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Date: February 29, 2024  
To: Members of the House Committee on Economic Matters  
From: Grayson Middleton, Government Affairs Manager  
Re: HB 1407 – County Tier 1 Renewable Sources – **Oppose**

Delmarva Chicken Association (DCA), the 1,600-member trade association representing the meat-chicken growers, processing companies, and allied business members on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, the Eastern Shore of Virginia, and Delaware opposes HB 1407 and urges an unfavorable committee report.

Chicken growers were some of the first to widely adopt solar technology in Maryland, and DCA fully supports its use as a cost-effective and environmentally friendly energy source. We also believe that other tier 1 technologies such as anaerobic digestion and litter-to-energy have the potential to greatly reduce industry bi-products and carbon footprint.

However, as an agricultural organization representing an overwhelmingly rural membership, we have serious concerns about the state abolishing (or even reducing) a county government's authority in the zoning of renewable energy sources. As many of you will recognize, the zoning of renewable energy facilities (particularly solar) is a contentious issue in rural areas. While we support its use and proliferation, we want to ensure that environmental interests are balanced with the economic and cultural interests of agrarian communities. Because of its geography, prime agricultural lands on the Eastern Shore are some of the most attractive in the state for solar development. Without proper oversight by county governments who know their lands best, this stimulus has the potential to greatly reduce agricultural outputs on the Eastern Shore and throughout the state.

This would pose a significant challenge for our industry. In 2023, our five companies purchased over \$1.5 billion in corn, soybeans, and wheat, comprising the vast majority of grain purchases on Delmarva. As the local output is reduced from the proliferation of solar and other development, the industry is required to import grain from other states and countries at higher prices. This benefits neither our industry nor our local farmers.

Furthermore, we have serious concerns about the potential of large-scale solar projects to reduce grid capacity and thus prohibit some of our members from getting small-scale on-farm solar. We have heard from numerous members who have sought to install solar on their farms but were told they were unable to do so because of the lack of grid capacity in their area. To that end, we support the portion of the bill mandating a study to investigate the grid capacity for renewable energy sources.

We believe that county governments know the needs of their farmers and citizens best. They alone have the intimate knowledge of their localities that is required to responsibly site solar in a manner which prioritizes the preservation of agricultural lands while also supporting the proliferation of solar development.



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For these reasons we urge an unfavorable vote on HB 1407.

Should you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact me at Grayson Middleton at [middleton@dcachicken.com](mailto:middleton@dcachicken.com) or 410-490-3329.

Sincerely,

Grayson Middleton  
Government Affairs Manager