



Date: March 5, 2020

Testimony of Bruce Burcat, Executive Director
Mid-Atlantic Renewable Energy Coalition
Before the Senate Finance Committee

House Bill 1390
Position: Support

I am Bruce Burcat the Executive Director of the Mid-Atlantic Renewable Energy Coalition (MAREC). I appreciate the opportunity to provide our comments to this Committee in support of House Bill 1390.

MAREC is an organization representing many of the leading utility-scale wind and solar developers and public interest organizations that support the development of renewable energy in the Mid-Atlantic region. Our members develop wind and solar farms in nine states in the PJM region. Unfortunately, when it comes to developing projects in Maryland, our members find the process to obtain certification to be cumbersome, costly and lengthy.

Of the nine states in the MAREC region, Maryland is one of the most challenging to successfully develop in-state sites for utility-scale solar projects, if not the most challenging. I know that you already have heard about some of the reasons for these challenges, like limited transmission capacity, conflicts with conservation easements, forests, wetlands and so forth. Compounding these types of challenges is the added element of requiring local permitting, which is redundant, creating inefficiency and an unduly lengthy process. While project permitting in other states generally take less than a year on average, project permitting in Maryland can exceed two years.

Local input before the Public Service Commission when considering the certification of a solar project is already an essential element of the process. The Commission CPCN process is thorough and comprehensive. Nevertheless, the dual permitting process that continues to exist

even after the Court of Appeals found that a separate local process was not legally justified creates a difficult situation for developers. As the Court stated that such a process “would engender chaos and confusion.” House Bill 1390 would create a defined structure for local participation and would resolve the issue of dual permitting processes.

Solar businesses choose to develop in states that have reasonable processes for permitting their projects and have public policies supporting development. We know that developers have and will leave the state as a result of the current permitting regime. While Maryland has strong public policy supporting solar development, in order to meet the goals of the Clean Energy Jobs Act, it needs to act to improve the permitting process for projects.

MAREC respectfully requests a favorable report on HB 1390.