



TESTIMONY FOR SB0613 Community Solar Energy Generating Systems Program

Bill Sponsor: Senator Brooks

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in strong support of SB0613 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

Maryland's community solar program was a groundbreaking initiative that was designed to allow residents who could not afford solar panels on their roofs to become part of a solar community project. This program has helped build solar capacity in the state and allowed many residents to enjoy the benefits of using solar without the cost or the burden. It has been very successful in pouring clean solar energy into our grid, which is helping to ensure that we transition more smoothly off of fossil fuels.

This is one program that should not sunset. It has been a highly successful program and is a very necessary part of meeting the state's greenhouse gas reductions, which we will absolutely not be able to meet without a pronounced investment in solar and wind.

We need to not only continue the program, but to enhance it and make it more accessible to low-income residents, who often don't own their residences or can't afford to install solar panels. The greatest barrier to their participation in this program is the lack of consolidated billing that effectively blocks them from using Energy Assistance to participate. This bill not only extends the program permanently, but suggests this enhancement that will allow more participation by low-income residents.

Another advancement of the program that is being proposed is the requirement that developers dedicate at least 40% of their project capacity to low-and-moderate income residents which will allow the residents who most need to convert off of fossil fuels to become investors in a solar future.

We believe that this program is critical to our success in meeting our greenhouse gas reductions and could also encourage low-income residents to switch to cleaner energy and help put more clean energy into the grid. This is a fantastic program that we should only be thinking about strengthening and expanding. We strongly support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.