

March 25, 2026

Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Position: HB 1532 Support with Amendments

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

The Baltimore City Fire Department (BCFD) supports the intent of HB 1532, however we believe that inspections of solar panel installations should remain the responsibility of governmental agencies. We recognize that rising utility costs across Maryland place a significant burden on residents and their communities, and we wholly support efforts to improve energy affordability and long-term savings.

At the same time, any measures to reduce costs must not compromise public safety or the safety of those who serve and protect our communities. As currently drafted, the bill would allow counties and municipalities to rely on remote or third-party inspections of installed solar energy systems when in person inspections are delayed. While this approach may help expedite project timelines, it raises important safety concerns.

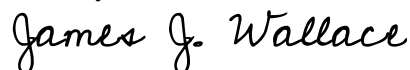
Remote and third-party inspections may not consistently ensure compliance with critical safety standards, including those established by the International Building Code, International Fire Code, and National Electrical Code. These alternative inspection methods can introduce challenges such as reduced accountability, inconsistent application of standards, limited inspection scope, and potential conflicts of interest. In particular, they may fail to adequately assess factors beyond basic code compliance, including structural roof integrity and long-term system durability.

While remote and third-party inspections can save time for many, solar panels, when improperly installed, pose serious risks. Faulty wiring, inadequate grounding, or loose connections can lead to electrical fires, structural damage, or dangerous shock hazards. These risks endanger both homeowners and first responders. Thorough, inspections conducted by qualified inspectors with the necessary certifications remain essential to ensuring installations meet all safety requirements and to prevent future hazards.

While BCFD supports the overarching goals of HB 1532, we respectfully urge that inspection authority for solar panel installations remain within governmental agencies. Maintaining this responsibility within public entities is critical to ensuring accountability, consistency, and the highest standards of safety.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



James J. Wallace
Fire Chief
Baltimore City Fire Department