



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

Senate Bill 931

Public Utilities – Generating Stations – Generation and Siting (Renewable Energy Certainty Act)

Date: February 28, 2025
To: Economic Matters Committee

Position: **FAVORABLE W/ AMENDMENT**
From: Gussie Maguire,
MD Staff Scientist

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS WITH AMENDMENT** Senate Bill 931, which adds regulations for solar and energy storage installation. CBF generally supports the state's adoption of solar and other renewable energy, but these projects cannot come at the expense of the Maryland's other natural resources. CBF supports in concept amendments to be brought forth by the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo). MACo's amendments largely capture CBF's concerns regarding fast-tracking and siting and we encourage their adoption.

While solar energy and energy storage installations undeniably help the state reduce its carbon emissions, in alignment with state climate goals, they are not without environmental impact. Ideal sites for solar installations include rooftops, parking lots, brownfields, landfills, and other areas of disturbed or degraded land¹. Solar farms should not be constructed at the expense of forests, which provide crucial ecosystem services including water infiltration: impervious solar panels, in contrast, contribute significant stormwater runoff and subsequent erosion. Despite restoration efforts, the state has had a net loss of forest over the years, as well as significant fragmentation of the forest stands that remain².

The bill as written forbids local jurisdictions from denying solar sites that meet landscaping requirements laid out in the bill text. Furthermore, it requires that jurisdictions expedite review processes for new solar projects, and that the solar generating stations themselves be exempt from real and property taxes. These provisions would incentivize applications by solar developers while reducing the timeframe for thoughtful review of potential negative impacts. MACo's suggested amendments more appropriately address siting.

CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENT report on SB 931.

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at mstegman@cbf.org.

¹ <https://www.cbf.org/document-library/cbf-guides-fact-sheets/principles-and-practices-for-solar-power.pdf>

² https://www.bayjournal.com/news/growth_conservation/maryland-still-losing-forests-and-trees-though-at-a-slower-rate-study-finds/article_b1ddd3b0-675e-11ed-9ea9-072671365ff9.html