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February 22, 2024

SUPPORT: HB1328 - Solar Energy and Energy Storage-Development and State Procurement

Chairs Wilson and Barnes and Members of the Committees:

Maryland LCV supports HB1328 Solar Energy and Energy Storage - Development and State Procurement and we thank Delegates Ziegler and Crosby for their leadership on this issue.

In 2019, the Maryland General Assembly, and this Committee passed the Clean Energy Jobs Act which set ambitious goals for renewable energy development in Maryland, including a requirement that 14.5 percent of our Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard be achieved from solar generation. These goals were further strengthened by the Moore-Miller Administration's commitment to reaching 100% clean energy by 2035. These goals will need to be balanced with other state goals, including forest conservation, stormwater management, protection of open space, and support for our agricultural economy. HB1328, with the sponsor amendments, seeks to take measures to find this balance by including the following provisions:

- 1) Enabling counties to create a Conservation and Restoration Fund for solar and energy development projects developed on land zoned for agricultural or silvicultural use;
- 2) Creating a Utility-Scale Solar Design and Siting Advisory Commission to create recommendations for best practices for balancing solar development with agricultural land preservation and stormwater management and to create model policies for solar energy development;
- 3) Requiring ground-mount solar projects to submit a vegetation management plan to the University of Maryland Extension program to mitigate harm to natural vegetation and pollinator habitats
- 4) Requiring the creation of a database of brownfields, landfills, parking lots and garages, as well as state lands, which could be suitable for solar energy development

Maryland LCV urges a favorable report on this important bill, but looks forward to working with the sponsor and the Committee on any necessary amendments.