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Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Testimony on: SB 1025 Public Utilities – Distributed Generation Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity

Position: Support

Hearing Date: March 7, 2024

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club urges this Committee to favorably report **SB 1025 Public Utilities – Distributed Generation Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity**.

The bill creates a new streamlined permitting process for smaller scale distributed generation through the Public Service Commission. A new Distributed Generation Certificate Of Public Convenience and Necessity (DGPCPN) would create and authorize a new pathway for the construction and operation of a distributed solar energy generating system, which has the same definition as the community solar energy generation system found in §7-306.2 of the Public Utilities Article. The bill also directs the Department of Natural Resources' Power Plant Research Program (PPRP) to develop and submit to the Public Service Commission proposed siting and design requirements and proposed standard licensing conditions for the issuance of a DGPCPN.

We appreciate that the bill directs PPRP to consider appropriate setbacks and landscape considerations in their standard siting and design requirements for the new DGPCPN, along with environmental preservation, stormwater management, and consideration of the state's climate and renewable energy goals. These are important factors and considerations when considering the siting of solar energy development in the State. It is important to differentiate between best practices and guidance versus requirements.

The current state permitting process for power plants, known as the Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity, was designed for large units like nuclear or coal plants, and includes many components which do not make sense for distributed solar generation and create extra work and delay for both solar companies and staff and local staff. The proposed DHPCPN will create an appropriately scaled permitting process.

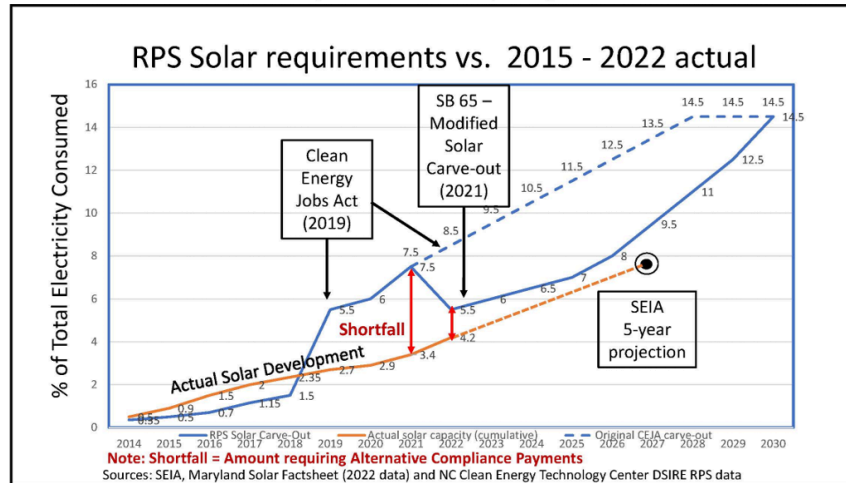
Solar energy is an essential component of Maryland's strategy in transitioning the state to clean renewable energy. Accordingly, through the Clean Energy Jobs Act (2019), Maryland set the statutory target of achieving 14.5% of the state's electricity consumption from solar generation by 2030. This goal was incorporated as a core element of MDE's recently released Climate

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America's oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.

Pollution Reduction Plan, which serves as the roadmap to achieve the goals in the Climate Solutions Now Act.

Unfortunately, Maryland is falling far short of achieving its annual solar energy targets.

Maryland solar progress



This means we are falling short not only on our clean energy goals, but also endangering our climate goals. We commend the General Assembly for continuing to provide attractive incentives to build community solar on rooftops, brownfields, industrial zones, and parking lots, but it is becoming increasingly hard to site community solar projects in the 2-5 MW range on the ground. This bill would address this issue by standardizing standards and procedures for smaller solar energy generating projects across the state, and thereby ensure these critical projects are constructed in a timely manner.

The Sierra Club believes that Maryland should do everything it can to incentivize solar generation and deployment within the state. This bill would do just that. For these reasons, we recommend the Committee favorably report SB 1025.

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