



Chair Brian J. Feldman

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

RE: FAVORABLE – SB 843 – Net Energy Metering, SUNRISE Program, and Community Solar Energy Generating Systems Program (SUNRISE Act) - SUNRISE Act

March 12, 2026

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Senate Bill 843 - SUNRISE Act. Ameresco respectfully supports this legislation because it both preserves the stability of Maryland's community solar framework and expands meaningful access to clean energy savings for low- and moderate-income (LMI) households.

Ameresco is a leading developer of community solar projects in Maryland, with approximately 46 megawatts of projects operating or in development across the state. These projects serve Maryland residents, businesses, and public-sector customers while providing locally generated renewable energy that helps stabilize long-term electricity costs.

A central strength of the SUNRISE Act is its protection of access to the full statutory 3 GW net metering cap. For many years, this cap has served as a key pillar of Maryland's solar policy framework and has provided the certainty necessary for developers, investors, landowners, and local governments to move projects forward. Maintaining access to the full cap helps ensure that projects already in development can proceed under the policy assumptions that supported their investment decisions. Market stability is critical for continuing to attract private capital and ensuring that Maryland can deploy clean energy resources quickly and cost-effectively.

Equally important, however, are the provisions of SB 843 that expand and strengthen pathways for low- and moderate-income participation in community solar. Community solar has always held the promise of allowing households that cannot install rooftop solar—particularly renters and LMI households—to access the economic benefits of solar generation. The SUNRISE Act helps establish a more effective framework for connecting LMI residents with community solar subscriptions.

A key feature of the bill is leveraging the Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP) as a trusted state entity with extensive experience administering programs that serve income-qualified households, including energy assistance and other benefit programs. Because OHEP already works directly with eligible residents and maintains established enrollment systems, it is uniquely positioned to help connect households with community solar savings.

This centralized approach significantly improves program efficiency by leveraging an existing state infrastructure that already interacts with the very households the program is intended to serve. It would unlock direct solar benefits for low-income households. There are not enough dollars available to help everyone, however this program would allow community solar to

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augment the resources OHEP already has in place. This also enhances the ability of distributed solar to serve low-income households and communities. Rather than requiring solar developers to conduct large-scale outreach and enrollment campaigns, the program can rely on a trusted public agency that already has established relationships with eligible households.

The SUNRISE Act's structure helps ensure that more of the economic value created by community solar flows directly to participating households. In decentralized enrollment models, developers often must rely on extensive marketing and door-to-door outreach to recruit subscribers, which can increase program costs and create barriers to participation. By consolidating enrollment through OHEP, the program reduces administrative overhead and allows a greater share of the solar savings to reach the households that need them most.

Taken together, the SUNRISE Act represents a thoughtful evolution of Maryland's community solar policy. By preserving access to the full net metering cap while creating a more effective pathway for LMI participation, the legislation strengthens both the equity and durability of Maryland's clean energy programs.

Ameresco appreciates the Committee's continued leadership on energy policy and respectfully urges favorable consideration of SB 843. We look forward to working with the General Assembly, the Administration, and other stakeholders to continue expanding access to affordable clean energy for Maryland residents.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

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