

# Testimony for SB 341

## Support for the Affordable Solar Act

Bill Sponsors: Brooks, Kramer, and Lam  
Committee: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment  
Organization Submitting: Nature Forward  
Submitted by: Angie McCarthy, MD Conservation Advocate  
Position: Favorable



Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and the rest of EEE;

I am submitting testimony on behalf of Nature Forward in strong support of the Affordable Solar Act. Nature Forward (formerly Audubon Naturalist Society) is the oldest independent environmental organization protecting nature in the DC metro region, including Maryland's near counties of Montgomery and Prince George's. Our mission is to inspire residents of Maryland and the Washington, DC region to appreciate, understand, and protect their natural environment through outdoor experiences, education, and advocacy. We thank the Maryland legislators for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of the Affordable Solar Act (SB 341).

We have heard time and time again that our energy grid does not have enough capacity for our ever-increasing demand. Current renewable energy policies have been driven in large part by fossil fuel interests and have been a hindrance to Maryland's pursuit of previous legislation's clean energy goals. **This is causing regular increases in ratepayers' electrical bills; is delaying our ability to reach our climate goals; and will continue to exacerbate our dual climate and cost of living crises.**

Further, our current structure for incentivizing the clean energy transition is ineffective in accomplishing Maryland's clean energy goals. Very few new clean energy projects are being constructed in the state other than distributed (rooftop) solar projects. The result is that ratepayers are paying more for their electricity, and the funds established for utility infrastructure development are not effectively investing in the development of new clean energy. The Maryland Office of the People's Council has put out a report that ratepayers will see a 2 - 24% rate increase within the next year due to this energy crisis.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>[https://opc.maryland.gov/Portals/0/Files/Publications/RMR%20Bill%20and%20Rates%20Impact%20Report\\_2024-08-14%20Final.pdf?ver=V9hZfyTmjLeNVt2Dg3cTgw%3d%3d](https://opc.maryland.gov/Portals/0/Files/Publications/RMR%20Bill%20and%20Rates%20Impact%20Report_2024-08-14%20Final.pdf?ver=V9hZfyTmjLeNVt2Dg3cTgw%3d%3d)



The Affordable Solar Act provides many of the solutions that we need to fix our energy landscape. **The quickest way to build more energy supply is by investing in clean energy projects.** This is the swiftest way to bring online *new* energy resources while also providing more resilience now and in the future. Additionally, this is how we protect hardworking Marylanders from corporate greed. Building out more natural gas or fossil fuel plants, or business as usual, cannot continue.

The Affordable Solar Act restructures financing and procurement for solar programs - this bill will phase out the current solar subsidy process and replace it with a dynamic process that ensures that solar incentives are tailored for their market segments. This program, which is similar to the New Jersey program that has been operating since 2020, can move our state to producing 15% of energy generation by 2035, while also capping the rate-payer impact of solar.

The Affordable Solar Act will also shift the financial burden off of ratepayers by establishing an escrow account to implement future solar projects. It will democratize renewable energy, by allowing renters, condo-owners, and other multi-family unit dwellers to be part of a renewable energy future through balcony solar. A typical balcony solar unit can reduce energy bills by 10-30% -- a boon when so many are struggling to pay their bills. <sup>2</sup>

As Nature Forward, we believe the Affordable Solar Act will benefit all Marylanders, on a regular basis. We, and our membership of over 30,000, are proud to support rational, common-sense business and environmental decisions and see the merit in this bill. **For these reasons, we urge a favorable report for the Affordable Solar Act.**

Angie McCarthy  
Maryland Conservation Advocate

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<sup>2</sup> <https://solartechonline.com/blog/solar-panels-apartment-balcony-guide/>