

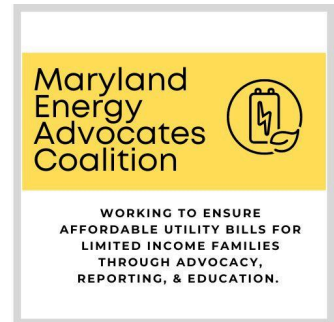
HB 1195 Net Metering, SUNRISE Program, and Community Solar Energy Generating Systems Programs (SUNRISE Act)

Environment and Transportation Committee

Hearing 3/3/26

Delegate Stein

Favorable with Amendment



Testimony from Laurel Peltier, Chair of Maryland Energy Advocates

Good afternoon, Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee. My name is Laurel Peltier, and I Chair the Maryland Energy Advocates Coalition. We work to ensure that limited-income families can afford their utility bills.

There are 2 tactical issues that the SB843 SUNRISE Act solves to maximize solar credits savings that truly hit limited income utility bills. We fully support Section O as it's written. Our request is to amend Section P to represent 10% of the total project's energy load, up from 8%, which will deliver more money to direct state energy assistance programs.

Section O allows for simpler account enrollment by Subscriber Organizations for limited and middle income (LMI) to access at least a 20% savings on their electricity bills. Section P offers another pathway to ensure that 40% of a solar project's generation offers direct savings to limited and middle income families.

Num. 1- Section O is a regulatory addition to allow for a Solar Subscriber Organization to enroll an account with a written or verbal approval. It's unclear in the current Public Service Commission regulations if a verbal agreement is legal. Section O clarifies this action. Getting an email signature for a limited income account may sound simple, but it's not. Many people are not tech savvy, don't use email, and the back and forth to have someone draw their signature on a mobile phone is unnecessary for a solar savings product that has only consumer upsides with no downsides. In today's environment, no email signature means no community solar enrollment and the LMI account loses out.

There is no downside to Community Solar, unlike previous retail energy contracts before SB1. Section O will allow LMI accounts to be automatically enrolled, and get solar

credits applied directly to their utility bills. SUNRISE also provides an incentive for a local energy assistance office to earn funds that can offset expenses and / or be distributed to recipients.

Num 2- Section P is the bigger fix and solves an issue in Maryland's less populated areas. The problem is that enrolling in LMI accounts is more difficult, particularly in rural areas. Section P was created for potential projects in the Potomac Edison and Delmarva territories.

Section P develops a process for a solar developer to make a yearly direct payment to the Department of Social Services Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP). Each year, an interested developer sends a payment equal to 25% solar credit savings. Here's the math: 25% LMI savings of 40% of the farm's energy load equals 10% savings payment on 100% of the solar farm's energy load.

These funds can be added to the current OHEP grant fund budgets and give more grants to rural area OHEP recipients. Those grants are already in place along with the utility billing feeds.

- Section P's real benefit is that solar developers have no risk in meeting the state's required 40% LMI goal in rural areas. With this risk eliminated, solar developers will hopefully build more solar.
- Subscriber organizations still sell the product to middle and higher income accounts and have more subscriptions in total because more solar could be developed.
- Limited income families in these rural areas get more utility grants. Their energy burdens are higher than suburban and urban areas (they match Baltimore's 14% energy burden) and higher grants make utility bills more affordable.
- Reduces the limited income mechanism rate payer impact that will begin on 1/1/27. The limited income tiered discount is applied *after* community solar grants. Section P helps commercial and residential rate payers.

Thank you for a favorable with amendment Committee report.