



**HoCoClimateAction.org**  
Howard County, Maryland

**Testimony: HB345 - Public Utilities - Solar Energy Generating Systems and Solar Renewable Energy Credits (Affordable Solar Act)**

**Hearing Date: February 10, 2026**

**Bill Sponsor: Delegate Charkoudian**

**Committee: Environment and Transportation**

**Submitting: Monica O'Connor for Howard County Climate Action**

**Position: Favorable**

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and Committee Members:

[HoCo Climate Action](#) is a [350.org](#) local chapter and a grassroots organization representing approximately 1,400 subscribers. We are also a member of the [Climate Justice Wing](#) of the [Maryland Legislative Coalition](#). Our organization works with residents and ally organizations to promote a safe climate and clean energy future. Specifically, we have worked extensively on building electrification to help Maryland achieve its ambitious climate goals, including net-zero emissions.

We urge you to vote **favorably** on HB345- Affordable Solar Act

Maryland residents are increasingly burdened by high utility bills that continue to rise at a greater rate than inflation, with the burden falling especially hard on working class families. Meanwhile, the Trump administration remains fixated on thwarting the lowest cost and fastest to develop sources of new electricity generation - solar energy and windpower. HB345 directly addresses each of these issues, by making it easier and more cost-effective for residents in the state to utilize solar energy to reduce their utility bills for decades to come, and incentivizing new commercial and utility-scale generation that will increase reliability, lower the wholesale cost of electricity in the region, and delay the need for expensive new transmission capacity in the state.

The bill does this in several ways. First, it restructures the current Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) by directing the Public Service Commission (PSC) to create administratively determined incentive levels for Solar Renewable Energy Credits (SRECs). This follows the lead of multiple states such as New Jersey, which have similarly made their RPS more cost effective using this new structure. The incentives will be tailored according to market segments such as residential, non-residential, and community solar, making the program more cost effective for the ratepayer, while ensuring forward-looking market growth. For larger, utility-scale projects, it directs the PSC to conduct a competitive procurement, driving down the cost of the incentive and creating the best value for the ratepayer. This will spur 4,000MW of new, in-state generation, reducing

our dependence on out-of-state imported energy, while creating good paying Maryland-based jobs.

Secondly, it creates a new clean energy fund administered by the major utilities, and directs all proceeds from the Strategic Energy Investment Fund to this fund, which can only be used to build new, cost effective, in-state clean energy generation. In this way, funds that are paid by the ratepayer for clean energy investment can only be used for this purpose.

Finally, it opens the market for Portable Solar Energy Systems, allowing our low and moderate income renters and condo residents to utilize consumer friendly options for solar that don't involve permits, contractors or interconnection agreements. These systems, which will likely be available at major retailers such as Costco and Walmart, are UL listed for safety, and can literally be pulled out of the box and plugged into a standard 120v outlet. This will reduce the burden of utility bills for those that rent their homes, or don't have the means or ability to contract for a larger solar installation.

HB345 also ensures that our labor force earns good paying wages for building out our clean energy future. The bill will help to get us back on track to fulfil the goals of the Climate Solutions Now Act. And, most importantly, will help to turn the tide on rising utility bills, helping our most vulnerable residents and working families with greater energy affordability.

The Energy Information Administration has just released a new report, forecasting that solar, wind and battery storage will provide over 99% of new electricity generating capacity in the U.S. in 2026. The reason for this is simple: Clean energy generation is the cheapest form of new generating capacity. And states that pivot away from fossil fuels and other expensive forms of generation will be the ones to reap the benefits of lower electricity costs far into the future.

For these reasons, **we urge a favorable report on HB345, the Affordable Solar Act.**