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Committee: Environment and Transportation
Testimony on: HB 1104 - Residential Solar Energy Systems - Local Inspections and Permitting
Position: Support
Hearing Date: March 3, 2026

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club urges a favorable report for HB 1104. This bill would streamline permitting processes for distributed renewable resources and reduce associated costs, making rooftop solar and local battery storage more affordable and accessible to Marylanders.

Overview

Faced with high electricity rates, an increasing number of Marylanders are exploring rooftop solar, but too often permitting expenses and delays stand in the way. Permitting complexities can increase the “soft costs” of rooftop solar installation by as much as \$7,000¹, making it unaffordable for many families. In addition, permitting complexities can result in considerable delays, slowing the rollout of crucial clean generation.

HB1104 addresses a suite of permitting challenges that hamper rooftop solar deployment, presenting a holistic approach to streamlining their deployment. This bill would:

- Cap permitting fees across the state
- Ensure that jurisdictions allow for remote inspections and instant online permitting
- Allow certified installers to connect solar and batteries to the electric meter (“pulling the meter”) without requiring coordination with the local utility across the state

Building on the Brighter Tomorrow Act of 2024

The Brighter Tomorrow Act (BTA, 2024) established a requirement for jurisdictions in Maryland to use an online permitting platform for rooftop solar, and included a grant program to cover the costs. However, some confusion remains about what constitutes compliance with this act, and as a result many jurisdictions across the state are not in compliance. The patchwork of permitting processes across jurisdictions complicates compliance for solar installers. HB1104 would address this confusion, clarifying the uniform requirements for the permitting platform.

In summary, HB1104 will reduce the costs of new rooftop solar and reduce project timelines, improving the return on investment and partially offsetting the significant loss of federal tax incentives that expired at the end of 2025. The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club strongly supports HB1104. We urge a favorable report.

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¹ *Solar Soft Costs: A Major Opportunity for Growth*. (June 2019). Solar Energy Industries Association. <https://seia.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Solar-Soft-Costs-Factsheet-1.pdf>