

Bill: HB 1104 – Residential Solar Energy Systems – Local Inspections and Permitting

Committee: House Environment and Transportation Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

Witness: Ryan Levinson

Organization: Baltimore City Resident and Homeowner

To Chair Korman and Members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee,

My name is Ryan Levinson, and I am a homeowner in Baltimore City. I am writing to express my strong support for **House Bill 1104**. This legislation is a common-sense solution to the fragmented and unpredictable bureaucracy that currently makes it incredibly difficult for Marylanders to lower their energy costs through rooftop solar.

I decided to go with solar to protect my family from the aggressive rate hikes we've seen in our electric bills. However, what I thought would be a simple home improvement turned into a bureaucratic mess that ultimately cost me thousands of dollars in lost incentives and electricity bill cost savings.

In Baltimore City, the permitting process still relies on outdated, manual systems. Because the city sets a 30-day review period for itself, and limits inquiry to only five permits at a time, my project would have to sit on a "virtual desk" for months with no progress and no clear way to communicate with a real person.

Before even reaching the unnecessarily slow permitting process, I was declined by several installers who simply refused to do business in Baltimore City because their previous experiences with the City's solar permitting process had been so bad.

This challenging and bureaucratic permitting process and the market fear it created for local businesses meant my system was not installed in 2025. As a result, **I missed the 30% federal Residential Clean Energy tax credit that expired in December and lost out on significant electricity bill cost savings.**

House Bill 1104 would prevent other Marylanders from facing this same "time tax" by:

- **Mandating Automated Permitting:** Requiring jurisdictions to use software for instant, code-compliant permit issuance, ending the need for installers to spend hours acting as couriers to local offices.
- **Authorizing Remote Inspections:** Allowing for inspections via photo or video so homeowners don't have to take multiple days off work to wait for an inspector who may only provide a vague three-hour arrival window.
- **Limiting Review Scope:** Ensuring that reviews are strictly limited to health and safety requirements, rather than subjective or aesthetic hurdles that vary by zip code.
- **Capping Fees:** Preventing jurisdictions from charging arbitrary and inconsistent fees that can range from \$100 to nearly \$1,000 for the same type of work.

I know lawmakers want to help consumers avoid the pain and expense my family and many others have endured, but we can only provide that relief by cutting the 20th-century red tape that bogs down so many residential solar projects. HB 1104 will lower costs for consumers, reduce the burden on local staff, and make clean energy truly accessible for all Maryland families.

I respectfully urge a **favorable report** on HB 1104.

Sincerely,

Ryan Levinson

Baltimore City