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To: The Honorable Brian J. Feldman  
Chair, Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

From: Karen S. Straughn  
Consumer Protection Division

Re: Senate Bill 794 – Maryland Home Improvement Commission – Residential Solar Power System Installation – Contractor License Required (SUPPORT)

The Consumer Protection Division of the Office of the Attorney General submits the following written testimony in support of Senate Bill 794 submitted by Senator Johnny Mautz. This bill would require a contractor that installs solar power systems to be licensed by the Maryland Home Improvement Commission.

In the past 3 calendar years, the Consumer Protection Division has received over 300 complaints involving solar power installation. While some of these complaints involve the sales process and misleading tactics used, a large number involve problems with the installation of the panels. Often, consumers find themselves with a leaking roof, necessitating removal and reinstallation of the panels. In some cases, the reinstallation results in a subsequent additional leak in the roof. Some reports detail instances of roof damage caused by poor installation practices, including unnecessary holes drilled and improper sealant application, particularly when dealing with less reputable installers. In other cases, the installer denies responsibility, creating a dispute as to whether the panels are the primary cause of the leak, and leaving the consumer with little recourse.

By requiring an installer of solar power systems to be licensed, there is action that can be taken when it is determined that the licensee is regularly performing subpar work. In addition, when

an installer is unreasonably denying responsibility, the consumer can pursue recovery through the Home Improvement Guaranty Fund.

For these reasons, we ask that the Economic Matters Committee return a favorable report on this bill.

cc: The Honorable Johnny Mautz  
Members, Education, Energy and the Environment Committee