

**Committee:** Environment and Transportation  
**Testimony on:** SB 341 -- Affordable Solar Act  
**Position:** Support  
**Hearing Date:** February 19, 2026

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club urges a favorable report for HB 341, the Affordable Solar Act. This follow-up to the 2023 Brighter Tomorrow Act strengthens the pathway to cost-effective, local, and clean solar power, from residential rooftop to utility-scale.

Maryland is falling behind on its ambitious clean energy goals.<sup>1</sup> In order to get back on track, Maryland needs to drive a significant expansion of solar energy in all forms—both utility-scale and behind-the-meter. Grid reliability, and costs faced by ratepayers, are both being jeopardized by growing demand, particularly from data centers in our multi-state region.<sup>2</sup> Reducing our reliance on dirty fuels is also crucial to reduce the serious health impacts associated with air pollution.<sup>3</sup>

Solar energy has become the world’s cheapest power source, and its increased coupling with ever-improving batteries has made solar-and-storage projects cost-competitive with gas peaker plants.<sup>4</sup> However, current federal policy is promoting fossil fuel energy while opposing renewables.<sup>5,6,7</sup> It is incumbent upon Maryland to respond to the challenges created by federal policy while meeting the state’s need for affordable, clean energy.

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<sup>1</sup> Maryland Energy Administration, *Reaching 100 Percent Net Carbon-Free Electricity in Maryland*, (Maryland Energy Administration, 2025)

<https://energy.maryland.gov/Reports/MEA%20100%20Clean%20Electricity%20Report.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Rachel McCrea, “Maryland lawmakers push for new power amid concerns about high costs.” *Capital News Service*, April 2, 2025,

<https://cnsmaryland.org/2025/04/02/maryland-lawmakers-push-for-new-power-amid-concerns-about-high-costs/>

<sup>3</sup> American Lung Association, “New Report on Air Pollution in Maryland: For Ozone Smog, Thirteen of 15 Graded Counties Post Worse Results; All Graded Counties Post Worst Results for Both Daily & Year-Round Particle Pollution,” press release, April 23 2025, <https://www.lung.org/media/press-releases/2025-md-sota>

<sup>4</sup> University of Surrey, “Solar energy is now the world's cheapest source of power, study finds.” *Tech Xplore*, October 6 2025, <https://techxplore.com/news/2025-10-solar-energy-world-cheapest-source.html>

<sup>5</sup> Maxine Joselow and Lisa Friedman, “Trump Halts 5 Wind Farms Off the East Coast,” *The New York Times*, December 22 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/12/22/climate/trump-offshore-wind-farms.html>

<sup>6</sup> Jake Spring, “Trump administration limits subsidies for solar, wind projects,” *The Washington Post*, August 15 2025 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2025/08/15/tax-credits-renewable-energy-projects/>

<sup>7</sup> Spencer Kimball, “Trump megabill gives the oil industry everything it wants and ends key support for solar and wind,” *CNBC*, July 3 2025,

[https://www.cnbc.com/2025/07/03/trump-one-big-beautiful-bill-oil-gas-coal-solar-wind-ira-tax-incentive-repeal.htm](https://www.cnbc.com/2025/07/03/trump-one-big-beautiful-bill-oil-gas-coal-solar-wind-ira-tax-incentive-repeal.html?msocid=339a416a464267c32782540947db66aa)  
l?msocid=339a416a464267c32782540947db66aa

This bill responds to this need in multiple ways:

- It restructures the current incentive (Solar Renewable Energy Credit, or SREC) program in a manner that protects ratepayers and ensures solar incentives are effectively tailored to each market segment (i.e., rooftop, community, and utility-scale). It does so in two ways:
  - 1) Directing the PSC to conduct competitive procurements for utility-scale solar, thereby ensuring value for ratepayers; and
  - 2) Directing the PSC to establish and regularly recalculate incentive prices for rooftop and community solar based on changes in federal policy and the market.
- It shifts funds paid by ratepayers (through their utilities) in the form of Alternative Compliance payments (ACPs) into an escrow account that will be used to implement this new solar procurement model. In so doing, it ensures that ACPs are used for their intended use—procuring renewable energy—instead of potentially being redirected for other purposes.
- Finally, it would legalize balcony solar<sup>8</sup> in Maryland. Also known as plug-in solar, this technology is popular in Germany and the Utah legislature approved its usage in the state with bipartisan support.<sup>9</sup> It creates the possibility for renters—as well as homeowners who cannot have rooftop solar—to generate solar power without permitting or installation costs. For many renters, balcony solar can meet 10-30% of their electricity needs and travel with them if they move.

By putting the right incentives in place for utility-scale, community, and rooftop solar, in addition to enabling balcony solar, the Affordable Solar Act will accelerate Maryland’s clean energy transition and move us towards our climate goals. The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club strongly supports SB 0341. We urge a favorable report.

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<sup>8</sup> Dana Drugmand, “Plug-In Solar Power Could Be Coming to a Balcony Near You,” *Sierra Magazine* November 7 2025, <https://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/plug-solar-power-could-be-coming-balcony-near-you>

<sup>9</sup> John Fitzgerald Weaver, “Balcony solar gains unanimous bipartisan support in Utah,” *pv magazine USA*, March 2 2025 <https://pv-magazine-usa.com/2025/03/05/balcony-solar-gains-unanimous-bipartisan-support-in-utah/>