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February 8, 2024

SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS: SB169 - Green and Renewable Energy for Nonprofit Organizations Loan Program and Fund

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Maryland LCV supports HB660 - Green and Renewable Energy for Nonprofit Organizations Loan Program and Fund, and we thank Delegate Charkoudian for her ongoing leadership on issues related to renewable energy.

In 2022 the Maryland General Assembly passed the most ambitious greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals in the country through the Climate Solutions Now Act. In order to confront the climate crisis and reach the emissions reduction goals set forth in that legislation, Maryland must take meaningful action in reducing our reliance on fossil fuels. Additionally, Maryland is striving to meet the goals set in the 2019 Clean Energy Jobs Act which mandates that 14.5% of our renewable energy portfolio must come from solar energy by the year 2030.

This year, this committee will be considering a number of legislative actions that will help us to achieve both of these goals, which must be done with an eye towards ensuring that the principles of Justice 40 are met wherever funding considerations are concerned. HB660 provides one such opportunity.

By providing a revolving loan fund for nonprofit organizations to install renewable energy systems on site, organizations may be able to cut their reliance on fossil fuels and save on energy costs - and contribute to the State's goals. Additionally, since the fund is created as a zero-interest revolving loan fund, rather than as a grant, it ensures that the State dollars will go further. With every repaid loan, that money will be able to be used again to support additional future projects.

While we support the bill's intent, and applaud its innovation, we offer one minor amendment which we think will improve the program and its effectiveness to serve the Marylanders who will most benefit.

We appreciate the mandate that the program prioritize nonprofits with budgets less than \$1 million. We suggest that the bill add explicit Justice 40 language and prioritize the funding for minority and women run nonprofits, and those that primarily serve low and moderate income households and those who live in overburdened and underserved communities.

Maryland LCV urges a favorable report on this important bill, but requests consideration of our suggested amendment.