

HB 1036 , Oppose

Ron Weiss, Fort Washington

I am Ron Weiss of Fort Washington, and **I strongly oppose HB 1036/SB 931**, the Renewable Energy Certainty Act (RECA),

I support the Maryland Association of Counties' (MACo) position against this legislation. While I fully support Maryland's transition to clean energy, **this bill, in its current form, undermines essential safeguards for community safety, local decision-making, and responsible renewable energy development.**

As a resident of Fort Washington, I have firsthand experience with the dangers of **poorly regulated energy storage projects**. Without prior notice, **Pepco attempted to install a lithium-ion battery energy storage system near homes and a daycare center in my community**. Upon researching lithium-ion battery storage, I discovered:

- **Thermal runaway failures have caused serious fires and released hazardous fumes.**
- **26% of inspected energy storage systems had issues with fire detection and suppression, and 18% had thermal management problems.**
- **No local or state agency could guarantee safety or provide updated permitting standards that addressed these risks.**

It took **three years of community advocacy**, with the help of **County Councilman Ed Burroughs, Delegate Kris Valderrama, and Congressman Glenn Ivey**, to successfully stop the project. However, **no community should have to fight this hard to protect their safety.**

MACo's opposition to RECA is entirely justified because the bill:

1. **Strips local governments of essential oversight** in permitting large-scale renewable energy and storage projects.
2. **Fails to establish adequate fire safety and emergency response regulations** for battery energy storage systems (BESS).
3. **Allows renewable energy companies to bypass fair tax contributions**, shifting financial burdens to local taxpayers.
4. **Threatens housing affordability** by prioritizing solar over land needed for development.
5. **Fast-tracks projects without ensuring proper site selection, public engagement, or safety measures.**

HB 1338, which I strongly support, **fills the regulatory gap for battery storage systems by requiring state-level permitting and review** before these projects are placed in residential areas. **New York State has already taken action** by implementing modern fire code regulations for energy storage systems, while Maryland still relies on outdated 2018 fire codes that do not account for lithium-ion risks.

Until Maryland establishes a commission and enforces proper safeguards for battery energy storage, **fast-tracking projects under HB 1036 would be reckless and put Maryland residents at unnecessary risk.**

I urge the committee to:

1. **Reject HB 1036 in its current form** and support MACo's proposed amendments to restore local government oversight and enforce safety standards.
2. **Support HB 1338**, which ensures state-level permitting for battery energy storage systems to prevent unsafe siting near residential communities.
3. **Prioritize safety-first clean energy policies** that balance progress with public health and community well-being.

Maryland needs clean energy, but we **cannot compromise safety, tax fairness, and local decision-making** in the process. I appreciate the opportunity to submit this testimony and urge you to **vote unfavorably on HB 1036 unless it is significantly amended.**

Sincerely,

Ron Weiss, Fort Washington