



**Testimony Regarding HB 1532  
Senate Education, Energy, & Environment Committee  
March 23rd, 2026**

Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

Our faith communities want to see climate and energy policy in Maryland that:

- reflects robust public input,
- is developed transparently in collaboration with groups representing our shared human interest in being able to breathe clean air in a stable climate, and
- is established through focused legislation that allows for substantive discussion and thoughtful discernment

None of these is true of the omnibus energy legislation that has barreled through the General Assembly in 2025 or 2026.

That said, we are submitting testimony previously submitted conveying our strong support for three elements we want to see in this energy package:

**the preservation of Maryland's EmPOWER program;**

**strong common sense guardrails regarding data center development; and**

**helping our state meet its climate goals by allowing more Marylanders to go solar.**

**TESTIMONY CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGES**

**Testimony Supporting HB 864**  
**Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**  
**March 21st, 2024**

**Position:** Favorable



Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

**Interfaith Power & Light (DC.MD.NoVa), along with five regional multi-faith networks and over a dozen Maryland faith organizations, request a favorable report on HB 864, the EmPOWER Maryland Energy Efficiency Act.**

Our breath connects us to each other and to all life. We believe our breath is for singing praise — not for breathing soot and pollution.

**But in Maryland, burning methane gas is harming all that has breath:**

*Below ground*, the pipes that bring gas to our homes leak methane, sometimes enough to risk an explosion — and trap more than 80 times as much heat as carbon dioxide, further damaging our climate.

*Above ground*, in our homes, burning gas indoors hurts the lungs and health of our loved ones, particularly the young and old.

**Today, we are using our breath to speak out:** for a safer, cleaner, and more efficient future where everything is powered by clean energy. We call on our elected leaders to issue a favorable report on HB 864, the EmPOWER Maryland Energy Efficiency Act, to help Marylanders get off gas-burning appliances at home.

For the health of our common home, we can strengthen the EmPOWER Maryland program and align it with our climate goals. For all that has breath, we can provide subsidies to help Marylanders choose cleaner, efficient appliances that protect the lungs of our children and most vulnerable neighbors. And for Marylanders already struggling with high utility bills, we can ensure that they have access to all the federal and state funding available to help them lower their utility bills and choose more efficient appliances.

Across Maryland, our faith communities are choosing healthy and efficient electric appliances over gas, oil, and propane. We call on you to join us by strengthening the EmPOWER Maryland program and passing HB 864 – *for all that has breath.*

Submitted on behalf of **Interfaith Power & Light (DC.MD.NoVA)**, and these Maryland faith groups and communities:

**Action In Montgomery (AIM)**

**Anne Arundel Connecting Together (ACT)**

**Central Maryland Ecumenical Council (CMEC)**

**Multi-Faith Alliance of Climate Stewards of Frederick County** (submitting additional testimony)

*The EmPOWER Act will help Marylanders reduce their carbon dioxide and methane output through cost-saving incentives resulting in cleaner air for breathing and less heat trapping carbon gasses in the atmosphere. And it gives the most incentives to lower income households, which is important to faith groups who support creation justice.*

**People Acting Together in Howard (PATH)**

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**Baltimore Jewish Council**

**Beloved DMV Environmental Justice Collective** (Green leaders in Black churches)

**Baltimore Washington Conference of the United Methodist Church Creation Care**

*BWCUMC Creation Care supports HB 864 for its energy efficiency and electrification provisions to help eliminate health and environmental harms, especially for underserved and overburdened communities.*

**Chesapeake Earth Holders Community of Engaged Buddhism**

*Our community cares deeply for the wellbeing of the Earth and all living beings. We support the Energy Efficiency Act because it will provide a means by which the citizens of Maryland can, through their combined efforts to shift to cleaner forms of energy, help create a cleaner and healthier environment for all.*

**Creation Care Ministry of the Delaware-Maryland Synod  
of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)**

**Episcopal Diocese of Washington Creation Care Committee**

**Green Dharma DMV** (Green leaders in Hindu and Jain communities)

**Green Muslims**

**Jewish Climate Action Network DMV (JCAN-DMV)**

**Jewish Community Relations Council of Howard County** (submitting additional testimony)

**Justice & Witness Action Network – Maryland**  
(Central Atlantic Conference, United Church of Christ)

**Maryland Catholics for Our Common Home** (submitting additional testimony)

**Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland** (submitting additional testimony)

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*Over five hundred caring Marylanders have spoken out in their congregations to strengthen EmPOWER over the last two years. A dozen of them are below, and view the [full album here](#).*





**Testimony Supporting SB 596**  
**Senate Education, Energy, & Environment Committee**  
**February 24th, 2026**  
**Position: FAVORABLE**

Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Maryland congregations of many faiths working together through Interfaith Power & Light (DC.MD.NoVa), we respectfully urge a favorable report on SB 596 – Data Center Clean Capacity.

Across our faith traditions runs a common thread: **we are called to be wise stewards of creation and to protect the most vulnerable among us.** Economic development cannot come at the expense of our communities. As data centers and large-load customers drive unprecedented electricity demand in Maryland, we insist that real human wisdom – not artificial intelligence or corporate interests – drive our decisions.

