



Maryland Municipal League
The Association of Maryland's Cities and Towns

TESTIMONY

February 28, 2025

Committee: House – Economic Matters

Bill: HB1036 - Public Utilities - Generating Stations - Generation and Siting (Renewable Energy Certainty Act)

Position: *Unfavorable*

Reason for Position:

On behalf of the Maryland Municipal League (MML), representing 161 local governments across the state, we respectfully submit this testimony in *opposition* to House Bill 1036, the Renewable Energy Certainty Act (RECA). While we strongly support the development of renewable energy as a crucial part of Maryland's energy future, we believe that the current form of this bill undermines local governance and compromises important community interests.

RECA proposes sweeping changes that would significantly reduce the role of local governments in the siting and approval of renewable energy projects, particularly large-scale solar energy generation systems. This shift would bypass critical local input that is essential for ensuring that projects align with the needs and concerns of the communities they impact. Municipalities play an integral role in ensuring that development is compatible with local zoning laws, environmental protections, and safety concerns, which are vital to preserving the character and livability of our communities.

Local governments have a responsibility to ensure that projects like these are thoughtfully sited, with adequate infrastructure, emergency access, and protections for residents. However, under the current provisions of HB 1036, municipalities would lose meaningful control over the siting process and the ability to require necessary community safeguards. Specifically, this bill allows for expedited approvals that could bypass local zoning laws and environmental reviews, potentially leading to incompatible developments that disrupt communities and burden municipal resources.

The bill allows renewable energy projects to receive tax incentives, which could shift the financial burden to local governments and their taxpayers. This could result in reduced resources for essential municipal services such as education, public safety, and infrastructure maintenance, without corresponding benefits to the local tax base.

The Maryland Municipal League uses its collective voice to advocate, empower and protect the interests of our 160 local governments members and elevates local leadership, delivers impactful solutions for our communities, and builds an inclusive culture for the 2 million Marylanders we serve.

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Local governments are also concerned about the safety implications of large-scale renewable energy storage projects, which are not adequately addressed in this bill. There are growing concerns about the risks posed by energy storage facilities, such as fires, hazardous waste, and the potential for toxic fumes, especially when these projects are located near residential, commercial, or institutional properties. Municipalities need the authority to assess and address these risks to protect the health and safety of their residents.

The Maryland Municipal League urges the committee to consider the substantial concerns raised by municipalities regarding local control, community safety, tax equity, and environmental protections. The current language of HB 1036 fails to provide sufficient safeguards for local governments and their residents. We believe that a more balanced approach is needed—one that allows for the responsible development of renewable energy while preserving the vital role of local governments in managing community growth, infrastructure, and safety.

We respectfully request that the committee give an ***unfavorable*** report on HB 1036.

For more information, please contact Tyler Alexis Brice, Manager of Advocacy and Public Affairs, at tylerb@mdmunicipal.org or 254-652-8110.

Thank you for your consideration.

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