



Committee: Education, Energy and the Environment

Testimony on: SB983 – Solar Energy - Distributed Generation Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity, Ground-Mounted Solar, and Small Solar Siting Workgroup

Organization: Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate Justice Wing

Submitting: Richard Deutschmann

Position: Favorable With Amendments

Hearing Date: March 6, 2025

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony today in support of SB983 with amendments. The Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate Justice Wing, a statewide coalition of nearly 30 grassroots and professional organizations, urges you to vote favorably on SB983, with suggested amendments.

The Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) calls for 14.5% of Maryland’s clean electricity to be contributed by solar energy by 2030, but the State has repeatedly fallen significantly short of this goal. According to the 2023 [Maryland Climate Pathways Report](#), both wind and solar generation must increase fivefold by 2031, with solar accounting for 33% of in-state energy generation. Additionally, Community Solar has been an incredibly important market segment of the industry in Maryland, addressing the needs of low-to-moderate income residents, renters, and those who are not able to have solar installed on their property. SB983 aims to strengthen Community Solar in the state, by creating a streamlined permitting process for these relatively smaller projects.

SB983 creates a new Distributed Energy Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (DGCPCN) permitting structure, targeted specifically at Community Solar projects between 2-5MW. The current CPCN permitting process was designed for larger power generation and other public projects, which can be arduous and time-consuming for smaller developers. The proposed legislation would task the Power Plant Research Program (PPRP) with creating standard siting and design requirements, and standard licensing conditions in order to receive a DGCPCN. These requirements would include reasonable setbacks, landscaping and screening, deforesting limits, and stormwater management. The DGCPCN would continue to engage a robust process of public comment and hearings, in order to gather input from local communities. Local governing bodies will still have responsibility over issuance of site plan, stormwater management and erosion/sediment control approvals, along with building and electrical permits. However, the legislation would also impose strict time limits, given the state’s interest in incentivizing new, in-state power generation. We believe that this legislation will right-size the

permitting process for these Community Solar projects, create predictable design standards for approval, speeding up deployment of critical generation assets in the state, and ensuring continued access to clean, renewable energy especially for low-to-moderate income Maryland residents.

We understand that sponsor amendments are being worked out in committee, and we think it is important that they address a compromise balance between clearing a path for clean energy development and local zoning concerns. At a minimum, the bill should provide an exemption to the prohibition on county regulation or a specific PSC review process in instances where a county holds an agricultural preservation or forest or other conservation easement on a property proposed for solar development. Easements represent county ownership of a right or rights in the bundle of property rights that should not be rendered meaningless by this bill. Our testimony does not directly address these amendments as we will not have a chance to fully review before the hearing.

For all of these reasons, we strongly support SB983 with changes suggested, and urge a FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS report in Committee.

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Adat Shalom Climate Action
Chesapeake Earth Holders
Climate Parents of Prince George's
Climate Reality Project
ClimateXChange – Rebuild Maryland Coalition
Coming Clean Network, Union of Concerned Scientists
DoTheMostGood Montgomery County
Echotopia
Elders Climate Action
Fix Maryland Rail
Glen Echo Heights Mobilization
Greenbelt Climate Action Network
HoCoClimateAction
IndivisibleHoCoMD
Maryland Legislative Coalition
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Montgomery County Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions
Mountain Maryland Movement
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