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Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Energy Subcommittee

Chair, Joint Electric Universal Service Program Workgroup

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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB804
Nuclear Energy Development Task Force

Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
February 29, 2024

Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you on SB805, Nuclear Energy Development Task Force. The purpose of this bill is to establish a task force to study and make recommendations regarding nuclear power generation.

To meet its ambitious renewable energy goals, Maryland must be bold. Our plans cannot be too little and too late for addressing the climate crisis at hand. Maryland is already experiencing rising seas, rising temperatures, and rising rates.

After much investigation into nuclear power programs in other States and countries, I have seen the immense progress in nuclear technology over the past few decades. It has the potential to be a critical source of power as we move away from gas and coal. At this point, wind and solar cannot entirely supplant electric power generated by fossil fuels, but nuclear power can be the missing link needed to make Maryland's power grid carbon-free.

Nuclear is a zero-emission clean energy source and an important part of an "all of the above" net zero energy strategy. It generates power through fission, which is the process of splitting uranium atoms to produce energy. The heat released by fission is used to create steam that spins a turbine to generate electricity without contributing to climate change.

Currently, Maryland has one nuclear plant, Calvert Cliffs, which accounts for 39% of the state's total electric net generation. Maryland's transition from coal-fired power could come as soon as 2025. Talen Energy intends to close the state's largest remaining coal plant, known as Brandon Shores, by June 2025. The closure of these plants leaves many energy markets looking for a more reliable energy source and many workers looking for jobs.

According to the Department of Energy (DOE)'s latest survey on domestic energy jobs, nuclear power creates tens of thousands of jobs across the country, fueling local economies with millions of dollars in state and local tax revenues. From skilled trades such as welding, pipefitting and carpentry, to roles in cybersecurity and policy analysis, a nuclear power plant requires a variety of jobs and skillsets to meet big picture goals. The nuclear energy industry also offers pathways for workers to enter the pipeline through apprenticeships and labor

partnerships, as the DOE report finds that the industry has the highest unionization rate across energy sources. In addition to a diversity of job types, according to the DOE, the nuclear power industry's workforce is also more diverse than the overall energy workforce.

Recognizing the concerns from the environmental community, SB804 allows us to engage in conversations to outline the positive attributes while also addressing the concerns surrounding waste disposal, so that Maryland can safely integrate this important clean energy resource and innovative workforce.

For these reasons, I am requesting a favorable report on SB805.

With kindest regards,

Benjamin Brooks