3 March 2024

Senator Brian Feldman, Chair
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Written Testimony
SB1023: Maryland Building Performance Standards – Fossil Fuel Use, Energy Conservation, and Electric– and Solar–Ready Standards (Better Buildings Act of 2024)

Position: Favorable

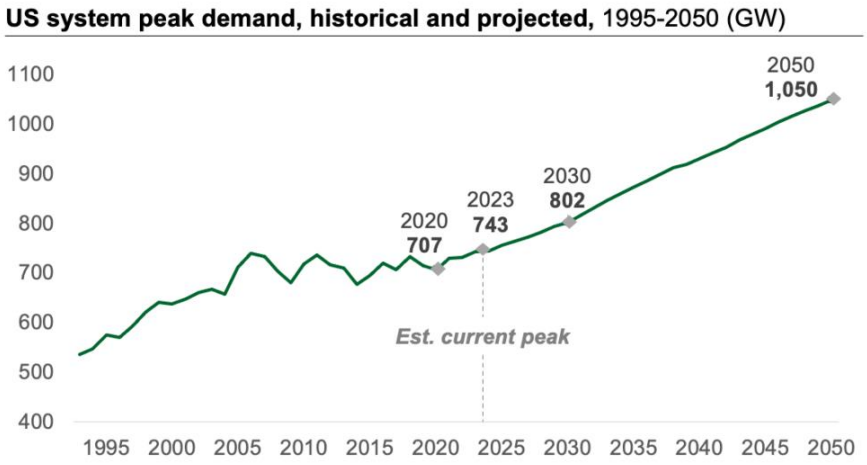
Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 1023, Maryland Building Performance Standards – Fossil Fuel Use, Energy Conservation, and Electric– and Solar–Ready Standards (Better Buildings Act of 2024). I am Robin Dutta, the Executive Director of the Chesapeake Solar and Storage Association (CHESSA). Our association has over 100 member companies in the solar and energy storage industries. Many members are Maryland-based. Others are regional and national companies with an interest and/or business footprint in the state. Our purpose is to promote the mainstream adoption of local solar, large-scale solar, and battery storage throughout the electric grid in order to realize a stable and affordable grid for all consumers.

I write to provide favorable testimony on SB1023, Maryland Building Performance Standards – Fossil Fuel Use, Energy Conservation, and Electric– and Solar–Ready Standards (Better Buildings Act of 2024). The Better Buildings Act is an important piece of legislation to move Maryland toward its 100% clean energy by 2035 goal. This legislation is focused on ensuring that new buildings built in Maryland are built with those goals in mind.

In support of its 100% clean energy goals, Maryland is changing how it is powered. Constructing a 100% clean energy future means making sure we are constructing our buildings with that future in mind. Electrification retrofits for buildings will be significantly more costly than integrating clean energy-ready amenities in the initial construction process. Building roofs need to be designed in a way where heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) is sited appropriately but not inadvertently obstructing rows of solar panels from being installed at a later date. And, the more that building design and construction has an eye towards integrating advanced energy technologies, the easier that installation can be. Solar-ready buildings will be particularly important as Marylanders make the move towards building and transportation electrification because adding solar generation on and near buildings and load centers will reduce the overall cost of that transition.

The grid of the future will have the combined roles that today's grid, natural gas system, and gas stations have now. To serve those roles, the grid will need to look and act differently, accounting for

higher overall statewide electric loads as well as higher demand in peak periods. The higher peak demand gets, the more expensive the electric grid becomes due to expensive infrastructure expansion and higher peak energy pricing. In a 2023 report, the U.S. Department of Energy estimates that nationwide peak demand will increase by over 40 percent by 2050. The chart below from that report illustrates that projection.



Increasing clean energy generation on buildings and near load centers in Maryland lowers peak demand, lowering the cost of the grid and the cost of the clean energy transition. For the everyday Maryland consumer, more clean solar energy generation would mean that critical grid events and spiking wholesale energy prices would occur less frequently, in less duration, and in lower extremes.

SB1023 would increase the amount of solar-friendly rooftops around Maryland by eliminating or minimizing the need for electric upgrades and retrofits for businesses and building owners seeking to add solar to their properties.

For these reasons, CHESSA asks the committee to issue a favorable report on SB1023. Please reach out with any questions on solar and storage policy. CHESSA is here to be a resource to the committee.

Sincerely,

Robin K. Dutta
Executive Director (acting)
Chesapeake Solar and Storage Association
robin@chessa.org