



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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Delegate Marc Korman, Chair
Environment and Transportation Committee
250 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: **TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT of House Bill 629**: Maryland Energy Administration – Study on Land-based Wind Energy

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and Members of the Committee:

At a time when Marylanders face significant electricity price increases, wider deployment of clean energy systems such as wind energy can provide crucial relief for low- and moderate-income households. **Howard County supports HB629 because it can help to advance Maryland's progress toward greater deployment of land-based wind energy, which is cleaner and cheaper than fossil fuel-based electricity generation.**

Achieving Maryland's ambitious clean energy and climate goals depends on decarbonizing our electricity. Although Maryland's Renewable Portfolio Standard calls for 50% of electricity sold in the state to come from renewable sources by 2030, only about 13% of Maryland's in-state generation is currently renewable, mostly from solar and hydropower. We have to pick up the pace of clean energy deployment. This has been a priority from the start of my Administration. In early 2019, I signed Howard County on to the "We Are Still In Declaration" aligning our work with the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate. That same year, Howard County became the first county in the nation to accept the U.S. Climate Alliance's Natural & Working Lands Challenge.

In 2020 we executed our landmark 2020 solar Power Purchase Agreement (PPA), which already generates enough clean energy to meet more than half of the electricity needed by all Howard County government buildings. This PPA will save the County well over \$30 million in energy costs over its 25-year term. Our commitment to climate action and sustainability was further recognized in 2022 when the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) gave its highest LEED "Platinum" ranking to Howard County under USGBC's Cities and Communities program. Howard County was the nation's first county to earn this prestigious LEED Platinum designation.

In launching our June 2023 "*Climate Forward: Climate Action and Resiliency Plan*," I committed Howard County to the ambitious goals of reducing greenhouse gases by 60% by 2030 and achieving net-zero emissions by 2045. Clean energy deployment is integral to our Climate Forward plan. We have seen solar generation grow by nearly 40% in Howard County over the past two years. While we now have over 150 megawatts (MW) of solar generation in the county, our aim is to reach solar capacity of 437 MW by 2030 and 1,133 MW by 2045.

Toward that end, we are undertaking a “whole-of-community” approach to further expand clean energy in Howard County. We are negotiating a second solar PPA in partnership with Howard County Community College and the Howard County Public School System. We are also working to develop several County-led community solar projects at a former landfill, a shared septic reserve site, and other County properties.

Even so, we would welcome the opportunity to also advance land-based wind power in Howard County. Wind energy in Maryland has been focused mostly on offshore development, which is now in jeopardy due to the federal government’s efforts to throw up permitting and other roadblocks. Land-based wind energy, although less costly, has been largely overlooked in Maryland as much of its territory has suboptimal conditions, likely creating missed opportunities. The slow pace of renewable energy deployment hampers Maryland’s ability to advance more affordable solutions, much less achieve ambitious climate goals.

Advancing land-based wind energy must be part of an all-hands-on-deck effort on clean energy and climate. HB629 would require the Maryland Energy Administration to conduct a study of Maryland’s land-based wind energy potential, with particular attention to identifying suitable locations and mitigating potential interference with radar technologies. Howard County supports this legislation as it could enable better informed decisions in promoting land-based wind energy development in Maryland. This would also help local jurisdictions and the state meet their respective climate commitments. **We respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report for HB629.** Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,



Calvin Ball
Howard County Executive