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RE: SB 931 and HB 1036 – Renewable Energy Certainty Act

Favorable

Chair Feldman, Chair Wilson, and members of the Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee and the House Economic Matters Committee,

The Coalition for Community Solar Access (CCSA) provides this written testimony regarding Senate Bill (SB) 931 and House Bill (HB) 1036. CCSA's position on this legislation is Favorable.

CCSA is a national, business-led trade organization, composed of over 100 member companies, that works to expand access to clean, local, affordable energy nationwide through the development of robust community solar programs. Community solar projects involve medium-scale solar facilities that are shared by multiple community subscribers who receive credit on their electricity bills for their share of the power produced.

CCSA has been an active participant in the development and implementation of Maryland's community solar pilot program, and we are grateful to this Committee for supporting the passage of SB 613 and HB 908 in 2023, which made community solar a permanent solution in Maryland. As a result, community solar will play a critical role in helping the state meet its energy requirements while also ensuring electricity cost savings for those that need it most, ensuring at least 40% of all capacity benefits low-and-moderate income customers.

SB 931 / HB 1036 would establish siting standards for ground-mounted solar systems and for storage systems, while preventing local jurisdictions from denying projects that meet those standards. It would also enable an option for local governments to establish a "community solar automatic enrollment program" whereby customers could be automatically enrolled as subscribers to an automatic enrollment community solar project.

CCSA appreciates the Senate and House Leadership on SB 931 / HB 1036, and particularly its emphasis on reducing barriers to siting solar systems in Maryland. Siting remains the greatest challenge to community solar development and is CCSA's top priority among market issues that need to be addressed. CCSA supports the SB 931 standards, in addition to the recommended edits (redlines) submitted in testimony by the Chesapeake Solar & Storage Association and Solar Energy Industries Association.

Further, CCSA supports related legislation that reduces siting barriers, via Senator Brook's SB 983 and Chair Clippinger's HB 827, which complement SB 931 / HB 1036 and would create a more efficient and right-sized permitting process for qualifying community solar projects that require a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity. Combined, these parallel legislative efforts will result in making Maryland a national model on solar siting while accelerating the deployment of much-needed clean energy in the state.

CCSA also supports the creation of an automatic enrollment option for local governments engaged in community solar, while acknowledging it as a relatively significant market change that merits discussion.



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CCSA appreciates the Senate and House Leadership's dedication to solving the complex challenges associated with Maryland's energy needs and we endorse the direction taken in SB 931 / HB 1036. We also look forward to continuing to work with the Chairs and respective Committees on this important legislation.

CCSA urges a favorable report on SB 931 and HB 1036.

Sincerely,

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