



February 20, 2026

The Honorable Marc Korman
Chair, House Environment and Transportation Committee
Maryland State House
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
Re: HB970 - Recognizing Nuclear Energy as Clean

Dear Chair Korman;

The Nuclear Innovation Alliance (NIA) is writing in support of HB970, which will change the current Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard to a Clean Energy Portfolio Standard and add nuclear energy as a Tier 1 renewable source. This bill recognizes nuclear energy as clean energy, will contribute to meeting Maryland's ambitious climate goals, and will provide important economic benefits to the state.

NIA is a non-profit, non-partisan 'think-and-do' tank whose mission is to create the conditions for success for new nuclear energy as an energy security and climate solution. NIA focuses on Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) modernization, federal and state policies to support new reactor commercialization, and private investment and workforce development in new nuclear energy. To achieve its mission, NIA performs technical analysis and policy development, educates policymakers, and engages with key stakeholders.

In 2024, Governor Wes Moore pledged to reach 100% clean generation in Maryland by 2035. He signed an executive order to advance the State's Climate Pollution Reduction Plan, tasking the Maryland Energy Administration with establishing a framework for a clean energy standard to achieve this ambitious goal. According to the Nuclear Energy Institute, Maryland's one nuclear power plant generates 40% of the state's electricity. In Maryland, nuclear energy avoids an estimated 7.6 million metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions annually by displacing fossil fuel generation. In this sense, nuclear energy is the backbone of Maryland's carbon-free energy strategy.

HB970 would provide existing and new nuclear power plants with the same incentives that other sources of clean energy receive. For these reasons, NIA urges the Committee for a report of favorable with amendments for HB970.

If you have any questions, please contact me at zkoshgarian@nuclearinnovationalliance.org

Sincerely,
Zach Koshgarian
Analyst, NIA

The DOE should consider which small advanced reactor projects under the authority of DOE could qualify for categorical exclusions. Specifically, microreactors under 10 megawatts constructed and operated near existing DOE nuclear facilities would not likely pose any additional environmental burden associated with construction, operation, and decommissioning. These reactors are critical clean energy projects for the DOE because they enable the testing and demonstration of reactor technology that could be deployed or scaled commercially to meet clean energy needs. The DOE should evaluate the specific reactor characteristics (including size, technology, and operational duration) and siting characteristics (including siting near existing DOE nuclear facilities) that would enable the categorical exclusion of these projects from NEPA reviews.

Recommendation 2: Consider lessons from recent federal experience.

Recent DOE experience provides insights on similar NEPA reviews. The DOE conducted an environmental assessment (EA) for the Microreactor Applications Research, Validation and Evaluation (MARVEL) microreactor that is to be built at Idaho National Laboratory (INL). Although DOE regulations normally require an EIS for a reactor project, the size of the reactor led DOE to first conduct an EA. As a result of the EA, DOE issued a finding of no significant impact (FONSI).¹ DOE found that the microreactor would not significantly affect environmental justice, water resources, air quality, land use, aesthetics, noise, or local socioeconomic conditions. Notably, MARVEL is a 100-kilowatt thermal microreactor fueled with high-assay low enriched uranium (HALEU). While smaller than proposed commercial designs, the DOE did not find a significant impact with the HALEU fuel fabrication, decommissioning, and other support activities associated with reactor operation. Finally, the DOE did not find cumulative impacts to the site when taking into account the many other nuclear facilities at INL. The considerations together suggest categorical exclusions could be applicable to advanced reactors and microreactors with certain characteristics and siting conditions.

Additionally, DOE should consider activities other agencies have identified as categorical exclusions. The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Department of Defense, and other agencies conduct activities similar to those of DOE. DOE should identify and implement best government practice.

NIA would like to thank DOE for the opportunity to comment in on this request for information. If you have any questions, please contact us at ecothron@nuclearinnovationalliance.org.

Sincerely,

Erik Cothron
Analyst
Nuclear Innovation Alliance

¹ DOE/EA-2146: Finding of No Significant Impact (November 2021). <https://www.energy.gov/nepa/articles/doeea-2146-finding-no-significant-impact-november-2021>