

Friday, February 21, 2025

TO: C. T. Wilson, Chair of the House Economic Matters Committee, and Committee members

FROM: Humna Sharif, The Nature Conservancy, Climate Adaptation Manager; and Michelle Dietz, The Nature Conservancy, Director of Government Relations

POSITION: Support HB 1111 Public Utilities – Solar Energy Generating Systems – Floating Systems and 3 Systems Located on Brownfields

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) supports HB 1111 Public Utilities – Solar Energy Generating Systems – Floating Systems and 3 Systems Located on Brownfields offered by Delegate Fraser Hidalgo. TNC is a global conservation organization working to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. In Maryland, our work focuses on delivering science-based, on-the-ground solutions that secure clean water and healthy living environments for our communities, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and increasing resilience in the face of a changing climate. TNC supports legislation that provides a path forward to address resource adequacy in Maryland to meet current and future electric load requirements and to alleviate the burden on ratepayers. We urgently need more energy, but we also need that energy to be clean and readily available.

HB 1111 seeks to incentivize development of solar generation in the state by including floating solar in the Small Solar Energy Generating System Incentive Program. The Small Solar Energy Generating System Incentive currently applies to a system with a generating capacity of between 20 kilowatts and 5 megawatts and includes systems located in parking lots, over rooftops, and on brownfields. HB 1111 expands the existing program to include floating solar located on a non-navigable body of water in the state.

This bill also amends Maryland tax law to exempt brownfields and floating solar systems from valuation and property tax. Currently nonresidential solar energy generating systems that are constructed on the rooftops of buildings or on parking facilities are exempted from property taxes. HB 1111 would expand this exemption to brownfield and floating solar, thus incentivizing more small-scale clean energy generation capacity in the state.

This bill is in line with the Moore-Miller Administration's goal of achieving a 100% clean energy standard for Maryland. Clean energy can be produced cheaper and safer than non-renewable energy generation methods. By enacting HB1111, small scale floating solar and brownfield systems can contribute to Maryland's ambitious clean energy goals.

We need to urgently reduce Maryland's dependence on fossil fuels; they not only pollute our environment, but also have adverse health impacts for Maryland's residents. The Nature Conservancy thanks delegate Fraser-Hidalgo for introducing this legislation, and his leadership towards Maryland's swift and secure transition to a fully clean energy future.

Therefore, we urge a favorable report on HB 1111.