



Senate Finance Committee
3 East
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

February 24, 2020

RE: **Support of SB 741**; Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity – Electric Facilities Study and Procedures

Chair Kelley and Members of the Committee,

My name is Rebecca Campbell and I am the Manager of Government Affairs for First Solar Inc. I appreciate the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding SB 741. I would like to express my strong **support** of this bill.

First Solar is the largest American solar photovoltaic (PV) panel manufacturer and the largest manufacturer of PV panels in the western hemisphere. We are one of the world's top ranked utility-scale solar developers and our projects are cost competitive with conventional energy sources today. With more than 25 gigawatts of modules sold, First Solar has a demonstrated history of financial stability and manufacturing success. First Solar solutions diversify the energy portfolio and reduce the risk of fuel-price volatility while delivering a levelized cost of electricity that is competitive with fossil fuels. Our renewable energy systems protect and enhance the environment. On a lifecycle basis, First Solar PV panels have the smallest carbon footprint, lowest water use and fastest energy payback time of any PV technology on the market. At present, First Solar has built two of the largest operational solar projects in Maryland: MD Solar, a 20 megawatt (MW) installation at the Maryland Correctional Facility in Hagerstown, and the 14 MW installation at Mount St. Mary's University.

SB 741 Creates a More Transparent, Efficient CPCN Process for Maryland's Rapidly Growing Solar Industry

The passage of CEJA in 2019 set Maryland on an impressive path towards one of the most aggressive goals for solar deployment in the country. However, in order to achieve its goals, it is essential for solar developers to have a fair, transparent, and efficient permitting process. The current CPCN process contains duplicative and inefficient elements that are currently increasing project costs and causing significant delays. SB 741 seeks to clarify and streamline this process. For example, while the determination in the Washington County vs. Perennial Solar case clearly declared that the PSC has final siting authority over solar projects¹, it continues to be PPRP's practice to require solar developers to seek local permitting – even though local permits would be deemed legally void. Instead, SB 741 acknowledges the importance of local input by creating a defined, formal process for local zoning officials to provide feedback to the PSC during the CPCN procedure, while eliminating the time-consuming, wasteful, and

¹ Board of County Commissioners of Washington County, Maryland v. Perennial Solar, LLC
<https://www.courts.state.md.us/data/opinions/coa/2019/66a18.pdf>



unnecessary process of requiring solar developers to seek local permits. SB 741 also creates greater transparency for PPRP's environmental review process and seeks to establish streamlined, consistent standard permit conditions for common project considerations such as setbacks, visual buffers, storm water management guidelines, and decommissioning plans.

With the passage of CEJA, Maryland is poised to become a leading solar market. However, the current CPCN process contains inefficiencies that are adding significant costs and time to the development of utility-scale solar projects. SB 741 will streamline and improve upon this process, thus helping to ensure that Maryland is on a path towards successfully achieving its energy goals. I respectfully request a favorable ruling on this piece of legislation.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your consideration of my testimony.

Respectfully,
Rebecca Campbell

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rebecca Campbell".

Manager, Government Affairs
rebecca.campbell@firstsolar.com
480-236-2085
First Solar, 350 West Washington Street, Tempe, AZ 85281
www.firstsolar.com