



TESTIMONY FOR HB 397

DATE: 2/4/21
POSITION: FAVORABLE
SUBMITTED BY: GARY SKULNIK, CEO OF NEIGHBORHOOD SUN BENEFIT CORP
GARY@NEIGHBORHOODSUN.SOLAR
240-284-6245

We are pleased to support HB 397 and the efforts of Delegate Lierman to protect low income consumers from predatory practices by companies in the energy industry. As the statewide leader in serving low-and-moderate income residents for community solar, we've seen the economic devastation that shady energy practices have brought to overburdened neighborhoods. Achieving true energy equity means correcting this historic injustice and ensuring that it doesn't happen again.

The legislation came about after studies showed that retail energy suppliers and other energy companies target low-and-moderate income residents with "bait and switch" offers that promise savings, but often come with rates that are far higher than the utilities. It will require any 3rd-party energy supplier serving households on Maryland state energy assistance in the previous 12-month period to charge the same, or lower, electric and natural gas rates as the account's regulated utility. Retail suppliers pre-enroll with the Public Service Commission to participate and guarantee savings for Maryland's most financially vulnerable households.

Neighborhood Sun is a Maryland B Corporation committed to bringing the promise of solar to everyone, not just the select few. It offers customers a share in a local community solar project that guarantees savings without any hidden fees. The company has been very active in advocating for low-and-moderate income residents at the state Public Service Commission, and has worked on many projects with specific low and moderate income carve-outs. It is partnered with dozens of local Maryland organizations, including many of the leading civic organizations in the state. Last year, it helped former employee, Kristal Hansley found WeSolar, the nation's only community solar company run by a black woman.

####