

Committee: Education, Energy and the Environment
Testimony on: SB781 –Offshore Wind Energy – State Goals and Procurement - Promoting Offshore Wind Energy Resources Act (the POWER Act)
Organization: Individual
Submitting: Deborah Cohn, Bethesda, MD
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: March 7, 2023

Dear Chair and Committee Members:

Thank you for accepting my testimony today in support of SB781.

The General Assembly, through the Climate Solutions Now Act, has set ambitious decarbonization goals for Maryland and, for this purpose, has passed several bills to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from the buildings and transportation sectors.

Studies of the buildings sector show that reductions in GHG emissions from improving building efficiency pale in comparison with reductions from eliminating fossil fuels in generating electricity. With today’s sources of electricity, Montgomery County’s Building Energy Performance Standards could reduce GHG emissions through building efficiency improvements by 19-26%, depending upon whether more efficient fossil fuel equipment was still permitted. Decarbonizing the electricity supply, when combined with improved energy efficiency, however, would increase these reductions to 83-94%.¹

SB781 (the POWER Act) can help make these larger reductions possible. It would:

- *Set an overall offshore wind energy goal* of at least 8.5 gigawatts by 2031. Enunciating this goal would signal both offshore wind energy companies and the Federal Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM), which is now determining where additional offshore wind turbines can be installed, that Maryland seeks a major increase in its generation of offshore wind power. Delaying setting this goal by even one year could jeopardize Maryland’s burgeoning offshore wind industry, an industry that could strengthen the Maryland economy, particularly in Baltimore County and on the Eastern Shore.
- *Authorize the Department of General Services (DPS) to enter into power purchase agreements* for up to 8 gigawatts by April 2025, to achieve this goal. This authority could include nearly 1 gigawatt of additional power from lease areas already being developed under existing legislation.
- *Direct the Public Service Commission to call for competitive bids for the development of open-access offshore wind transmission facilities* to serve as a grid interconnection point for wind generated from new lease areas off Maryland’s shore, *i.e.*, a significant portion of the 8.5 gigawatt goal, and potentially for additional offshore wind power generated by

¹ Building Energy Performance Standards Development – Technical Report Executive Summary prepared by Steven Winter Associates for Montgomery County, MD (February 2022) at pp5-6 (Greenhouse Gas Emissions Impacts).

neighboring states. Maryland must develop this infrastructure to be competitive with New Jersey, New York and Massachusetts.

SB781 will contribute materially to reducing Maryland's GHG emissions and, thus, to achieving its decarbonization goals. It will also create good jobs, encourage use of locally and domestically manufactured construction materials and components, and protect consumers against excessive electricity rates.

For these reasons I encourage this Committee to issue a FAVORABLE report on SB781.