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Environment and Transportation Committee
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
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Chair Korman,

I am writing in favor of **HB 1104: Residential Solar Energy Systems – Local Inspections and Permitting**, or the **Solar Opportunity Act**.

Maryland is currently facing an energy crisis when it comes to affordability. Utilities, gas, and electricity are all rising exponentially. The One Big Beautiful Bill Act has contributed to the loss of federal tax credits. Most notably, the bill has cut funding for solar energy and placed restrictions on energy tax credits. The bill has terminated the 25D tax credits for homeowners which no longer allows for the deduction of 30% of the system's costs from taxes as of December 31, 2025.[1] Reducing the costs of solar is a priority for Marylanders, especially given the loss of federal tax credits for solar installations. Maryland's SB 783, The Brighter Tomorrow Act, mandates local governments to adopt automated permitting software to create a smoother process for solar permitting for homeowners. Prince George's and Worcester Counties were one of the first to implement automated permitting.[2] The Solar Opportunity Act will help to further implement automated permitting in our state and cut costs for homeowners.

HB 1104 requires jurisdictions to implement automated permitting to ease the process of applying for solar energy permits. More specifically, the Act will:

- Define automated permitting to mean automated code compliance checks and instant permit issuance. This allows for uploads of photos and videos of a site to easily issue a permit.
- Place permitting under a single building department to eliminate restrictions and requirements. There would then be the issuance of a single permit for the solar project from the said one building department that is decided.
- The Act will implement statewide uniform building codes for all properties; in doing so, this would further ease the permit process. There would no longer be different versions of building codes from jurisdiction to jurisdiction like there is at present.

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[1] SEIA, Explained: The Cleaner Energy Provisions in the "One Big Beautiful Bill", SEIA (2025), https://seia.org/research-resources/clean-energy-provisions-big-beautiful-bill/

[2] Johanna Nuemann and Susan Kaplan, RELEASE: Maryland Counties Awarded First Grants to Accelerate Solar Adoption, Environment America (2025) https://environmentamerica.org/maryland/media-center/release-maryland-counties-awarded-first-grants-to-accelerate-solar-adoption/#:~:text=Today's%20announcement%20is%20a%20win,Act%20requirement%20for%20automated%20permitting.%E2%80%9D

- Solar installations would allow for certified installers to pull and replace the meter, no longer requiring utilities, utility-hired contractors, and the homeowner to be present at the time a meter is pulled or replaced.
- Back-up systems would no longer require a permit so long as the system is installed by a licensed contractor.
- The Attorney General would create an enforcement mechanism that would allow for jurisdictions to further comply with SB 783.

In 2025, Texas successfully passed SB 1202, which allows for third-party professionals to review and approve plans using Solar APP+, an automated permitting software for solar energy. Once homeowners receive approval from construction can immediately start.[3] Texas SB 1252 – Changes to Residential Energy Backup System Regulations, allows for licensed contractors to install back-up systems. The bill creates a uniform standard across Texas for the installation of back-up systems rather than varying codes per municipalities.[4] Automated permitting software in Texas has decreased the current lengthy process that homeowners face while making the process to clean energy faster.[5] HB 1104 will accomplish the same, implementing a uniform-code across the state and automated permitting to streamline the process of permitting homeowners, solar installers, and utilities.

In California, the Residential Solar Permit Reporting Program (SB 379), requires local jurisdictions to adopt online permitting systems for residential solar energy systems. The bill further requires jurisdictions to annually report the number of solar permits reviewed by the California Energy Commission, a year after the automated permitting system is adopted by local jurisdictions.[6] The bill has been very successful, with reports of 20 counties and 213 cities complying with an online, automated platform implemented.[7] Maryland's HB 1004 is expected to succeed, drawing optimism from the positive results of California's Residential Solar Permitting Reporting Program and Texas' SB 1202 and SB 1252.

The Solar Opportunity Act will ensure jurisdictions comply with automated permitting software, cut burdensome red tape, and cut costs for homeowners. For the average residential solar energy

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[3] Environment America, New Law Cuts Red Tape For Rooftop Solar and Batteries, Environment America, (2025), https://environmentamerica.org/texas/media-center/new-law-cuts-red-tape-for-rooftop-solar-and-batteries/
[4] Tex. S.B. 1252, 89th Leg., Reg. Sess. (2025).
[5] Ian Seamans, How Does Texas' Third-Party Rooftop Solar Permitting Law Work, Environment America, (2025), https://environmentamerica.org/texas/center/articles/how-does-texas-third-party-rooftop-solar-permitting-law-sb1202-work/
[6] California Building Officials, Automated Permitting For Solar Energy Systems, California Building Officials (2025), https://www.calbo.org/post/automated-permitting-solar-energy-systems
[7] California Energy Commission, Residential Solar Permit Program Status Dashboard, California Energy Commission (2026), https://www.energy.ca.gov/programs-and-topics/programs/residential-solar-permit-reporting-program-sb-379/residential-solar

system, the direct and indirect permitting costs add about $7,000.[8] Reducing the costs of solar is a priority for Marylanders, especially given the loss of federal tax credits for solar installations.. As other jurisdictions and countries are doing so at a fraction of the cost, it is imperative that we decrease soft costs as much as possible or risk losing solar developers in Maryland. The loss of a thirty-percent federal tax incentive is a major hit to the industry. As our energy costs continue to climb, it is vital that we deploy renewable generation as cheaply and as quickly as possible. Streamlining solar installations is just part of the solution to lowering energy costs and ensuring access to renewable generation for our communities.

Respectfully,

Delegate David Fraser-Hidalgo

[8] Solar Automated Permit Processing: Cutting the Cost of Residential Solar, Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA), n.d., https://seia.org/solarapp/