



25 March 2026

Senator Brian Feldman, Chair  
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
2 West, Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

## **Signed Up Oral and Written Testimony**

### **HB1532: Utility RELIEF Act**

#### **Position: Favorable with Amendment**

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Chair Feldman and Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee, The Coalition for Community Solar Access (CCSA), the Chesapeake Solar and Storage Association (CHESSA), the Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA), and the Maryland Rooftop Solar Coalition (MRSC) respectfully submit this joint Favorable with Amendment testimony for House Bill 1532. As Maryland is facing a generation shortage, solar energy is effectively the only source of new electric generation in the state today and expected to be the vast majority of new generation in the next few years.

CCSA is a national, business-led trade organization, composed of over 100 member companies, that works to expand access to clean, local, affordable energy nationwide through the development of robust community solar programs. Community solar projects involve medium-scale solar facilities that are shared by multiple community subscribers who receive credit on their electricity bills for their share of the power produced.

CHESSA is a regional trade association representing solar installers, developers, manufacturers, and other solar workers in Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. CHESSA's mission is to create a business and policy environment that encourages mainstream solar and energy storage adoption for the benefit of consumers, communities, and the electric grid. CHESSA is a recognized state affiliate of SEIA.

SEIA is the national trade association for the United States solar and energy storage industries. As the voice of the industry, SEIA works to support solar and energy storage as they become a mainstream and significant energy source by expanding markets, reducing costs, increasing reliability, removing market barriers, and providing education on the benefits of solar energy and energy storage. SEIA collaborates with its 1,200 member companies and other strategic partners to advocate for policies that create jobs and shape fair market rules that promote competition and the growth of reliable, low-cost solar power and energy storage.

MRSC is a coalition of national, regional, and local companies committed to growing Maryland's rooftop solar market. Our members create durable, family-supporting jobs and help Marylanders reduce and better manage their electricity bills through home solar and storage systems. MRSC

members have served Marylanders for well over a decade and hope to continue doing so for decades to come.

Our organizations represent the majority of distributed-generation companies operating in Maryland, including local installers, national developers, manufacturers, community solar providers, and residential contractors for whom the Maryland net metering program represents a key policy for the market to operate in Maryland. These businesses account for hundreds of millions of dollars in private investment across the State. Solar energy, both customer-sited and community-based, is one of the most deployable and scalable energy resources available in Maryland today. It can be developed and interconnected quickly, attract private capital without long-term fuel risk, reduce peak demand, lower transmission congestion, and provide measurable system benefits to ratepayers. In the current environment of rising capacity costs and economic uncertainty, policies that provide clarity and stability for distributed generation are essential.

The undersigned solar trade associations respectfully offer amendments to HB1532 in the hopes of improving the bill and making its intended outcomes stronger and in line with the sponsors' intents. As the bill stands, it does not offer a stable policy or business outlook for solar businesses or potential consumers of solar, especially in the near future. We offer amendments on three specific topics: net metering reforms, residential solar automated permitting, and the proposed reverse auction program in order to improve how this bill impacts the business climate for solar companies in Maryland.

### **Net Metering Reforms**

The undersigned solar trade associations do not oppose the transition to a successor net metering program. In fact, we support it so much we worked with Senator Feldman and Delegate Stein to develop HB1195/SB843, the SUNRISE Act which is explicitly designed to transition the Maryland distributed solar industry from the current net metering program to a successor program designed by the Maryland Public Service Commission (PSC). In doing so, the legislation set out a carefully calibrated timeline for under what conditions projects under development would qualify for the current program versus the successor program. This was done in order to provide transparency, predictability and to protect current investments and operating solar generation, to not disrupt projects currently under development, and to establish clear guidelines for how the PSC would determine the successor program.

It is for those reasons that the undersigned solar trade associations offer amendments to the net metering reform and transition section of HB1532. We believe that without further refinement, the legislation in its current form would make it harder for energy consumers to turn to solar energy as an affordable solution to lower their utility bills.

For residential and commercial systems (collectively known as “behind the meter” systems), we propose the following changes:

- Allow eligible customer-generators to qualify for the current net metering program by submitting an interconnection application to the utility until PSC-approved utility tariffs become available.

- Ensure a prospective and smooth transition by the PSC by setting a timeline that an Order creates the successor program by February 1, 2027 ahead of an anticipated July 1, 2027 start date.
- Allow the PSC to establish different new net metering tariffs based on different customer and solar project types. For example, the PSC may determine that residential solar projects should be compensated for the value of electricity generated differently from other types of solar projects and customer types.

For the community solar segment of distributed solar, we propose the following changes:

- Establish a date certain of no earlier than July 1, 2027, for community solar projects to qualify for the permanent program queue and pay the initial interconnection deposit to the electric company;
- Set prospective caps (set at 150% of the capacity currently in the community solar program queues) in Delmarva Power and Potomac Edison territories only, in order to allow in-development projects an opportunity to meet the maturity requirements, as opposed to the bill setting retroactive caps across the state;
- Create a community solar fund for low-and moderate-income households within the Office of Home Energy Programs;
- Address any potential utility or bureaucratic delays by ensuring that the PSC has discretion to extend project deadlines based on delays outside the control of a community solar project developer;
- Protect the investments already made and contracts already signed based on the current net metering program by ensuring that those projects remain under the current program's rules through the operating life of the system; and
- Incorporate language from HB1195/SB843 that would direct the PSC to establish the new net metering program based on the pass-through utility costs of generation and transmission, plus a PSC-determined value of distributed energy to the distribution grid.

### **Strengthening Residential Solar Automated Permitting**

The residential solar industry has already been hit by H.R. 1 and the loss of the Solar Investment Tax Credit. As the organization Permit Power notes in their written testimony, Maryland has the 4th-slowest residential solar permitting timelines in the country. Time is money, and the lack of speed in both permitting and inspections adds to residential solar system costs. The undersigned trade associations believe that counties should be offering automated permitting and remote inspections, which are common sense solutions to make an affordability solution like solar more accessible to homeowners.

### **Reverse Auction – Moving to Permanent Solutions**

The undersigned trade associations recognize the limited benefits that one-off clean energy programs can provide. This reverse auction could help larger-scale solar projects; however, it excludes most types of solar under development in Maryland. Instead, we suggest that clear, consumer-friendly

programs be added to the reverse auction in the near-term, supporting residential and commercial consumers adopting solar.

However, to provide stability to the state’s solar industry, and to create an improved business climate to what currently exists, we ask that SB341, the Affordable Solar Act, be incorporated into HB1532. This legislation would create a permanent program for solar deployment – growing new generation versus the status quo without asking the ratepayers to foot a larger bill.

The more in-state solar and energy storage that can be built, the greater protection Maryland can gain from the volatile and expensive PJM capacity auctions. Even with price caps, Maryland ratepayers are currently exposed to increasing utility rates. Prioritizing the development of Maryland solar and storage is one of the most effective policies the General Assembly can take to protect ratepayers from PJM and skyrocketing costs from the electric companies.

In summary, the joint solar trade associations offer these amendments to improve the legislation and eventually support HB1532. If this legislation can provide stability for the Maryland solar industry, then we can continue to add new generation at-scale in the state. We are here to be resources to the EEE Committee and the General Assembly.

Respectfully submitted,

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