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*Susan O'Neill, Chair*

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Testimony in Support of  
House Bill 1417 – Department of General Services - Clean Energy Procurement Program –  
Establishment  
House Economic Matters Committee  
March 13, 2025

**The Rural Maryland Council supports House Bill 1417 – Department of General Services - Clean Energy Procurement Program – Establishment.** This bill requires the Department of General Services to establish a Clean Energy Procurement Program by January 1, 2026. The department will work in consultation with the Maryland Green Purchasing Committee, the University System of Maryland, and the Maryland Clean Energy Center. Additionally, the department will issue a solicitation for a biogas contract in collaboration with these entities and will be authorized to enter into a contract to procure biogas.

This initiative is particularly significant for rural Maryland, where we face unique challenges and opportunities in our pursuit of sustainable energy solutions.

Rural communities in Maryland are often disproportionately impacted by energy costs, with many residents relying on fossil fuels that can be expensive and harmful to the environment. By promoting clean energy procurement, this bill not only aligns with Maryland's commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions but also offers a pathway for rural residents to access more affordable and reliable energy sources.

Furthermore, the establishment of this program can stimulate local economies by creating jobs in clean energy industries. This is especially crucial in rural areas where economic diversification is needed. By investing in renewable energy projects, we can foster growth in sectors such as solar and wind power, which can offer stable employment opportunities for residents.

House Bill 1417 also addresses energy access and equity. Many rural households face barriers to obtaining clean energy solutions, whether due to high upfront costs or lack of infrastructure. The Clean Energy Procurement Program aims to enhance energy efficiency and accessibility, reducing the energy burden on low- to moderate-income families and ensuring that all Marylanders can benefit from the transition to clean energy.

Moreover, this program will have positive environmental impacts. Transitioning to clean energy reduces our reliance on fossil fuels, lowering air and water pollution and contributing to the health of our communities and ecosystems. This is vitally important for the rural landscapes that are not only part of our heritage but also essential for our agriculture and natural resources.

The Rural Maryland Council respectfully requests your favorable support of House Bill 1417.

The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) is an independent state agency governed by a nonpartisan, 40-member board that consists of inclusive representation from the federal, state, regional, county, and municipal governments, as well as the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. We bring together federal, state, county, and municipal government officials as well as representatives of the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to identify challenges unique to rural communities and to craft public policy, programmatic, or regulatory solutions.

**“A Collective Voice for Rural Maryland”**