
TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 345
Public Utilities – Solar Energy Generating Systems and Solar Renewable Energy
(Affordable Solar Act)
Environment and Transportation Committee
February 10, 2026

Social Work Advocates for Social Change strongly supports HB 345, which will reform Maryland’s Solar Renewable Energy Credit (SREC) program and direct funds to incentivize medium- and large-scale solar projects without increasing ratepayer bills. It also legalizes the use of portable solar panels, which homeowners and renters can use to lower their energy bills, and will implement consumer protections against utility companies’ fining them for using portable solar.

Expanding the availability of solar energy in Maryland will reduce carbon dioxide emissions in the state and its harmful and costly impacts. The consequences of carbon pollution are well documented: increased temperatures, erratic precipitation patterns, and sea level rise, among others.¹ Each year, carbon pollution causes more harm to Marylanders. Last summer was the deadliest on record for heat deaths in the state.² Western Maryland is still recovering from last spring’s floods.³ Meanwhile, flooding in Annapolis becomes increasingly regular and expensive to mitigate.⁴ Climate disasters like these disproportionately affect lower-income people, especially those from historically marginalized groups.⁵

The solar energy incentives in HB 345 are critical for Maryland’s energy future, and they can help address high energy bills. Portable solar can offer economic relief to Marylanders who are increasingly overwhelmed by high energy bills. Portable solar panels are low-cost, have high impact, and immediately effective ways for residents to autonomously produce their energy, lower electricity bills, fortify themselves against energy blackouts, and reduce air pollution. Too many Maryland families have to choose between paying for electricity and other utilities or paying for other necessities, like food and health care. Access to climate-conscious energy should be a Maryland standard to bridge the gap between state and individual responsibility and protect our environment while improving our quality of life.

HB 345 expands the potential of solar energy in Maryland by allowing for portable options that renters can take advantage of. All Marylanders deserve the opportunity to avail themselves of affordable solar power for their families and their neighborhoods. Portable and balcony solar options – as proposed in HB 345 – plug directly into a standard outlet and immediately lower electrical usage.⁶ Furthermore, portable options empower those who have been the most impacted by climate change and the rising price of traditional fossil fuel energy to choose and participate in climate solutions.

Adopting HB 345 reduces Maryland’s reliance on other states for energy. Maryland has retired gas and coal power plants without investing enough into renewable energy, which has made us depend on other states for about 40% of our power.⁷ Creating our own solar power can increase Maryland-produced energy and further reduce utility costs. At the same time, the bill responsibly allocates compliance fees and public service company taxes to an account that specifically invests in more solar incentives to ensure that this program can be financially maintained for years to come without drawing unduly on the state budget.

Solar energy is the fastest and most cost-effective way to build new electricity generation. Maryland should embrace every opportunity to reduce our carbon emissions, and expanding solar access through HB 345 is an easy, profitable step in that direction. Other countries, states, and municipalities that have made portable solar available experience rapid adoption of the technology, emissions reductions, and lower costs. It’s time for Maryland to follow suit and secure our energy independence.

Social Work Advocates for Social Change urges a favorable report on HB 345.

Social Work Advocates for Social Change is a coalition of MSW students at the University of Maryland School of Social Work that seeks to promote equity and justice through public policy, and to engage the communities impacted by public policy in the policymaking process.

¹Emanuel, K. 2024. Climate Science, Risk & Solutions. <https://climateprimer.mit.edu/climate-science-risk-solutions.pdf>

²Maryland 2025 Heat-Related Illness Surveillance Summary Report. <https://health.maryland.gov/preparedness/Documents/2025%20Heat-Related%20Illness%20Surveillance%20Summary%20Report.pdf>

³Sears, B. 2025. Cost of Western Maryland flood damage more than doubles. <https://marylandmatters.org/2025/08/19/cost-of-western-maryland-flood-damage-more-than-doubles-state-to-appeal-fema-aid-denial/>

⁴Alexander, J. 2024. Worse and Worse. <https://wtop.com/anne-arundel-county/2024/08/8th-worst-flood-on-record-debbys-aftermath-causes-annapolis-to-declare-state-of-emergency/>

⁵Coelho et al.. 2025. Global socioeconomic disparities in exposure to extreme heat. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-025-04075-3>

⁶ Chesapeake Climate Action Fund. 2026. *Affordable Solar Act*. <https://www.ccanactionfund.org/maryland/affordable-solar/>

⁷U.S. Energy Information Administration, January 2025. Maryland Analysis <https://www.eia.gov/states/MD/analysis>