



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF
WASHINGTON COUNTY, MARYLAND

March 23, 2026

Delegate Marc Korman, Chair
Environment and Transportation Committee
250 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: **Support with Amendments: HB1532 – Utility RELIEF ACT**

Dear Delegate Korman:

The Board of County Commissioners of Washington County (the “Board”) supports the Utility RELIEF Act, with the amendments proposed by the Maryland Association of Counties (“MACo”). The concerns addressed by MACo’s amendments highlight important issues of concern for the Board.

The requirement that counties allow remote inspection of installed solar panels if average inspection times exceed five business days over a 12-month period disregards firefighter and resident safety. Remote inspections frequently do not provide a sufficient review for code compliance, adequate firefighter access or other safety criteria. Overlooking certain healthy and safety requirements could create unforeseen risks.

HB1532 specifically excludes historic preservation from applicable review by the solar permitting software and preempts counties from reviewing or denying a permit based on an applicant’s failure to comply with applicable historical preservation requirements or criteria. Additionally, the bill creates a burdensome quarterly reporting mandate that would take staff time away from actual permitting tasks to focus on administrative reporting requirements. Last session the General Assembly passed the Renewal Energy Certainty Act. While the legislation moved in a positive direction, additional changes needed include striking salvage value from the calculation of the decommissioning bond and clarifying the 5% limit within a priority preservation area includes facilities constructed both before and after the effective date of the legislation.

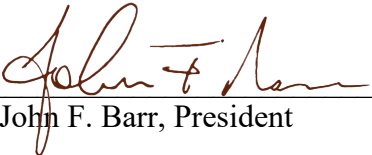
Finally, MACo requested an amendment to clarify that recommendations on a state-level zoning or permitting structure be developed in consultation with county planning and permitting officials. This will help recommendations reflect local comprehensive plans, county infrastructure capacity, and community impacts.

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These proposed amendments allow counties to remain productive stakeholders in addressing Maryland's energy needs. Accordingly, the Board respectfully encourages the Committee to issue a Favorable with Amendments report for HB1532.

Sincerely,

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF WASHINGTON COUNTY, MARYLAND

By:  _____
John F. Barr, President