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February 23, 2023

To: Maryland House Environment and Transportation Committee

From: Jim Brown, Policy Director, Audubon Mid-Atlantic

Subject: Favorable Testimony for Maryland **HB908 Community Solar Energy Generating Systems Program**

Good afternoon. My name is Jim Brown. I am the policy director for Audubon Mid-Atlantic, here in Maryland. Audubon Mid-Atlantic is the regional office of National Audubon Society, representing over 35,000 Marylanders who advocate for the protection of birds, bird habitat, and policies aiming to protect both birds and human communities in the face of increasing environmental challenges, habitat loss, pollution, and climate change.

Audubon Mid-Atlantic enthusiastically supports HB 908. This bill protects birds, and it protects all of Maryland's communities from the impacts of climate change by making renewable, non-carbon-based energy available to more consumers throughout the state. This bill is good for birds. It is good for people. And it is good for the future of Maryland's energy landscape.

Thanks to major advances in technology, solar energy is more affordable and obtainable for both businesses and individual homes. That's good news for people and birds, since adopting renewable energy is critical to reducing pollution, lowering global temperatures, and preserving the places that birds need to survive. Audubon strongly supports renewable energy, including solar, that is properly sited in ways that avoid, minimize, and mitigate negative impacts on birds and other wildlife. HB 908 takes into account these siting considerations by incentivizing brown fields, already developed land, and the innovative co-location of solar with agricultural and other acceptable land uses.

The science tells us birds are in decline due to habitat loss and climate change. 1/3 of all Maryland bird species experienced significant population declines in the past 50 years. HB 908 will slow this climate change induced habitat loss. It will also help Maryland meet our ambitious clean energy goals as laid out in both the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022 and the goals set by the Moore administration,

The Science tells us:

- Greenhouse gas induce climate change is the single biggest threat to both birds and humans
- Investing in renewable energy and making solar accessible to all Marylanders will slow the impacts of climate change, protecting our most vulnerable bird and human communities from increasing threats attributed to a changing climate

HB 908 will strengthen Maryland's energy economy, create a more climate-resilient environment, and deliver better public health outcomes to our residents and visitors. It will also continue to hold Maryland up as a leader in habitat conservation, ecosystem preservation, and the protection of birds now and in the future.

Audubon Mid-Atlantic respectfully urges a favorable review of this legislation.

Thank You,

Jim Brown

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