



**Before the General Assembly of the State of Maryland
House Economic Matters Committee
January 14, 2021**

**Testimony of David W. Murray
Executive Director
Chesapeake Solar & Storage Association
HB 0008: Use of Proceeds for Maryland Healthy Soils Program
OPPOSE**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 8. My name is David Murray and I serve as Executive Director of the Chesapeake Solar & Storage Association, formerly known as the Maryland-DC-Virginia Solar Energy Industries Association. We are the local trade association representing over 4,500 solar installers, developers, manufacturers, and other solar workers in Maryland.

The solar industry opposes HB 8 as it allocates resources away from renewable energy programs, climate programs and education initiatives. HB 8 does not reduce fossil fuel consumption, reduce energy burdens on Maryland's most vulnerable citizens, or increase clean energy generation. Instead, these funds are directed toward an agricultural initiative. We believe monies from the Strategic *Energy* Investment Fund should relate to energy investments. Given we are far from our 2030 goal of generating 50% of our electricity from renewable resources, its vital we not direct funds from clean energy deployment.

Proponents of HB 8 could contest that because the Healthy Soils Program encourages carbon sequestration, it should receive an allocation from the SEIF. However, carbon sequestration is just one of several Healthy Soils Program goals, the first listed in its authorizing legislation is to "Improve the health, yield, and profitability of the soils of the State." The Healthy Soils Program is in essence an agricultural program, and should not be the most appropriate use of SEIF. CHESSA believes that legislation resembling HB 1176 (2020) would be a more appropriate mechanism to fund the Healthy Soils program.

The Chesapeake Solar & Storage Association encourages legislators to review the [informational statement](#) from Maryland Energy Administration Director Mary Beth Tung on [HB0395](#), the previous version of HB 8 in the 2020 session. MEA notes "The kind of carbon sequestration achieved through the healthy soils program may not be as valuable for carbon emission reductions as existing MEA programs that are funded from the same sub-account this legislation proposes to utilize... The Department of Agriculture has not approached MEA with concerns that the Healthy Soils Program is in any way failing or unsuccessful. That Department has made no request for funding from the SEIF or for other assistance through MEA."

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

David Murray
Executive Director
Chesapeake Solar & Storage Association (CHESSA, formerly MDV-SEIA)