



Olivia Bartlett, DoTheMostGood

Committee: Finance

Testimony on: SB0525 – Public Utilities - Energy Distribution Planning and Required Labor Standards

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: February 15, 2022

Bill Contact: Senator Brian Feldman

DoTheMostGood (DTMG) is a progressive grass-roots organization with more than 3000 members across all districts in Montgomery County as well as a number of nearby jurisdictions. DTMG supports legislation and activities that keep residents healthy and safe in a clean environment and which promote equity across all our diverse communities. DTMG strongly supports SB0525 because it will help Maryland undertake the improvements needed to have a resilient electricity grid that supports the clean-energy economy and workers of the future.

Modernizing Maryland's electricity grid is a high priority – it's a key tool in fighting climate change and is critical for the state's ability to transition to renewable energy, electrify our building and transportation sectors, and be resilient in the face of climate change. With federal infrastructure funds coming to Maryland, we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity for grid investments that will help us meet our state goals.

The Distribution System is the part of the energy grid that the state regulates through the Public Service Commission (PSC). How the Distribution Grid is planned and maintained will not only determine how reliable and resilient our energy system is but also whether we can reach our clean energy and greenhouse gas reduction goals.

The PSC is beginning a Distribution System Planning. SB0525 aims to ensure the Distribution System Planning process is done in an equitable way and will produce the grid we need to have for the reliable, just, future-oriented energy system that we want. SB0525 complements the PSC's existing Distribution System Planning process by:

- explicitly defining that state goals of decarbonization, greenhouse gas reductions, renewable energy, equity, family-sustaining employment, energy resiliency and reliability, and cost-effectiveness be met by the planning process.
- harnessing federal funding to support grid investments needed to meet our goals.
- ensuring transparency and engagement by establishing a broadly based and inclusive stakeholder workgroup to study issues related to energy distribution planning and implementation.
- directing investments in the grid to create family-sustaining jobs.

In addition, SB0525 will create transparency by requiring an annual report from the workgroup about the distribution planning process; will require the PSC to adopt regulations related to energy

distribution planning and implementation; and will require the PSC and the Maryland Energy Administration to coordinate with utilities regarding federal infrastructure grid improvement funding.

Importantly, SB0525 will establish labor standards for contractors and subcontractors in grid modernization projects. Workers involved in distribution grid upgrade projects also must reap the benefits of the transition through family-sustaining wages, health and retirement benefits, and apprenticeship programs. SB0525 includes these provisions, as well as plans to recruit and retain state residents, including returning citizens, women, minority individuals, and veterans.

As states increase renewable energy goals, adjust to climate threats, and plan for a future with more electricity needs, grid modernization is a high priority. Many states have mandated that distribution planning processes directly support state energy, equity, and economic goals. Illinois, New York, and California have all used legislation to set clear parameters for the distribution planning process. By passing SB0525, we can ensure that we build a grid ready for the future.

Therefore, DTMG strongly supports SB0525 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report on this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

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