



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Testimony in Support

SB 613 - Electricity – Community Solar Energy Generating Systems Program

To: Chair Feldman and the Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
From: Phil Webster, PhD
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Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland.
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The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland (UULM-MD) strongly supports **SB 613 - Electricity – Community Solar Energy Generating Systems Program** and urges a FAVORABLE report by the committee.

The UULM-MD is a faith-based advocacy organization based on the Principles of Unitarian Universalism. Two Principles are particularly relevant. The Second Principle, *justice, equity and compassion in human relations* and the Seventh Principle, *respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part*.

Unitarian Universalists believe in *justice and equity in human relations*. This bill will promote equity and justice by making solar energy accessible to Low and Moderate Income Families in multiple ways.

Community Solar installations are generally small businesses owned by Maryland citizens and provide fair wage jobs in a growing sector of the green economy. These programs help make Solar Energy available to the approximately 75% of Maryland households that can't have solar at home because their roof isn't adequate or shaded, or they rent or live in a condo and don't own the roof. This can especially leave out Low- and Moderate-Income (LMI) households.

Also, 40% of the electricity generated by this bill will be reserved for Low and Moderate Income individuals and families, with discounts of 20-25% when compared to utility rates.

This bill would address some major obstacles that keep low-income Marylanders from benefiting from Community Solar Programs, by implementing programs like "Unified Consolidated Billing" which will make it easier for households participating in ratepayer assistance to subscribe to community solar projects. Often Low and Moderate Income

families can't utilize Community Solar Providers because the providers must bill separately for their services, unlike other non-utility electricity providers who bill their customers on the customers' utility statements. Another problem that this bill would address is providing ways for households who don't have bank accounts or credit cards to pay their utility bills in cash.

Unitarian Universalists also believe that we should all have *respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part*. Climate change is a serious and growing threat to all Marylanders. Maryland is especially vulnerable to the effects of sea-level rise and increasing frequency and intensity of heavy rainfall. Rapid electrification and generation of clean green electricity are critical to tackling climate change. Community Solar is a vital component of clean green electricity.

All Marylanders need bold and urgent action! Please keep us on the right and moral path towards a livable climate and a sustainable world. We owe it to our children.

We support this bill and urge a FAVORABLE report in committee.

Phil Webster, PhD

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