



(202) 810-1661  
705 Edgewood St NE, Suite 110  
Washington, DC 20017

[WWW.NEWCOLUMBIASOLAR.COM](http://WWW.NEWCOLUMBIASOLAR.COM)

Chair Feldman and Members of the Maryland Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

New Columbia Solar, LLC, submits this testimony in favor of Senate Bill 0613, which would make Maryland's Community Solar Energy Generating Systems (CSEGS) Pilot Program permanent and authorize consolidated billing for charges, among other things. New Columbia Solar finances, designs, installs, and maintains solar energy systems in the DC metro area, and has developed several community solar systems in Maryland counties surrounding DC.

For many building and property owners, community solar is the best option for adding renewable energy to their rooftops and parking lots. The CSEGS pilot program has opened up opportunities for solar installation and development in Maryland that didn't exist before. Making the program permanent is vital to meeting the state's aggressive climate change goals and renewable portfolio standard. If CSEGS are not made a permanent option for solar energy development in Maryland, the state will not just fall short of its climate goals as well as lose an important tool in addressing inequity and environmental justice in the transition to clean energy, as well as the opportunity to bring in additional federal dollars allocated in the Inflation Reduction Act to support development of solar that serves low-income communities and families.

In our experience, consolidated billing for community solar is key to ensuring community solar programs meet their equity goals, as it significantly lowers the barrier to entry for low- and moderate-income households. We are glad to see SB 0613's provisions enabling use of consolidated billing, and urge the Committee to ensure this tool is maintained in the final version of the bill.

Finally, we urge the Committee not to allow direct utility participation in community solar energy generating systems. This would create a system and program rife with conflict of interest. Further, maintenance of healthy competition among many market participants will result in solar systems built efficiently at less cost to ratepayers and with better benefits for customers.

Sincerely,

Nicole Rentz  
Director of Market Development and Policy  
New Columbia Solar

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