

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2024 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 1054 (Senator Kramer)
Education, Energy, and the Environment

**Local Government - Building Permits for Residential Solar Energy and
Residential Energy Storage Systems - Required Platform and Inspections**

This bill requires, by August 1, 2025, each county and municipality to implement SolarAPP+, which is a web-based platform developed by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory that supports the tracking and approval of residential building permits. The bill establishes specified procedures for the approval of permits processed through SolarAPP+. The bill also requires a county or municipality, beginning August 1, 2025, to certify with the Maryland Energy Administration (MEA) that it complies with specified requirements in the implementation of SolarAPP+ when applying for funding from MEA.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill does not materially affect State operations or finances. MEA can handle the bill's requirements with existing resources.

Local Effect: The bill is not anticipated to materially affect local government operations or finances, as discussed below. **This bill imposes a mandate on a unit of local government.**

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary: SolarAPP+ is the most recent version of a web-based platform, developed by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, that provides a standard portal for receiving and processing residential solar energy system and residential energy storage system permit information.

The bill requires each county and municipality, by August 1, 2025, to implement SolarAPP+ to support the tracking and approval of residential building permits for (1) residential solar energy systems; (2) residential energy storage systems; (3) main electric panel upgrades; and (4) main electric panel derates. MEA may delay the initial implementation or suspend the requirements for implementing SolarAPP+ if there is insufficient State or federal funds available to provide financial or technical support to local governments implementing SolarAPP+.

A county or municipality must authorize any inspections required for a permit, that is processed through SolarAPP+, to be conducted remotely through real-time video, recorded video, or photograph. A remote inspection conducted by any of these methods may not cost more than an in-person inspection and must also be completed within the same timeframe as an in-person inspection. A county or municipality may not require an inspection required for a permit to be conducted more than once. A permit is deemed approved if an inspection required for the permit is not completed within 10 business days following the receipt of the permit application.

Beginning August 1, 2025, a county or municipality must certify to MEA that it complies with the requirements for the implementation of SolarAPP+ when applying for funding. MEA may impose conditions on or deny direct funding from any MEA program if a local government is not in compliance.

Current Law: Every county in Maryland has a building permit office, the primary function of which is to issue a permit that gives the right to perform specific work on a designated site or project. The permit office sends an inspector to each ongoing project to ensure that work on the project complies with applicable codes. Noncompliance with established standards is normally addressed between the inspector and the licensed individual, who is expected to bring the project up to code. If the individual does not remedy the problem, the inspector may report the violation to the applicable licensing board.

Local Fiscal Effect: The bill requires counties and municipalities to implement the SolarAPP+ platform to support the tracking and approval of residential building permits. The cities of Frederick and Havre de Grace both advise the bill has no estimated impact on their finances. The City of Frederick expressed potential concerns with the compatibility of SolarAPP+ and its current permitting software.

The Maryland Municipal League advises the bill's mandatory requirement for local governments to implement SolarAPP+ to process certain permits may increase municipal expenditures to comply with the bill. The Maryland Association of Counties advises that county expenditures may increase to the extent that State and federal funding is not available. However, the Department of Legislative Services notes that the bill authorizes

MEA to delay the implementation of SolarAPP+ if there are insufficient State or federal funds available to MEA to provide support to a county or municipality implementing SolarAPP+.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: HB 1265 (Delegate Fraser-Hidalgo) - Environment and Transportation.

Information Source(s): Maryland Association of Counties; cities of Frederick and Havre de Grace; Maryland Municipal League; Department of Legislative Services

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