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Testimony of Bryan Dunning  
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Before the Maryland House of Delegates, Economic Matters Committee  
Regarding House Bill 1036: Renewable Energy Certainty Act

Dear Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and Members of the House Economic Matters Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the Center for Progressive Reform (the Center) in support of HB1036. The Center is a nonprofit research and advocacy organization that is focused on addressing our most pressing societal challenges, including advancing the concerns of historically marginalized communities by centering racial and economic justice in climate policy. For the reasons discussed in the testimony below, the Center requests that this committee issue a **favorable with Amendments** report on HB 1036.

The Renewable Energy Certainty Act provides a vehicle to streamline permitting concerns for solar and storage in Maryland, particularly providing a pathway to advance bringing online new community solar projects in the state. It is important to consider the balance between state and local jurisdiction in the permitting process, and HB 1036 provides for significant community engagement – particularly in the instance of proposed siting in an overburdened or underserved community -, set back requirements, and other requirements to protect community preferences as a balance against the requirement that localities do not adopt prohibitions to construction or operation of solar energy generating stations or energy storage devices.

This bill represents a meaningful step to addressing Maryland's energy resource adequacy issues by providing a pathway to bring critical renewable generation and storage online to serve the state's demand load. Solar and storage represent low-cost sources of energy generation to serve both general and peak demand and do so in a manner that allows the state to meet its generation goals while also achieving its climate goals set forth in law under the Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022.

This said, the Center requests that the Committee consider adopting amendment language into the Renewable Energy Certainty Act to maximize the rate of clean energy and storage construction in Maryland. Currently under consideration by both the House Economic Matters Committee and the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee is HB0398/SB0316 – the Abundant Affordable Energy Act (AACE), which would supplement the

clean energy goals of the Renewable Energy Certainty Act, and as such the Center asks that the committee amend language from AACE into this bill.

Provisions of AACE which most supplement the impact of this bill relate to creating competitive procurement for storage or renewable generation, as well as administratively determined incentives for distribution scale solar and the REC-II, SREC-II programs. By incorporating this language (broadly included in proposed sections **7-709.2** and **.3, 7-1201, 7-1202**, and **7-1206-11** of the public utilities code) the amended Renewable Energy Certainty Act will provide both a method for addressing permitting issues for solar and storage projects, and create a viable, reliable, and least-cost pathway to ensure the economic viability of them. The administratively determined incentive, including its market segment capacity blocks, will additionally strengthen the impact of the Renewable Energy Certainty Act in bringing community solar projects online to benefit Marylanders.

Finally, the labor protections included within the competitive procurements for storage and utility-scale renewable generation facilities, namely, community benefits, will ensure that these projects financially benefit the communities where they are constructed, strengthening local protections already enumerated within the Renewable Energy Certainty Act.

For these reasons, the Center requests that this committee adopt the above discussed portions of AACE as amendments to this bill, and issues a **favorable report upon the amended bill**.