

**Blue Ribbon Community Solar Land Use Commission
HB 936**

**Barve
House Environment & Transportation Committee
House Economic Matters Committee**

Wednesday, March 2, 2022

Mr. Vice Chair and Members of the Committee,

This is a simple, straight-forward bill that is necessary.

It establishes a Blue Ribbon Commission relating to community solar development.

Today, only a small number of American households and businesses have access to solar because they rent or live in multi-tenant buildings, have roofs that are unable to host a solar system or are shaded by trees, or experience some other mitigating factor preventing them from having solar on their rooftop.

Community solar refers to local solar facilities shared by multiple community subscribers who receive credit on their electricity bills for their share of the power produced. This model for solar is being rapidly adopted nationwide.

In Maryland, we are operating under a community solar pilot program, which will likely lead to projects through 2025, a certain amount of which must be dedicated to low- and moderate-income families. Under current law, community solar projects are limited to 2 megawatts – or between 10-20 acres.

Under state law, subscribers who purchase the community solar from a generating facility must live in the service territory where the project is developed. As a result, a project in the Pepco territory can only serve Pepco customers. In addition, there are annual limitations set in law regarding the number of projects that can be developed in each service territory.

It is also very different than large, utility-scale solar development, which can range from hundreds to even over 1,000 acres of development – compared to community solar, which is in the range of 10-20 acres.

Obviously, community solar development is part of the solution to address global climate change and leads to cleaner air and water. There is also economic benefit to local communities, construction jobs, and other benefits from community solar.

While there are limitations on community solar development in Maryland, there are many challenges to developing such projects.

In many communities throughout the state, there has been some resistance to developing community solar projects on lands zoned primarily for agricultural purposes, including in my county – Montgomery County.

While some community solar projects may be able to be constructed at locations other than land zoned for agriculture, it is more expensive and harder to pencil.

HB 936 brings together stakeholders, including from:

- The Hogan Administration
- Maryland General Assembly
- Local government
- Agricultural interests
- Environmentalists
- Renewable energy development community

These stakeholders would balance various state needs by looking at the state's renewable energy goals, total land area, agricultural land, population, and other factors in an effort to determine the amount of community solar development for each jurisdiction. It would not mandate community solar development in each of the state's 24 jurisdictions, but would set a clear target for each jurisdiction to do its part to meet our needs without overburdening one jurisdiction over another.

Unless there are any questions, thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB 936. I would urge a Favorable Committee Report.