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Date: February 10, 2026
To: Members of the House Committee on Environment and Transportation
From: Grayson Middleton, Government Affairs Manager
Re: HB 460 – Solar Energy Construction in PPA – Study – **Support**

Delmarva Chicken Association (DCA) is the trade association representing the meat-chicken growers, companies, and allied business members on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, Delaware, and the Eastern Shore of Virginia. Collectively, we contribute more than \$5.4 billion to Maryland’s economy and pay more than \$254 million in state and local taxes. On behalf of our members, we support HB 460 and urge a favorable committee report.

Chicken growers were some of the first to widely adopt solar technology in Maryland, and DCA fully supports its use as a cost-effective and environmentally friendly energy source. We also support the thoughtful development of solar in our region that is congruent with the needs of the community and agricultural production, as determined by local planning and zoning authorities.

However, as an agricultural organization representing an overwhelmingly rural membership, we have serious concerns about recent legislative actions that have reduced meaningful local authority over such projects and the economic impacts associated with solar development on prime agricultural lands. As many of you will recognize, the zoning of renewable energy facilities (particularly solar) is a contentious issue in rural areas. While we support its use and proliferation, we want to ensure that energy needs and environmental benefits are balanced with the economic and cultural interests of agrarian communities.

Because of their geography, prime agricultural lands on the Eastern Shore are some of the most attractive in the state for solar development. [Modeling by the American Farmland Trust](#) estimates that 83% of projected solar development will be on agricultural land, of which 43% will be on land ATF deems nationally significant due to high levels of productivity.

This poses significant challenges for our industry. In 2024, our five companies purchased over \$1.3 billion in corn, soybeans, and wheat, comprising the vast majority of grain purchases on Delmarva. As the local output is reduced from the proliferation of solar and other developments, the industry is required to import grain from other states and countries at higher prices. Aside from the economic harm to both our farmers and industry, this also raises our net carbon emissions.

The Maryland Energy Administration has stated publicly that it will require between 18,000 to 20,000 acres of solar development statewide to meet its renewable energy goals. 2% of the priority preservation area would allow for 21,000 acres of solar siting under the jurisdiction of the PSC *on the Eastern Shore alone*, representing an economic loss of \$63 million. We say now, as we did last year, that this is the maximum loss we can expect to absorb before we approach fundamental supply chain challenges that could severely disrupt production. The current 5% cap is not a sufficient safeguard against these concerns.



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Furthermore, we have serious concerns about the potential of large-scale solar projects to reduce grid capacity and thus prohibit some of our members from getting small-scale on-farm solar. We have already heard from numerous members who have sought to install solar on their farms but were told they were unable to do so because of the lack of grid capacity in their area.

We believe that county governments know the needs of their farmers and citizens best. They alone have the intimate knowledge of their localities that is required to responsibly site solar in a manner that prioritizes the preservation of agricultural lands while also supporting the proliferation of solar development. That we must first reach a 2% cap before that input is possible is still concerning. However, we think that it is a meaningful improvement as compared to the current statute. This bill is a good-faith effort to preserve prime Eastern Shore farmlands so that our carefully balanced agrarian economy can continue to thrive and exist for future generations.

For these reasons, we urge a **favorable** vote on HB 460.

Should you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact me at Grayson Middleton at middleton@dcachicken.com or 410-490-3329.

Sincerely,

Grayson Middleton
Government Affairs Manager