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January 24, 2025

## HB 61 SUPPORT

Public School Construction and Renovation - Solar Canopies for School Parking Lots -  
Underground Infrastructure

Appropriations Committee  
January 28th, 2025

Dear Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

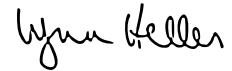
The Climate Access Fund is a statewide nonprofit Green Bank that uses innovative finance to increase low-income households' access to solar power. We specialize in community solar project development and finance, and we seek to fill gaps in the market that are preventing more low-income households from benefiting from discounted electricity bills through community solar. Specifically, we incentivize the development of low-income community solar projects that are located on rooftops and parking lots, as these projects are typically more costly to build and require more gap financing than projects on large tracts of land.

Community solar projects generate electricity which is sent directly into the grid, and Maryland residents can sign up to purchase that power at a discount and receive a credit on their utility bills. Many low-income Maryland residents rent their homes and thus cannot benefit from solar power except through community solar. School parking lots – particularly those located in historically disinvested communities – are ideal locations for the low-income community solar projects. Unlike buildings, parking lots do not consume electricity, so all of the power generated on parking lots can be sent to the grid and be reserved for low-income households. Furthermore, parking lots occupy land that has already been developed and solar parking canopies decrease the need to situate solar arrays on undeveloped land. The canopies also provide vehicles with shade from the sun and shelter from rain and snow.

Yet solar arrays in parking lots are more costly to construct than ground-mounted solar because of the need for additional support infrastructure and underground digging to run necessary conduit and wiring. HB 61 addresses these challenges by requiring that while new construction is being done on schools (i.e. while the asphalt on parking lots is already ripped up), conduit and wires are run to prepare the parking lot to eventually have a solar canopy. It's much less expensive to run the wires during the initial construction of the parking lot, even if the solar canopy structure is not built until later.

HB 61 is a practical, forward-thinking bill that supports Maryland's renewable energy goals by reducing the ultimate cost of solar canopy development on our school's parking lots. We urge a favorable report.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lynn Heller". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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