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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Delegate Marc A. Korman
Chairman, House Environment and Transportation Committee
House Office Building – Room 251
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Mr. Chairman,

I am writing in favor of HB 1265 – Local Government – Building Permits for Residential Solar Energy and Residential Energy Storage Systems – Required Platform and Inspections.

Reviewing and approving solar permitting applications requires a considerable amount of time and resources for local governments. The sheer volume of applications can be time consuming for permitting departments across various jurisdictions.¹ While the application process can vary by jurisdiction, residential solar projects typically require a building permit and an electrical permit.² Oftentimes, individuals have to repetitively contact their respective jurisdiction’s permitting department in order to obtain updates and additional information on their application status. In Maryland, Montgomery County recently became the first jurisdiction in the state to adopt the use of SolarAPP+ for the purpose of approving solar permit processing. This reduces the wait time for approval from 8-9 days to only one day.³

Last year, the Maryland legislature created the Task Force to Study Solar Incentives under Chapter 545 of the 2023 Laws of Maryland.⁴ The task force studied the impacts of solar energy in the state and developed recommendations in order to ensure Maryland reaches our state solar energy goals as established in the state’s renewable energy portfolio standards.⁵ Through their findings, the workgroup recommended that all local jurisdiction permitting authorities be required to adopt an online standard permit process, including but not limited to SolarAPP+.

¹ “Solar Automated Permit Processing (SolarAPP+) Benefits ,” National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), n.d., https://solarapp.nrel.gov/docs/SolarAPP_Benefits_Memo.pdf

² “DPS - Residential Solar Permit Process,” Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services , n.d., <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DPS/Process/rci/residential-solar.html>

³ “Montgomery Co. Adds Tool for One-Day Processing of Solar Panel Permits,” WTOP News, July 23, 2021, <https://wtop.com/montgomery-county/2021/07/montgomery-co-adds-tool-for-one-day-processing-of-solar-panel-permits/>.

⁴ S.B. 469, 2023 Leg., 445th Sess. (Md. 2023).

⁵ “Task Force to Study Solar Incentives ,” Maryland Energy Administration, 2024, <https://energy.maryland.gov/Pages/SolarTaskForce.aspx>

HB 1265 addresses these challenges by requiring counties and municipalities to implement the web-based platform SolarAPP+ to support the tracking and approval of residential building permits for certain residential solar energy projects, residential energy storage projects, and main electrical panel alterations. Additionally, this bill would require counties or municipalities to certify to the Maryland Energy Administration compliance with certain laws when applying for funding from the Administration beginning August 1, 2025. Federal money has already been earmarked for the purpose of expanding solar infrastructure. The Administration can require jurisdictions to meet certain requirements prior to distributing the funds.

SolarAPP+, developed by the U.S. Department of Energy, is a federally created and approved application for solar installation projects. Through Solar APP+, the platform is able to catch typos and errors and return corrections to the applicant instantly. The application has an automated review for safety and code compliance, enabling local governments that adopt the tool to approve solar permits at a far more rapid rate. Furthermore, the app provides transparency into the permitting timelines. Ineligible projects are referred to the typical permitting review process.⁶

Streamlining the solar permit process is a vital step for the state to meet our renewable energy targets. HB 1265 directly seeks to ensure all Marylanders can install and enjoy solar projects within a reasonable time frame. By passing this bill, we can make solar energy more accessible and equitable across the entire state.

⁶ “Streamlining Solar Permitting with SolarAPP+,” Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy , n.d., <https://www.energy.gov/eere/solar/streamlining-solar-permitting-solarapp#:~:text=How%20SolarAPP%2B%20Works,permitting%20systems%20used%20by%20jurisdictions.>