

Committee: Economic Matters

Testimony on: HB1233 – Community Solar Energy Generating Systems – Subscription Eligibility

Submitting: Deborah A. Cohn

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: February 21, 2025

Dear Chair Wilson and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing my testimony today in support of HB1233. As a Maryland resident in the PEPCO service area since 1986, I am writing to underscore the benefits of encouraging more development of community solar as it can lower electricity costs for residents who cannot install rooftop solar where they live, help Maryland achieve its in-state solar energy generation targets, increase equity and take into account the financial interests of the utilities involved.

We have frequently priced out rooftop solar, but we have too large a “passive solar” tree canopy over our roof to justify the investment. So we subscribed to one of the early community solar projects built on a landfill in Prince George’s County. I have followed the development of community solar since then.

The Problem: Montgomery Prince George’s Counties are too densely developed to have many brownfields or unused industrial sites suitable for community solar development. Yet both counties have several low and moderate income (LMI) residents, whether homeowners or apartment dwellers, who save about 5-10 percent on their annual electricity costs. Baltimore City also has a large percentage of low and moderate income residents who might benefit from the savings afforded by community solar and insufficient development sites in BG&E’s service area.

Parts of the state served by Delmarva Power and Potomac Edison have the opposite problem. They have available acreage suitable for community solar projects but lack adequate numbers of low and moderate income residents to satisfy the requirement that at least 40 percent of the project’s output benefits low or moderate income subscribers.

The Solution: HB1233 addresses this mismatch between where community solar generating systems can be built and where low and moderate income residents live. It allows a low or moderate income resident in one utility’s service area subscribe to a community solar project in another utility’s service area. To address the financial interests of all involved utility companies, HB1233 requires that the LMI subscriber receives the same credit value on his or her utility bill as an LMI subscriber that resides in the service area of the utility in which the community solar project is located. HB1233 requires the Public Service Commission to establish a process for the exchange of community solar bill credits between the affected utilities in these circumstances.

Benefits: HB1233 promotes further development of community solar, helps LMI residents reduce their utility costs and brings Maryland closer to meeting its solar energy generation goals. The bill enhances equity, increases in-state generation of solar energy, and through rules establishing the amount of credit, takes into account the financial interests of the different utility companies involved.

For these reasons I support HB1233 and urge a FAVORABLE report in Committee.

Thank you.