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TTY USERS CALL VIA MD RELAY

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

February 11, 2020

The Honorable Chairman Paul G. Pinsky
Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: SB 281 - Renewable Energy Development and Siting (REDS) - Evaluation and Tax and Fee Exemptions

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Committee Members,

Thank you for providing the opportunity to bring the State of Maryland into the next phase of renewable energy by your vote in favor of Senate Bill 281. As Chair of the Renewable Energy Development and Siting Task Force, I along with its members have had the privilege to work with localities, industry, and state agencies, and have received great feedback from all levels of the administration and industry.

SB 281 includes three of the legislative recommendations of the Task Force. The bill removes fees for participants in the Voluntary Cleanup Program, improves clarity on the existing authority of the Public Service Commission to evaluate material changes to an energy project, and it eliminates the franchise tax for public-private partnerships that site energy generation in preferred locations.

The Task Force was designed and directed to provide proposals to the state and its units for evaluating, reviewing, and approving proposed solar and wind energy projects so as to expedite, standardize, and streamline the process. It was also directed to identify specific changes to state law, policies, procedures, regulations, resources, and tools that would incentivize responsible renewable energy development and siting.

While conducting its deliberations over the course of the last six months, the Task Force was directed to give careful consideration to efforts by Maryland counties and municipalities to site renewable energy projects through comprehensive plans, planning, and zoning ordinances, taxation, and other local laws, policies, procedures, or regulations; and consider related actions of the Critical Area Commission for the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays, Department of Natural Resources Power Plant Research Program, and Public Service Commission.



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The Task Force includes key stakeholders from state agencies along with representatives of Maryland's agriculture community, local government, as well as the solar and wind energy industry. It seeks to accelerate clean and renewable energy projects while minimizing and mitigating the impact on agriculturally or ecologically important, sensitive, and valuable areas.

Executive Order 01.01.2019.09 established the "Governor's Task Force on Renewable Energy Development and Siting." The Task Force was tasked to produce an interim report by Dec. 1, 2019 describing its initial work, and make preliminary recommendations for legislation in the 2020 session of the Maryland General Assembly.

The Task Force recommendations include developing incentives that aid development in desired locations, maximize utilization of rooftops and parking lots, incentivize reclamation of low value lands, promote agricultural use on agricultural lands, and address county and municipality concerns.

SB 281 aligns with the Task Force mission and members consensus-based recommendations. Therefore, it is recommended that the legislature support the legislation to ensure progress in responsible renewable energy solutions.

Being a western Maryland resident, I understand the challenges and opportunities of clean and renewable energy while balancing the role of local decision making in this process. The Task Force is committed to continuing its work to determine siting-based solutions that would encourage renewable energy installations on existing structures, impervious surfaces or other properly planned and zoned areas. Development in these areas would benefit the state's energy and environmental goals while protecting our agricultural or natural resources, be it farmland, forests or wetlands. Thank you for your legislative efforts regarding renewable energy development and siting to meet the environmental stewardship goals of our state's residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gregory I. Snook".

Gregory I. Snook
President and CEO of CHIEF
1 South Potomac Street
Hagerstown, MD 21740