

Testimony in **FAVOR** HB 88 PSC GRID Reliability & Inclusive Distribution Act

Economic Matters Committee

Sponsor: Del. Charkoudian

HB88

February 1, 2022

Laurel Peltier, Chair, Energy Advocates Coalition

I am writing in **FAVOR** of an important bill that prescribes actions to be included in the future GRID PSC working group. Energy Advocates, our members and citizens' mission is to advocate and work to lower energy burdens, and strive for more sustainable utility bills, both environmentally and affordability. We have much work to do. Our coalition will partner with any PSC working group to get low-income participants.

Please consider the points below for the working group & the low-income segment:

- There roughly 400,000 families/accounts that qualify as low-income.
- The average energy burden is too high today at 12-15% of income. The average income is \$16,000. Forty-one percent are seniors on fixed incomes. Maryland has serious work to do, even today, before the grid modernization, to reduce these crushing burdens.
- A working group will only work with all voices and a low-income participant is critical. **Please consider a stipend for a low-income person to take part in monthly meetings.** PSC working groups are during work hours, and be mindful that even getting to 200 St. Paul's and \$15 parking adds up. These can be real barriers for this segment.
- An emission-free Maryland will be costly, and it seems smart to not disproportionately add more costs on these families who already have leakier homes, less efficient HVAC equipment, who participate less in Empower MD (because 70% they're renters, it's not designed for renters).
- Significant funds will need to be targeted to low-income energy efficiency that works on a larger scale, creative income-based programs in order for Maryland to achieve an emission-free state.
- Leaving behind 20-25% of the 2.3 households will ensure that Maryland never reaches that goal. This working group could make the difference in low-income strategies being developed and implemented.

HB88 offers smart and strategic ideas that we think should be implemented by the Public Service Commission.