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RE: HB 1407 – County Tier 1 Renewable Sources – Generating Systems, Capacity, and Generation – Prohibition, Studies, and Plans

**Favorable**

Chair Wilson and members of the House Economic Matters Committee,

The Coalition for Community Solar Access (CCSA) provides this written testimony regarding House Bill (HB) HB 1407. CCSA's position on this legislation is Favorable.

CCSA is a national, business-led trade organization, composed of over 100 member companies, that works to expand access to clean, local, affordable energy nationwide through the development of robust community solar programs. Today, the majority of households and businesses do not have access to solar because they rent, live in multitenant buildings, have roofs that are unable to host a solar system, or experience some other mitigating factor. Community solar provides a solution to this gap by allowing local solar facilities to be shared by multiple community subscribers who receive credit on their electricity bills for their share of the power produced.

CCSA has been an active participant in the development and implementation of Maryland's community solar pilot program, and we are grateful to this Committee for supporting the passage of HB 908 in 2023, which made community solar a permanent solution in Maryland. The program will play a critical role in helping the state meet its clean energy requirements, while also ensuring electricity cost savings reach those that need it most (e.g., the program requires at least 40% project capacity to benefit low-to-moderate income customers).

Chair Wilson's HB 1407 would: (1) prevent a county from adopting zoning laws or other regulations that restrict or prohibit the construction or operation of Tier 1 renewable sources; and 2) require the Public Service Commission (PSC) to determine the amount of renewable sources needed from each county to meet the state's renewable portfolio standard, and in turn require each county to meet a certain generation plan within ten years.

CCSA appreciates the objective of HB 1407 to improve clean energy siting at the local jurisdictional level. Siting is the most pressing barrier to community solar deployment in Maryland, and projects that are two megawatts or smaller are entirely subject to local jurisdictional zoning and regulation. CCSA has identified roughly a dozen counties as being restrictive or prohibitive to community solar. This includes multiple counties that have adopted either explicit or de facto bans on community solar development on agricultural land.

CCSA urges a favorable report on HB 1407 to ensure counties establish reasonable local zoning and regulations that allow landowners to use their land for renewable energy development, while supporting the state's broader energy requirements. Though not opposed to county-specific energy requirements, CCSA would flag that there are likely other considerations for such an analysis beyond a county's energy load and population. For instance, it may be beneficial to instead perform a technical analysis of the renewable energy potential in each county based on other factors such as interconnection capacity, utility infrastructure, and available land.



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Sincerely,

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