

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



Written Testimony of Qcells

FAVORABLE Re: Senate Bill 596

Qcells testifies in support of Senate Bill 596, Large Load Customers – Electric System Interconnection and Demand Response. Qcells—while known as one of the largest domestic manufacturers of solar panels—also provides grid services offerings that aggregate behind-the-meter and front-of-the-meter resources to support reliability, manage peak demand, and lower costs for customers and the grid.

SB 596 prudently links large-load growth to new clean and flexible resources, such as energy storage, virtual power plants, and demand response. Large load customers must provide interconnection capacity for at least 25% of their load through behind-the-meter storage, new storage capacity, new carbon-free assets, or demand response, with a strong incentive to go to 100% in exchange for prioritized studies, interconnection, and permitting. At the same time, the bill directs the Public Service Commission to establish a dedicated demand response program for large load customers with clear event structures, notification timelines, compensation, and performance rules, giving both large customers and solution providers like Qcells the certainty needed to plan and invest. The requirement that the Commission's performance metrics account for virtual power plant aggregation, front-of-the-meter storage, and non-wires alternatives recognizes that a portfolio of distributed and utility-scale assets can operate together like a flexible power plant, delivering capacity, peak reduction, and resiliency at lower cost.

Importantly, SB 596 balances flexibility for large customers with protections and benefits for other ratepayers. It creates a standard and expedited interconnection process for large load customers that may not delay interconnections for others, requires load studies and fees that help fund bill assistance and low-income efficiency programs, and encourages prevailing wage on priority projects. Qcells stands ready to invest in clean energy and grid services programs facilitated by SB 596 to ensure that the costs of accommodating large new loads are met through distributed, flexible capacity. In conclusion, SB 596 is smart policy that will ensure rapid load growth does not unfairly burden ratepayers, while also driving smart investments in the grid. SB 596 is critically needed to set a framework for flexible, clean resources in the wake of data center proliferation.