



Committee: Ways & Means

**Testimony on: HB0076 - Community Solar Energy Generation
Systems-Exemption From Energy & Property Taxes**

Organization: Climate Justice Wing of the Maryland Legislative Coalition

Submitting: Diana Younts, Co-Chair

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: January 19, 2022

Dear M. Chair and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing our testimony today in support of HB0076. The Maryland Legislative Coalition (MLC) Climate Justice Wing, a statewide coalition of over 50 grassroots and professional organizations, urges you to vote favorably on HB0076.

This bill provides an exemption to local energy taxes and certain personal property taxes for community solar projects that provide at least 50% of their energy production to low and moderate income households and that also provide that energy at 20% lower cost than the energy provided by the local utility to those households.

Community solar projects are a critical component to meeting Maryland's climate goals and targets because they provide renewable energy to families and building owners that cannot otherwise install or afford solar energy and because such projects increase the amount of clean, renewable energy on the grid. Anyone who receives an electric bill can benefit from community solar including renters, residents in multi-unit buildings, municipalities, nonprofits and businesses that don't own their roofs.

Incentivizing community solar for low and moderate income families and communities is essential to energy justice for these families who already pay disproportionately higher utility bills than other households. Because energy is a regressive cost, low-income households in Maryland dedicate 13% of their annual incomes to energy costs and pay 550% more as a percent of income than non low-income households. The majority of these (55%) are Black, Hispanic, or Asian households. Providing low cost solar energy to these families helps to redress this problem. Equitable and just deployment of renewable energy is critical to expanding our clean energy economy and addressing environmental injustice.

Energy is also a substantial cost for building owners and managers, so the availability of low cost community solar is an important means of preserving affordable housing.

In short, incentivizing community solar for low and moderate income families is good for the environment and good for families who need help with their energy costs as well.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report for HB0076.

MLC Climate Justice Wing:

Assateague Coastal Trust
Maryland Legislative Coalition
MD Campaign for Environmental Human Rights
Chesapeake Climate Action Network
WISE
Frack Free Frostburg
Mountain Maryland Movement
Clean Water Action
Howard County Indivisible
Howard County Sierra Club
Columbia Association Climate Change and Sustainability Advisory Committee
HoCo Climate Action
CHEER
Climate XChange - Maryland
Mid-Atlantic Field Representative/
National Parks Conservation Association
350 Montgomery County
Glen Echo Heights Mobilization
The Climate Mobilization Montgomery County
Montgomery County Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions
Montgomery Countryside Alliance
Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee
Audubon Naturalist Society
Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church
Environmental Justice Ministry
Coalition For Smarter Growth

DoTheMostGood Montgomery County
MCPS Clean Energy Campaign
MoCo DCC
Potomac Conservancy
Casa de Maryland
Nuclear Information & Resource Service
Clean Air Prince Georges
Laurel Resist
Greenbelt Climate Action Network
Maryland League of Conservation Voters
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland
Concerned Citizens Against Industrial CAFOs
Wicomico NAACP
Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility
Chispa MD
Climate Law & Policy Project
Maryland Poor People's Campaign
Labor Network for Sustainability
The Nature Conservancy
Clean Air Prince Georges
350 Baltimore
Maryland Environmental Health Network
Climate Stewards of Greater Annapolis
Talbot Rising
Adat Shalom Climate Action
Mid-Atlantic Earth Holders
Climate Parents of Prince Georges
Echotopia

Maryland NAACP State Conference,
Environmental Justice Committee