The Honorable Marc Korman
House Environment and Transportation Committee
251 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

February 27, 2026

Chair Korman and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on HB1104. Permit Power is a research and advocacy non-profit on a mission to make it easy, inexpensive, and safe for American families to power their lives with clean energy. We strongly support HB1104, and we urge you to do so as well.

This bill would streamline the process of getting approval from local government to install home solar and batteries while increasing the safety of the systems. It would allow solar installers to receive automated permits for systems that meet building safety codes, create photo records for inspection, and standardize the code requirements between one community and the next.

Increasing access to home solar and batteries is an essential part of the solution to Maryland's growing energy affordability crisis. Monthly utility bills increased $20 in many parts of the state last year alone due to skyrocketing wholesale rates and the build-out of energy-intensive data centers. Going solar provides homeowners with significant savings on utility bills – approximately $2,300 annually. But right now, bureaucratic inertia at local governments delays and frequently blocks families from installing rooftop solar, and makes doing so more expensive.

Today, Maryland has the fourth slowest residential solar permitting timelines in the country – meaning that Maryland is behind many other states that lack real clean energy goals. Roughly one-in-eight home solar projects that begin the permitting process in Maryland are cancelled, and solar installers cite permitting delays as the biggest reason for the cancellations. In our recent study on permitting barriers in Maryland, we found an installer who measured out the impacts of permitting bottlenecks and found that they would be able to install solar on 50 percent more homes if those bottlenecks were eliminated.

The local permitting process not only suppresses solar growth and creates delays, but also costs money. A study by the non-partisan think tank Switchbox found that the policies in HB1104 would reduce the cost of home solar by an average $5,500. This is the result of direct costs, such as the resources expended by a solar installer to acquire the permit, and the indirect costs, such as managing internal systems to track unique processes between jurisdictions. The cost savings from HB1104 would make up for roughly 60 percent of the lost federal tax credit.

If the policies in HB1104 were to be implemented statewide, more than 74,000 additional families are projected to adopt solar by 2040.

The policies in HB1104 are already being deployed across the country while maintaining a high level of safety. Automated permitting is live in hundreds of jurisdictions, representing roughly one-third of the national market, and projects that undergo automated permitting pass inspection at rates comparable to projects that undergo traditional permitting. Jurisdictions that have adopted automated permitting include Denver, Houston, Los Angeles, New Orleans, and Oklahoma City. Jurisdictions in Maryland include Gaithersburg, Kent County, Montgomery County, Rock Hall, Rockville, Salisbury, and Worcester County. Automated permitting legislation became law in California in 2022, and jurisdictions have since chosen different software plans to comply, including off-the-shelf products such as SolarAPP+ and Symbium, and more bespoke products through the jurisdictions' existing GovTech providers. Legislation signed last December in New Jersey will automate permitting statewide, and as of two weeks ago, similar legislation cleared both houses in Virginia and is progressing quickly in Massachusetts.

Remote inspections have been in use across the country since COVID. Due to their comprehensiveness, remote inspections have equivalent or higher levels of safety compared with on-site inspections. The New York State's solar subsidy program employs remote inspections and reports that 22 percent of projects reviewed remotely identify deficiencies that the on-site inspector missed. California and Colorado have statewide caps on permitting fees.

The benefits of the policies to streamline permitting have been well documented. For instance, an independent peer reviewed study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) found that streamlined permitting policies, at a level less robust than the policies in HB1104, increased new solar installations by 17 percent.

We ask you to support affordable, clean energy for Maryland by voting yes on HB1104.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Davis

Benjamin Davis
Chief of Policy