



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

Senate Bill 860

Property Tax – Community Solar Energy Generating Systems – Agrivoltaics

Date: March 10, 2022
To: Budget and Taxation

Position: **Support**
From: Doug Myers, Maryland Senior Scientist

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** SB 860 which prioritizes siting of community solar projects onto already disturbed parcels limiting their detrimental effects on forests, water quality and ongoing carbon sequestration benefits.

Community Solar Generating Systems usually consist of solar panels affixed to rooftops for residential and small-scale commercial buildings where the bulk of the generated electricity will be used. This lessens the energy bills of that home or business and generally supports the grid when excess energy is generated. Doing so prevents the need for new power plant construction and the additional work to subsequently reduce their associated greenhouse gas emissions.

As the demand for solar energy increases, large utility scale operations are being proposed that threaten farmland and forests. Clearing forests to install panels and transmission infrastructure could have significant negative impacts on local streams and could negate the existing environmental benefits of those trees such as cooling and purifying water, supporting biodiversity and sequestering carbon in soils. For this reason, prioritizing the siting of community solar systems will help meet Maryland's greenhouse gas reduction goals while protecting our forests, farmland and streams.

SB 860 recognizes that many agricultural systems are conducive to solar installations such as rotational grazing and certain perennial crops that grow better in partial shade. These systems, called Agrivoltaics, combine multiple revenue streams for a farmer, improve soil health and diversify food production in the state.

CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on SB 860. For more information, please contact Robin Clark, Maryland Staff Attorney at rclark@cbf.org and 443.995.8753.

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The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 300,000 members and e-subscribers, including over 109,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.