



Date of Hearing: February 28, 2023

TESTIMONY ON SB613 – POSITION: FAVORABLE

Electricity – Community Solar Energy Generating Systems Program

To: Chair Brooks and Members, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

From: The Jewish Community Relations Council, Howard County

Betsy Singer, Laura Salganik, Co-Chairs

The JCRC of Howard County is submitting this testimony in support of SB613, Community Solar Energy Generating Systems Act.

The Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) urges action to slow climate change. Repair of the world (*tikkun olam*) is a guiding tenant of our Jewish faith. We are compelled to act to prevent massive changes to the Earth’s climate as we face rising temperatures due to excessive greenhouse gases trapped in Earth’s atmosphere. Enhancing clean sources of energy such as solar and wind and replacing carbon-generating sources of energy is essential to life on Earth.

SB613 will make the Community Solar Energy Generating Systems Pilot Program permanent rather than allowing it to end in 2024. Since 2017, the Pilot program has been successful because it extended access to solar energy to homeowners, renters and businesses that are then able to realize the lower cost of this clean energy.

The bill considers environmental justice by requiring expansion of community solar access to low- and moderate-income (LMI) residents. At least 40% of the kilowatt-hour output would be designated for LMI subscribers. The bill also strengthens the program by allowing “utility consolidated billing” for energy assistance households to become solar subscribers and be able to apply energy assistance benefits to all electricity charges.

SB613 also protects forests by encouraging energy generation on developed land, such as clean landfill sites, industrial areas, rooftops, and parking lots. Finally, the bill will provide certainty to solar businesses and support the State’s solar workforce, while helping Maryland move closer to its solar generation targets.

For these reasons and the need to accomplish the transition to clean energy in Maryland, the Jewish Community Relations Council of Howard County urges passage of SB613.