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**SB 613 - Electricity - Community Solar Energy Generating Systems Program
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
February 28, 2023**

SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENT

**Donna S. Edwards
President**

Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO

Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 613 with amendments. My name is Donna S. Edwards, and I am the President of the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO. On behalf of Maryland's 300,000 union members, I offer the following comments.

SB 613 makes the existing community solar program permanent and increases its focus on delivering solar energy to low and moderate income subscribers. Solar energy is a core component of Maryland's transition away from fossil fuels, but the industry suffers from low pay and limited career advancement opportunities. Adding quality job standards to SB 613 ensures workers hired to build and maintain these community solar programs for low and moderate income subscribers will not continue to be eligible for energy assistance programs.

Maryland Matters reported that, "A study on SEIF funds for FY 21 showed that 52% of the proceeds went to energy bill assistance programs in Maryland, whereas for the RGGI states overall just 15% of the funding went to bill assistance. In Maryland, 20.5% of the funds went to energy efficiency programs, compared to 54% of funding going to energy efficiency in all the RGGI states collectively." Our state's approach to transitioning away from fossil fuels should be building abundant clean and renewable energy sources, not to continuously subsidize the high energy bills of a larger and larger share of Maryland's residents. With SB 613 we have an opportunity to directly incentivize new energy creation and decrease the number of workers that we need to provide energy subsidies by requiring quality job standards.

We propose an amendment, similar to the job requirements found in other legislation proposed this year and included in the Clean Energy Jobs Act of 2019, that set minimum job standards for workers on community solar projects.

To be added to 7-306.2 on Page 9, Line 10, moving and renumbering all following paragraphs accordingly:

“(20) EMPLOYERS BUILDING OR MAINTAINING A COMMUNITY SOLAR ENERGY GENERATING SYSTEM SHALL MEET THE FOLLOWING JOB REQUIREMENTS:

- 1. PAY AT LEAST 150% OF THE STATE MINIMUM WAGE;*
- 2. PROVIDE CAREER ADVANCEMENT TRAINING;*
- 3. AFFORD EMPLOYEES THE RIGHT TO BARGAIN COLLECTIVELY FOR WAGES AND BENEFITS;*
- 4. PROVIDE PAID LEAVE;*
- 5. BE CONSIDERED COVERED EMPLOYMENT FOR PURPOSES OF UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE BENEFITS IN ACCORDANCE WITH TITLE 13 OF THE LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT ARTICLE;*
- 6. ENTITLE THE EMPLOYEE TO WORKERS’ COMPENSATION BENEFITS IN ACCORDANCE WITH TITLE 9 OF THE LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT ARTICLE;*
- 7. BE COMPLIANT WITH FEDERAL AND STATE WAGE AND HOUR LAWS FOR THE PREVIOUS 3 YEARS;*
- 8. OFFER EMPLOYER–PROVIDED HEALTH INSURANCE BENEFITS WITH MONTHLY PREMIUMS THAT DO NOT EXCEED 8.5% OF THE EMPLOYEE’S NET MONTHLY EARNINGS; AND*
- 9. OFFER RETIREMENT BENEFITS.”*

The bill currently defines low and moderate income subscribers as annual household income at or below 200% of the federal poverty level and moderate-income means having an annual household income that is at or below 80% of the median income for Maryland.

Renewable energy generation, transmission, and storage are the growth industries of the future. For these projects it is paramount that we apply labor standards. We must set high standards for the emerging energy jobs to ensure that we are setting up the next generation of workers to be as successful as the ones that precede them.

We urge the committee to issue a favorable report with our amendments.