

SB 341 - SUPPORT

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**Public Utilities - Solar Energy Generating Systems and Solar Renewable Energy Credits
(Affordable Solar Act)**

Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment
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Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to express my strong support for SB 341, the Affordable Solar Act, because I want to give ordinary citizens in Maryland more tools to lower their electricity bills and more ways to access clean renewable energy for their homes.

I am a confessed energy nerd – a retired private citizen in Bethesda, a customer of Pepco, and a former official in the U.S. Department of Energy, where I served as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Conservation and Renewable Energy from 1989 to 1993.

We are hearing a lot these days about energy affordability, but energy policy is a complex topic that involves many overlapping levels of government and seemingly defies easy solution. Some answers are clear, though – like giving people the right to buy off-the-shelf solar panels that they can plug right into the wall, reducing the amount of power they are buying from their utility. To gather sunlight, the panels can go on an apartment balcony or a deck or in a yard or driveway. Because they deliver such a small amount of electricity compared to the overall power system, they don't disrupt utility operations – and utilities shouldn't be able to demand paperwork or payment. The average payback time for a system purchased today is about five years.

Sound radical? All you need to know about these small-scale systems is that **libertarian Utah** was the first state to pass a law to cut out the red tape and make it easy for consumers to buy and use them. It's time for Maryland to catch up.

The Affordable Solar Act does that and more. It also aligns the state's renewable energy credit system with its original goals – to get more solar power built in Maryland. Right now, utilities that fail to keep up with the Renewable Power Standard simply pay a fee – using

ratepayer funds. These Alternative Compliance Payments are piling up in the Strategic Energy Investment Fund and are being raided for other purposes. Gov. Moore's proposed budget would siphon off \$292 million to plug gaps in the general fund. Instead of an incentive to build more solar, the funds are becoming an indirect state tax increase.

With no additional cost to ratepayers, and drawing on a proven model from New Jersey, the Affordable Solar Act will use the Alternative Compliance Payments instead to incentivize construction of new solar systems amounting to **4,000 MW** by 2035 – at residential and commercial properties, as well as utility-scale and community solar systems. It's a smart way to put our money where it will do the most good in building up Maryland's solar capacity – the intent of the Renewable Power Standard in the first place.

I urge a favorable report on SB 341.