



TO: Members, House Appropriations Committee
FROM: Mary Beth Tung – Director, MEA
SUBJECT: HB1310 - Clean Energy and Energy Efficiency - Investment in Low-Income Communities
DATE: March 11, 2021

MEA Position: Letter of Information

Our mission at the Maryland Energy Administration (MEA) is to promote affordable, reliable, and cleaner energy that benefits *all* Marylanders. Our programs and policies help lower energy bills, support business energy upgrades, support a cleaner environment, and promote energy independence for the State.

MEA accomplishes these goals through the administration of the Strategic Energy Investment Fund (SEIF); providing funding for energy assistance, grants for clean and renewable energy, and support for low-to-moderate income efficiency projects. However, legislation this session, has effectively drained the SEIF, and could further risk these valuable programs. In order to preserve SEIF-funded programs of any kind, the legislature must act now to protect this limited resource.

Secondly, the mission of the Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities is already closely linked with the program and policy work of MEA. Though MEA is sometimes overlooked, the aforementioned low-to-moderate income program and bill payment assistance that MEA funds through the SEIF are keys to the continued promotion of environmental justice.

House Bill 1310 will place the Commission in a position to greatly influence MEA. 1-703(b)(1) will materially affect each and every MEA program, as those programs promote “clean energy and energy efficiency.” MEA believes that - with or without the remainder of this legislation - 1-702 should be amended to add MEA to the list of representatives on the Commission.

Lastly, MEA cautions the adoption of the defined term “low-income community” *at this time*. The Maryland Department of the Environment is in the midst of an open, public, and inclusive process to identify “environmental justice communities,” and that has the potential to include metrics broader than simply income or poverty.

MEA urges the committee to consider the SEIF-funded work MEA is already doing in our disadvantaged communities before issuing its report.