

March 10, 2025

Honorable Brian Feldman, Chair  
Senate Education, Energy & Environment Committee  
Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

### **SB 843 – FAVORABLE**

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and Senate Education, Energy & Environment Committee,

TurningPoint Energy ("TPE") is a solar and battery storage development and investment company, with over 1 gigawatt of community solar developed across the United States and 21 megawatts in Maryland alone. We were proud to participate in Maryland's community solar pilot program since its inception in 2015 and continue to invest heavily in the state's clean energy future.

Chair Feldman has been a longtime leader in the clean energy policy since serving as a Delegate; the SUNRISE Act is another example of his forward-thinking approach to ensuring Maryland continues to grow in-state clean energy resources.

There are two critical goals achieved by this bill, outlined below:

#### **A Clear Direction for the Future of Solar & Energy Storage**

The development cycle is long: a kitchen table conversation with a prospective landowner to delivering the first electrons to neighbors takes at least three to five years. Without a clear line of sight on how a community solar project will be compensated for providing power to customers, we cannot begin project development.

SUNRISE tackles this issue head-on by implementing a fair process by which solar projects in development are placed on the current community solar tariff. A project must have invested in site control, interconnection, and started securing local or state permits in order to hold a place in a future net energy metering queue. This method balances the need to provide certainty to project developers without offering positions to earlier stage, more speculative projects.

In tandem, the bill kicks off a process at the Public Service Commission (PSC) to create a successor tariff to net energy metering, to be implemented after the state has hit the 3,000 MW goal set by the General Assembly in 2021. The timeline recommended by SUNRISE provides sufficient time to truly analyze the complex dynamics of distributed energy deployment and the variety of benefits these resources provide to Marylanders.

By establishing a clear, fair process for current projects – and starting the process to build the structure for future ones – the SUNRISE Act ensures Maryland does not lose a step on meeting its clean energy deployment goals.

### **Additional Tools to Reach Low to Moderate Income (LMI) Households**

The SUNRISE Act offers two new tools to leverage community solar projects to offset rising energy bills.

- (1) Section (O): Coordinating Community Solar Enrollment with the Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP)** When the General Assembly made the community solar program permanent in 2023, every new project was required to deliver 40% of its power to low to moderate income households, offering each subscriber to less than a 10% discount on their energy bills. This requirement ensures that all projects not only deliver clean, local energy – but bill savings to Maryland’s most vulnerable households.

At the same time, there have been challenges connecting LMI – particularly low-income – households with community solar savings. Many prospective households express skepticism or reluctance to signing up for a subscription, even though by statute they must receive at least 10% bill savings each month.

That is why SUNRISE coordinates community solar projects with local home energy offices. Section (P) ensures that agency staff can enroll households into community solar projects with a simple affirmative from the customer. Customers enrolling in community solar this method will need to save at least 20% on their energy bill. Once a customer has been enrolled by a subscription coordinator via OHEP or a local office, the coordinator remits \$100 to OHEP as a “thank you” for staff time.

- (2) Section (P): Direct Payments to OHEP**

At present, community solar project owners are spending resources to knock on doors or run digital advertisements to attract prospective low to moderate income customers to sign up for guaranteed bill savings. This piecemeal process invites the question: why not deliver resources meant for LMI customer acquisition directly to LMI customers?

Section (P) of SUNRISE assumes that if a community solar project dedicates 4% (40% of its customers at a 10% retail discount) of its energy output for free to LMI customers, the project could double that amount – to 8% - and deliver a monetary payment to the Office of Home Energy Programs or Strategic Energy Investment Fund (SEIF) for direct energy assistance programs. The project will still subscribe customers – some of whom may benefit through Option (O) as well – but it will meet its requirement to deliver value to low-to-moderate income customers.



Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to working with you and Members of the Committee on this and other energy legislation.

Thank you,

/s/

David Murray

dmurray[at]tpoint-e.com