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OPPOSE – House Bill 1328
HB1328 – Solar Energy and Energy Storage – Development and State Procurement
Economic Matters Committee
Thursday, February 29, 2024

Potomac Edison, a subsidiary of FirstEnergy Corp., serves approximately 285,000 customers in all or parts of seven Maryland counties (Allegany, Carroll, Frederick, Garrett, Howard, Montgomery, and Washington). FirstEnergy is dedicated to safety, reliability, and operational excellence. Its ten electric distribution companies form one of the nation's largest investor-owned electric systems, serving customers in Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, West Virginia, and Maryland.

Unfavorable

Potomac Edison / FirstEnergy opposes House Bill 1328 – *Solar Energy and Energy Storage – Development and State Procurement*. HB-1328 would establish the Maryland Utility-Scale Solar Design and Siting Commission within the Power Plant Research Program, and require multiple reporting requirements for state agencies and public utilities.

Potomac Edison / FirstEnergy requests an Unfavorable report on HB-1328 due to grid security concerns and the massive regulatory reporting requirements placed on public utilities. The company would support the establishment of a Utility-Scale Solar Design and Siting Commission.

Company regulatory and engineering subject matter experts are concerned with the type and amount of information being requested in this legislation. Utilities never disclose Critical Energy Infrastructure Information (CEII), or the location of such equipment, for the purpose of national security, economic security, and public health and safety. This bill creates potential security risks and huge administrative burdens on utilities.

FirstEnergy's Transmission group has determined that none of the electric transmission system information requested in this bill could be provided due to it being CEII -- which is privileged and confidential. In addition, FirstEnergy's Distribution group also determined that none of our 34.5kV sub-transmission circuits could be shown for the same reason.

If a statewide Utility-Scale Solar Design and Siting Commission (Commission) were established, this group could create consistent processes and standards for future solar development. Utilities could augment this effort by including more detailed information (that is not CEII) on their publicly accessible hosting capacity maps. These maps show the approximate amount of aggregate generation that can be added to a circuit, without triggering large utility system improvements. It is critical that utilities remain solely responsible for distribution system planning to maintain the integrity of the grid, but this could help the Commission in their work by providing the output of this ongoing analysis. It should be noted that some forms of data being requested for non-CEII infrastructure (such as generation queue) are already provided by the utilities to the Public Service Commission or the public through various other required reports.

Security of the electric grid crosses multiple jurisdictions, and this bill adds significant risk to the system. Providing facility locations, load levels, and other sensitive data to the public is not safe. **Given the physical and cyber security concerns regarding providing specific location data on grid infrastructure, Potomac Edison / FirstEnergy respectfully requests an Unfavorable report on HB-1328.**