



# CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

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*Environmental Protection and Restoration  
Environmental Education*

## House Bill 494

Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard - Solar Energy - Municipal Electric Utilities

DATE: FEBRUARY 13, 2020

POSITION: OPPOSE

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**The Chesapeake Bay Foundation opposes House Bill 494 as an erosion of the State's Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard.** HB 494 caps the annual percentage of the State's Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard that must be derived from solar energy for municipal electric utilities to 2.5%. The solar requirement is 6% in 2020, and increases over time, eventually reaching 14.5% in 2030 and later.

In 2019, the General Assembly passed landmark legislation to increase Maryland's Renewable Energy Portfolio Standards. These Standards aim to confront greenhouse gas emissions and slow climate change. Climate change has immediate and drastic impacts on the Chesapeake Bay, many of which are already being experienced. This legislation would step back the renewable energy commitments for municipal electric utilities.

Warmer climates mean warmer waters, which decreases dissolved oxygen and exacerbates the Bay's fish-killing "dead zones" and contributes to algal blooms. The rising water temperatures are also stressing fish and reducing the populations from the Bay's iconic striped bass to brook trout. Other temperature sensitive species such as eel grass, a critical habitat plant, are at risk.

The reduction of climate-impacting greenhouse gases is critical to achieving Bay clean-up goals. Atmospheric deposition of nitrogen is the highest nitrogen input load in the Chesapeake Bay. The principle sources of oxidized nitrogen, also called NO<sub>x</sub>, are air emissions from industrial-sized boilers such as electric power plants and internal combustion engines in cars, trucks, and airplanes.

Maryland is one of the most vulnerable states to climate change impacts, several of which are already being observed. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation is wary of any legislation that steps back from the State's commitments to reduce greenhouse gases.

**For these reasons, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation recommends an unfavorable report on HB 494 from the Economic Matters Committee.** For questions or more information, please contact Robin Clark Eilenberg, Staff Attorney, at 443.482.2165 or [reilenberg@cbf.org](mailto:reilenberg@cbf.org).

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*The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 300,000 members and e-subscribers, including over 107,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.*