

HB1532 - FAVORABLE W/ AMENDMENTS

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Utility RELIEF (Reducing Energy Load Inflation for Everyday Families) Act

Chair Feldman and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

My name is Skye Richmond, representing Bright Saver. We are a nonprofit building a movement to make solar ownership affordable and accessible to everyone. I am writing today to encourage the Committee to support HB1532 with one key amendment to ensure that the people of Maryland can access plug-in solar to make their energy more affordable.

As currently drafted, the bill caps portable solar generation devices at a total system output of 391 watts. Among more than 30 states that have introduced plug-in solar legislation, Maryland would be the only state to impose such a restrictive limit. This would effectively prohibit larger, safe, and already-certified systems, limit customer savings, and fail to accommodate future updates to NEC and UL codes—requiring additional legislation to keep pace with industry standards. Maryland would stand alone in enforcing such a constraint, and importantly, it would significantly constrain the benefits available to residents.

Importantly, this is not a safety issue. Systems up to 1,200 watts have already been certified under established national standards (including NEC and UL) to safely address utility and grid concerns. The proposed 391-watt cap therefore does not reflect existing safety frameworks, but instead functions as an unnecessary barrier to access.

The people of Maryland are at risk of missing out on significant cost savings. A 1,200-watt system could save Marylander's more than \$300 annually. Plug-in solar provides meaningful access for renters and apartment residents. According to 2020 Census data, approximately 32% of housing units in Maryland are occupied by renters. This technology ensures that access to clean energy is not limited by housing status. When paired with battery storage, plug-in solar can also provide backup power during outages, improving household resilience and energy independence.

Similar legislation has been introduced in 30 states, and is currently awaiting signature on the governor's desk in both Virginia and Maine, reflecting strong regional and national momentum behind plug-in solar.

We urge the Committee to support HB1532 and, importantly, to restore the allowable size of portable solar generation devices to 1,200 watts. This adjustment would align Maryland with emerging standards, preserve safety, and ensure residents can access meaningful energy savings.