

**Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment**  
**Testimony on SB613 “Electricity – Community Solar Energy Generating Systems Program”**

**Position: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS**

**Hearing Date: February 28, 2023**

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

We write to you as Maryland residents and customers of community solar who have done substantial research into how community solar works to expand clean power deployment and access in our state. Community solar has been a substantial benefit for our families, as well as our communities, and we strongly support this bill which would continue and expand the innovative community solar pilot program that Maryland has adopted as a national leader.

SB 613 would support the creation of new jobs, expand the deployment of new clean power, expand affordable access to renewable energy—especially for low- and moderate-income (LMI) households, renters, and others who cannot afford or are not able to install rooftop solar— save Maryland residents money on their electricity bills, reduce customer confusion and greenwashing over renewable electricity procurement, and reduce air pollution and improve public health outcomes. There is fundamentally no downside to passing this bill, and by contrast, it presents a no-cost opportunity to improve environmental, economic, and public health conditions in our state, while positioning Maryland as a national leader in clean energy that can influence comparable adoption in other regions. Therefore, we wholeheartedly support this bill and ask you to do the same.

Additionally, we ask you to please consider the following amendments that would strengthen the bill:

1. **Require each utility to publicly list on their website an explanation of the benefits of community solar and a comprehensive list of community solar providers in Maryland with links updated at least annually.** This will help interested residents understand the benefits of community solar and to explore and compare options for signing up. The current information on utility websites does not provide sufficient information to customers to understand the program, benefits, and providers.
2. **Create a dedicated maryland.gov webpage for community solar that includes a list of all community solar providers for each utility updated at least annually.** The purpose is to help interested residents understand the benefits of community solar and to explore and compare options for signing up. The current maryland.gov websites do not provide this. Instead, the current site provides lists of all approved community solar projects, which are long and provide insufficient information for finding a community solar provider to subscribe to.

3. **Require that all community solar contracts between providers and users include a no cost termination clause that allows the user to terminate the contract at any time for any reason without cost.** This clause is already the default for many community solar providers, and it would reassure potential users. Some community solar contracts have a long duration, but with a no cost termination clause this becomes a pure benefit to the user since they can quit anytime but otherwise their utility bill savings are locked in for the entire contract duration.
4. **Clarify language in the bill to state that the program applies to all Maryland residents and not just LMI-qualifying residents.** Although we support enhanced savings for LMI households, there are many residents above LMI thresholds that would benefit from access to clean power from community solar, and this should be stated clearly in order to maximize participation at all scales.
5. **Require all utilities to mail or email clear, concise information on what community solar is, its benefits, and current options for how to sign up (including the current list of community solar providers) to all individuals in Maryland who pay a residential utility bill.** This can be included, e.g., as an insert in a utility bill or as an email if bills are received electronically.
6. **Allow utility consolidated billing for all subscribers.** The current system involving separate bills from the utility and from the community solar provider poses an unnecessary impediment to users and may lead to lower uptake. The utility should consolidate billing into a single bill, just as they currently do for residents who select to use third-party electricity providers.
7. **Make it easier for LMI subscribers to be verified, including self-attestation.** Under the current setup, it is quite onerous for LMI subscribers to provide proof that their income is below the LMI threshold. Instead, signing a self-attestation would suffice and lower this major barrier to serving LMI residents (which often are from underrepresented minorities, so this will also improve equity).

We thank you for your leadership in advancing this critical legislation at a time when rapid and transformational change of our energy infrastructure is required—and for considering the above amendments to this outstanding bill.

We have no financial connection to community solar providers other than being happy customers.

For more information on the benefits of community solar, please see the following op-ed in the Baltimore Sun titled:

“Maryland’s community solar pilot program can help you save money — and the planet” by Michael Rosenblum and Julian Goresko (Director of Sustainability at Johns Hopkins University), May 10, 2022, available at the following link:

<https://www.baltimoresun.com/opinion/op-ed/bs-ed-op-0511-community-solar-20220510-rqwghsiajbohlwqnw4cpbin7m-story.html>

Signed,



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*The views in this document reflect the individual position of the signatories and not the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health or Johns Hopkins University.*