Planned data centers are driving up projected electricity load, putting pressure on our grid and risking higher costs for everyday Marylanders. Because utilities must plan for projected demand, even when some of that demand is speculative or duplicative, Marylanders could be left paying for overbuilt infrastructure if projects fail to materialize or relocate. For so many of our families already struggling with rising energy bills, this risk is not abstract. It is a matter of economic dignity and household stability.

This bill offers a faithful and practical solution to this problem in a few key ways.

**First, the bill embraces demand response and load flexibility.** SB 596 establishes a voluntary demand response program for large-load customers (like data centers) over 25 MW, administered by the Public Service Commission, and ensures these reductions come from battery storage, flexible load, or other non-emitting resources. This reduces strain on the grid while avoiding additional pollution that harms frontline communities.

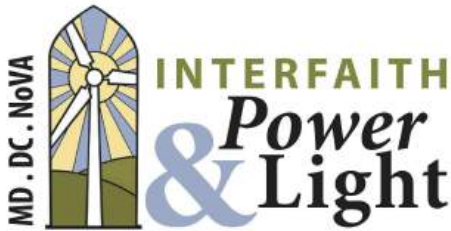
**Second, the bill accelerates clean energy solutions.** By directing the Maryland Energy Administration to identify surplus interconnection capacity at existing generator sites, SB 596 allows new battery storage and zero-emission resources to come online more quickly. In our faith communities, we understand that time matters when responding to urgent needs. Climate change, grid reliability, and affordability are urgent. Unlocking existing infrastructure to deploy clean capacity reflects wise stewardship of what we already have.

**Third, SB 596 ensures that data center facilities and other large-load customers contribute fairly to the system they rely on.** By requiring at least 25% of load capacity to be matched with storage, carbon-free generation, or demand response, we align economic development with moral responsibility. Work must be dignified, and growth must be just.

**Finally, the community benefit fee ensures that as large-load customers seek to interconnect, they contribute to energy assistance and efficiency programs for low-income households through EmPOWER.** Our traditions teach that we are judged by how we treat those with the least. Those demanding more and more energy must not be allowed to impose higher costs on the state's most vulnerable people, but be required to provide meaningful relief.

SB 596 reflects the values we lift up every day in our congregations: stewardship, justice, shared responsibility, and care for our common home. It insists that those building new things in Maryland do so mindful of their impact on our neighbors and our common home. For these reasons, Interfaith Power & Light (DC.MD.NoVa) respectfully requests a favorable report on SB 596.





February 6, 2026

Testimony supporting HB 345, Affordable Solar Act  
House Environment & Transportation Committee  
**Position: FAVORABLE**

Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of **Interfaith Power & Light (DC.MD.NoVa)** and the many faith communities we serve across Maryland, we urge a **favorable** report on HB0345, the Affordable Solar Act.

Maryland's faith communities are putting their resources toward sacred and essential purposes. Our congregations strive to be faithful stewards of the gifts entrusted to us.

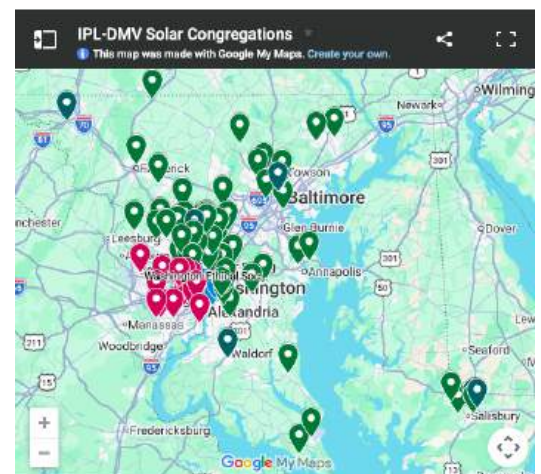
Right now, Maryland families and community institutions face some of the highest electricity costs in the nation, and those costs continue to rise. For congregations, nonprofits, and households alike, this means fewer resources for mission, service, and care, and more money spent on fuel-burning power that harms the very world we are called to protect.

We believe Marylanders deserve real solutions that give us control over our energy future, not just more expensive bills. HB0345 helps build a system that protects ratepayers while moving forward with clean energy. The bill's escrow account system ensures transparency and prevents excessive costs from being passed on to customers, striking an important balance between urgent climate action and strong protections for ratepaying Marylanders.

The Affordable Solar Act also makes solar energy accessible to more of our neighbors, regardless of whether they own their home. The portable solar provisions open the door for renters and apartment residents to participate in the clean energy economy. A typical balcony system can reduce electricity bills by 10–30%, bringing the benefits of energy independence to communities that have long been left out.

Our faith communities know firsthand that solar power works. **Across Maryland, more than 70 congregations are already powering their sanctuaries with the sun.** In just the last year, our Clean Energy Shepherd program helped twelve congregations install or move toward installing solar, representing over a megawatt of clean energy. One church lovingly described their panels as their “newest stained-glass windows,” a visible sign of their commitment to stewardship and sustainability.

We are ready to meet the climate crisis with real action. Maryland currently generates only about 7% of its electricity from renewable sources, yet we have set a goal of reaching 50% by 2030. HB0345 moves us meaningfully toward that goal while ensuring the transition is fair, affordable, and inclusive.



For these reasons, and on behalf of the many congregations and communities striving to become better stewards of their resources and their world, we respectfully urge a favorable report on HB0345.