

February 15, 2024

Chair C.T. Wilson
Economic Matters Committee
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is David Murray, I am the founder and principal of Legacy Solar Partners, a consulting firm based in Alexandria, VA. As a Virginian, I do not have access to the same 100% renewable energy options Marylanders can enjoy from a robust, retail electricity market. HB 267 stands to eliminate these options. I urge an unfavorable vote to help preserve its policies, which are currently helping drive solar energy deployment and electric vehicle (EV) adoption.

HB 267 implements measures that will overregulate product pricing, in turn removing innovation and preventing suppliers from continuing to offer tailored clean energy products to Maryland residents. Such examples include free solar energy weekends, fixed monthly billing, free EV charging, and most importantly, 100% renewable energy products. By my last count, Marylanders can choose from over thirty plans offering “100% renewable energy products.”

The products are essential to meeting customers where they are, as options range from clean energy projects across the country, to solar facilities in the state of Maryland. Customers have the opportunity to select among a wide array of choices, reflecting both their values and budget.

As a customer in a regulated retail market, how many options do I have? **Just one.** If I want to ensure 100% of my electricity use comes from clean energy, I have no choice but to select Dominion’s Green Power Program. The utility has counted traditional resources, such as biomass (ie burning trees) and hydroelectric facilities, as renewable. Last year, this program purchased renewable energy credits from wind facilities in Mississippi, Arkansas and Missouri - all states outside of our electricity grid! Some customers are fine with this approach, but I prefer to play a more active role in deploying wind and solar in our region. I share this concern with thousands of other Virginia ratepayers. I urge Maryland, which currently offers customers at least thirty “100% renewable” options - not to go down the same path by passing HB 267, which would effectively end its retail energy market.

The primary beneficiary of this bill appears to be incumbent utilities, who stand to gain hundreds of thousands of new customers if HB 267 is enacted. Utilities cannot market directly to customers when they have monopoly power over the billing function - no competitive market exists where a single entity has that type of market advantage. Various provisions of HB 267 - from established fixed prices to driving up the cost of salespersons - eliminate or make it very challenging for companies to offer 100% renewable products to customers. These companies would leave the market, handing their customer base to Standard Offer Service (SOS).

As a clean energy advocate in several states, I can attest to several problems with eliminating competition, and handing more power to monopoly utilities. I urge the Committee to give HB 267 an unfavorable vote and preserve Maryland's retail market for clean energy.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Murray", with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

David Murray

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