



HoCoClimateAction.org
Howard County, Maryland

Testimony in SUPPORT of – HB0768, *Community Choice Energy- Pilot Program MC 17-21*

Hearing Date: March 23, 2021

Bill Sponsor: Montgomery County Delegation

Committee: Finance

Submitting: Howard County Climate Action

Position: Favorable

[HoCo Climate Action](#) -- a [350.org](#) local chapter and a grassroots organization representing more than 1,450 subscribers, and a member of the Howard County Climate Collaboration -- supports HB0768, Community Choice Energy Program MC 17-21 - (Community Choice Aggregation - CCA).

We have been educating ourselves and others in Howard County about the climate crisis for more than 13 years. We have supported and advocated for climate action legislation at the county, state and federal level and strongly support legislation promoting clean energy. We have campaigned to encourage residents in Maryland to take personal action for reducing their carbon footprints.

One of our campaigns is to encourage residents to switch their utility energy supplier to one that provides [100% wind power for their household](#). We had partnered with several organizations that had negotiated lower rates for 100% wind power for our members' households. These campaigns have had limited success because the process is confusing and the learning curve impedes members from switching from their utility to a third-party energy supplier. Many, particularly low-income and elderly residents, are skeptical because they have already been targeted by unscrupulous third-party energy suppliers that charge higher rates. Participation is lower than what is needed to meet our goals in MD to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The leveraging power of a few organizations can go only so far in reducing the costs of clean energy. Many low-to-moderate-income families do not participate in our wind campaign because clean electricity has generally been more expensive than dirty energy supplied by the utilities. We need to democratize clean energy options and leverage our greater purchasing power by aggregating everyone at the county level.

Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) provides this need for a cleaner and lower-cost option for electricity. This important tool gives communities control over their electricity decisions and helps in our work to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. This bill creates a pilot CCA program in Montgomery County and CCA is very successful in nine other states and in

hundreds of municipalities nationwide. Community Choice is entirely voluntary. Residents or businesses who do not wish not to participate can opt out and switch to their utility or any third-party energy supplier.

International experts have urged action on climate with increasing fervor in recent years for good reason: The consequences of staying the course are dangerous. We have an opportunity to heed the warnings of scientists now while signaling to the nation that Maryland is ready to embrace a climate-friendly economy. We can no longer delay meaningful climate action.

We encourage a FAVORABLE report for this essential legislation.

HoCo Climate Action

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