customers on the customers' utility statements.
2. Low-income households who don't have bank accounts or credit cards may pay their utility bills in cash, but Community Solar bills are not able to be paid in cash.

Unitarian Universalists also believe that we should all have *respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part*. Climate change is a serious and growing threat to all Marylanders. Maryland is especially vulnerable to the effects of sea-level rise and increasing frequency and intensity of heavy rainfall. Rapid electrification and generation of clean green electricity are critical to tackling climate change. Community Solar is a vital component of clean green electricity.

About 75% of Maryland households can't have solar at home: their roof isn't adequate or is shaded, or they rent or live in a condo and don't own the roof. This can especially leave out low- and moderate-income (LMI) households.

Community Solar installations are generally Maryland owned small businesses and provide fair wage jobs in a growing sector of the green economy.

All Marylanders need bold and urgent action! Please keep us on the right and moral path towards a livable climate and a sustainable world. We owe it to our children.

We support this bill and urge a FAVORABLE report in committee.

Phil Webster, PhD

Lead Advocate, Climate Change UULM-MD