

SB0341 - SUPPORT

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SB0341—Public Utilities—Solar Energy Generating Systems and Solar Renewable Energy Credits (Affordable Solar Act)

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
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Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

My name is William Mascioli. I have lived in Silver Spring, Maryland, for more than 40 years. I raised my children here. Retired now, I worked for over 35 years as an attorney for the federal government protecting the collective-bargaining rights of workers under the National Labor Relations Act, an edifice of rights built on the foundation of “concerted activity for mutual aid and protection.” I was dedicated to that work because that notion of mutual aid and protection is deeply personal for me. I have tried to conduct my life guided by principles of compassion, empathy, and recognition that we are all tied together by threads of obligation and responsibility – to each other as humans, to future generations, and to the natural world that sustains us. For decades now, I have lived with growing anxiety and despair over our reckless and irresponsible failure to deal with the ongoing climate crisis with anything approaching adequacy.

These days, like, I trust, most of us, I am terrified and dismayed by the country’s slide into authoritarianism, most immediately evident by the brutal and lawless treatment of members of our community by the agents of ICE and the rest of the deportation apparatus. I have been pleased, proud, and impressed by this legislature’s efforts to rein in ICE’s abuses. The climate crisis is every bit as threatening to our democracy as Trump’s depredations against our national morals. Indeed, the suffering and injustices that it threatens--and the political disruptions that those will entail--cannot be overstated. It warrants *at least* the same level of attention.

Put simply, Maryland needs to act quickly to do its part to combat the climate crisis by moving away from fossil fuels. For that reason, I urge you to issue a favorable report on SB 341, the Affordable Solar Act.

Four years ago, by passing the Climate Solutions Now Act, Maryland set a goal of 50% renewable energy by 2030. SB 341 will take giant strides toward reaching that goal, and does so in a way that increases solar generation within our borders and makes solar energy more widely accessible. Among other things, it: (a) creates a program within the Public Service Commission to develop at least 4,000 megawatts of additional solar energy generating capacity in the state, a massive increase, and (b) authorizes portable plug-in solar, which will make solar

power vastly more available to renters and other apartment dwellers, which will mean significant long-term savings on utility bills.

Furthermore, this legislation will ensure that ratepayer money for solar actually builds more solar in the state, rather than being used for grant-making or general government functions, as is now the case.

At a time when the federal government is doing all that it can to thwart moves toward a cleaner, more equitable energy future, it is imperative that states step to the fore, and SB 341 presents just such an opportunity to Maryland. I urge a favorable report and thank you for your consideration.