

Dear Mr. Chairman and members of the House Economic Matters Committee,

The Climate Change Working Group of Frederick County (CCWG) strongly supports the passage of HB0768. CCWG is a group of knowledgeable citizens working to prepare Frederick County and its citizens to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of our planet's climate crisis through responsible planning, education and advocacy.

This bill provides both the impetus and the support to bring Maryland to the forefront of efforts to prevent the catastrophic consequences of climate change and meet the goals of the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Act. The Montgomery County Delegation has introduced legislation, HB0768, to permit the establishment of a Community Choice Energy (CCE) pilot program in Montgomery County.

Montgomery County declared a Climate Emergency in 2017 and has committed to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 80% in 2027 and 100% in 2035. CCE is a powerful tool to achieve that ambitious but necessary goal. Enacting CCE is one of the principal recommendations of the County's Clean Energy Working Group.

Community Choice Energy will provide Montgomery County with affordable, clean energy because it allows the County to negotiate BETTER RATES and CLEANER electricity for county residents, in particular low-income residents. CCE legislation at the state level will enable the county to create an entity called a Community Choice Aggregator (CCA) which can buy energy for all residents. An aggregator functions like a buying club and can specify the source of energy production and negotiate for lower rates. Nine states currently allow CCE aggregation. They are California, Illinois, Ohio, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Virginia. Communities in these states often pay less in energy costs than the standard offer service rate from the local utilities.

CCE will provide local control and local choice. The structure and goals of a CCE aggregator are determined by the local *democratically elected* government that establishes it. This gives people local control over their electricity source. Montgomery County can use CCE to transition rapidly to renewable energy and negotiate for lower rates. Any new county residents would be automatically enrolled in this clean-energy, low-cost program, but individuals wishing to continue with the utility or third party supplier of their

choice could opt out of the CCE.

The Climate Change Working Group of Frederick County supports HB0768, which will authorize Montgomery County to create a CCE Pilot Program within the county. In the past year, Frederick County and Frederick City have jointly passed a climate emergency resolution, and established an expert Climate Emergency Mobilization Working Group to research, compile and advise the County on policies and actions we can take to slow down or reverse the damage due to climate change. We believe strongly in the potential advantages of a functioning aggregator role at the county level. We are deeply interested in watching and supporting the development of a pilot program in our neighboring county to provide an example and experience for other Maryland counties to follow.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on HB0768.

Respectfully,

Edwin J Grayzeck
Frederick, MD
Executive Committee Member of CCWG

