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Prince George's County Council Member
District 5
Committee: House Economic Matters
Testimony on: HB 561 - "Electric Industry – Community Choice Energy"
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 13, 2020

Dear Chair Davis, Vice Chair Dumais, and members of the Economic Matters Committee,

Most of us have immediately tossed into the recycling bin those mailers from companies that claim to offer lower electrical rates and the option to have your home powered through renewable sources, if you just sign here.

Oftentimes, customers are overwhelmed by retail energy options, and can find themselves locked into a contract that is far more expensive than they were led to expect. Community Choice Energy (CCE) would allow Maryland communities to break free of this flawed model. Ensuring energy supply contracts are vetted, clean energy increases, and consumer well-being is always at the top of the list of priorities by empowering municipalities and counties to negotiate energy purchasing on behalf of their residents.

CCW would help us switch to cleaner energy and pay less while we do so. If the Community Choice Energy Act becomes law it will allow Maryland communities to take control of their own power and move towards affordable, locally-produced renewable energy sources that will save the planet and residents' hard earned money.

CCE allows communities to choose renewable energy sources such as wind and solar at fixed rates, protecting consumers from unpredictable rate hikes. Since local governments will have a large number of customers, they can also bargain for lower rates. In fact, New Jersey CCA members are seeing savings as high as 10% while increasing clean renewable energy. Residents who don't want to use the local CCE program would be able to opt-out.

CCE will increase access to clean renewable energy. Communities that adopt CCE programs will be able to offer residents affordable options for locally sourced 100% clean renewable energy, reducing our dependence on fossil fuels, which are driving global warming. Community Choice Energy would give many communities access to clean renewable energy for the first time, while helping to reduce the pollution from fossil fuels that disproportionately impacts low-income communities.

The bill is a win in terms of consumer protection, garnering support from consumer rights advocates such as Maryland PIRG and the Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition. And it's also a huge win for clean energy, which makes it a win for our economy in Maryland. The solar industry has already invested billions in our state, and last year employed nearly 5000 people.

Increasing local clean energy will help drive more investment and job growth, creating opportunities for even greater benefits to a clean energy economy.

We have an amazing opportunity this legislative session to support a clean energy initiative while providing greater equity to Maryland communities by passing the The Community Choice Energy Act. I urge you to vote yes for consumers, the environment and public health, and to help Maryland join the other eight states that already allow communities to take advantage of this innovative policy.