

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Testimony on: SB 613 - "Community Solar Energy Generating Systems Program"
Organization: Climate Parents of Prince George's
Person Submitting: Joseph Jakuta, Lead Volunteer
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 28, 2022



Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

Thank you for considering our testimony to SB 613 "Electricity - Community Solar Energy Generating Systems Program." Climate Parents is a campaign to reduce climate change causing pollution in our schools, and our group is active in Prince George's County. In particular, we recently worked directly with Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) technical staff and other advocates to develop a first in the national School Climate Change Action Plan.

SB 613 will make the Community Solar Energy Generating Systems Pilot Program permanent rather than letting it sunset in 2024. The bill places a greater focus on expanding community solar access to low- and moderate-income (LMI) residents by requiring at least 40% of the kilowatt-hour output be for LMI subscribers and by requiring utility consolidated billing, which places all energy charges in one utility bill.

Since 2017, the Community Solar Pilot Program has provided home-owners, renters, and businesses access with the environmental and price benefits of solar energy. Making a permanent program will allow Marylanders to take advantage of these benefits into the future, without any pause or interruption to the program.

Community solar can be an asset to schools. Schools have large rooftops and lower summer loads when electricity usage is at its highest. School districts can benefit from this by using part of their solar installations as community solar in order to defray the costs to school systems. Examples of school districts already doing so include Issaquah School District, WA¹, Olympia School District, WA², and Swampscott, MA³. On the other side of the coin, some districts are becoming community solar subscribers, such as Beverley, MA.⁴

In fact, we also have a school right in Prince George's County that took advantage of the pilot program. As stated in the PGCPS Climate Change Action Plan, "The Oxon Hill High School solar array is the first community solar energy generating system to receive authorization to operate within Pepco's Maryland territory, and one of the first large rooftop community solar projects in Maryland. In addition, it is the first community solar project in this utility territory that will supply energy to Pepco's low- and moderate-income (LMI) residents."⁵ Not only does this show that our schools can and will take advantage of this program, it shows that these projects can be designed to allow for participation by LMI residents.

Community solar has been shown to work, including for school systems around the country and right here in Maryland. We need this legislation enacted to put in place a permanent community solar program in our state.

We encourage a **FAVORABLE** report for this important legislation.

¹ <https://www.pse.com/press-release/details/PSEs-Community-Solar-Program-partners-with-Issaquah-School-District>

² <https://olysol.org/project/tmcs/>

³ <https://www.swampscottps.org/community/solar-project/>

⁴ <https://beverlyma.gov/736/Community-Solar-on-former-landfill>

⁵ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1eS5YuvfblLyDsnw5QWwqITtKBeEjx28/view> , Page 37