



**Committee: Economic Matters**

**Testimony on: HB827 – Solar Energy - Distributed Generation Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity, Ground-Mounted Solar, and Small Solar Siting Workgroup**

**Organization: Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate Justice Wing**

**Submitting: Richard Deutschmann**

**Position: Favorable With Amendments**

**Hearing Date: March 13, 2025**

Dear Chair Wilson and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony today in support of HB827. The Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate Justice Wing, a statewide coalition of nearly 30 grassroots and professional organizations, urges you to vote favorably on HB827, with suggested amendments.

The Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) calls for 14.5% of Maryland’s clean electricity to be contributed by solar energy by 2030, but the State has repeatedly fallen significantly short of this goal. According to the 2023 [Maryland Climate Pathways Report](#), both wind and solar generation must increase fivefold by 2031, with solar accounting for 33% of in-state energy generation. Additionally, Community Solar has been an incredibly important market segment of the industry in Maryland, addressing the needs of low-to-moderate income residents, renters, and those who are not able to have solar installed on their property. HB827 aims to strengthen Community Solar in the state, by creating a streamlined permitting process for these relatively smaller projects.

HB827 creates a new Distributed Energy Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (DGCPCN) permitting structure, targeted specifically at Community Solar projects between 2-5MW. The current CPCN permitting process was designed for larger power generation and other public projects, which can be arduous and time-consuming for smaller developers. The proposed legislation would task the Power Plant Research Program (PPRP) with creating standard siting and design requirements, and standard licensing conditions in order to receive a DGCPCN. These requirements would include reasonable setbacks, landscaping and screening, deforesting limits, and stormwater management. The DGCPCN would continue to engage a robust process of public comment and hearings, in order to gather input from local communities. Local governing bodies will still have responsibility over issuance of site plan, stormwater management and erosion/sediment control approvals, along with building and electrical permits. However, the legislation would also impose strict time limits, given the state’s interest in incentivizing new, in-state power generation. We believe that this legislation will rightsize the permitting process for these Community Solar projects, create predictable design standards for approval, speeding up deployment of critical generation assets in the state, and ensuring

continued access to clean, renewable energy especially for low-to-moderate income Maryland residents.

We understand that sponsor amendments are being worked out in committee, and we think it is important that they address a compromise balance between clearing a path for clean energy development and local zoning concerns. At a minimum, the bill should provide an exemption to the prohibition on county regulation or a specific PSC review process in instances where a county holds an agricultural preservation or forest or other conservation easement on a property proposed for solar development. Easements represent county ownership of a right or rights in the bundle of property rights that should not be rendered meaningless by this bill. Our testimony does not directly address these amendments as we will not have a chance to fully review before the hearing.

For all of these reasons, we strongly support HB827 with changes suggested, and urge a FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS report in Committee.

350MoCo  
Adat Shalom Climate Action  
Chesapeake Earth Holders  
Climate Parents of Prince George's  
Climate Reality Project  
ClimateXChange – Rebuild Maryland Coalition  
Coming Clean Network, Union of Concerned Scientists  
DoTheMostGood Montgomery County  
Echotopia  
Elders Climate Action  
Fix Maryland Rail  
Glen Echo Heights Mobilization  
Greenbelt Climate Action Network  
HoCoClimateAction  
IndivisibleHoCoMD  
Maryland Legislative Coalition  
Mobilize Frederick  
Montgomery County Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions  
Mountain Maryland Movement  
Nuclear Information & Resource Service  
Progressive Maryland  
Safe & Healthy Playing Fields  
The Climate Mobilization MoCo Chapter  
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland  
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