

UTILITY-SCALE SOLAR ENERGY COALITION OF MARYLAND



House Economic Matters Committee

1/18/2021

HB 298

Support

Madam Chair and members of the Committee, the Utility-Scale Solar Energy Coalition of Maryland (USSEC) comprises solar energy developers dedicated to responsible development of solar energy generation in Maryland.

USSEC strongly supports HB 298 which would require that the state's CPCN process for electric power plants include an assessment of greenhouse gas impacts that are the primary cause of climate change.

The state's CPCN process, while extremely thorough, currently does not specify the need to assess climate change impacts of proposed electric power plants. While our collective scientific understanding of the causes, risks, and substantial costs of anthropomorphic climate change have developed significantly just in the last decade, the CPCN statutory considerations of the impacts of a proposed electric power plant seeking a CPCN have not changed substantially over that time.

Despite the clear interplay between the CPCN process and the RPS and GRRRA, the PSC's current CPCN completeness factors make no mention of either of these state policies or interests. As the CPCN process determines whether generating stations are in the public interest to construct, it is logical – and necessary – for the state to consider the impacts of each proposed generating station on the RPS and GRRRA.

In November of 2020 as part of the current PSC rulemaking that seeks to reform the CPCN application review process, a group of environmental and clean energy advocates recommended changes to CPCN process that would have included an assessment of a proposed project's impact on Maryland's climate and RPS goals. While the subsequent proposed rules issued by PSC staff in December of 2020 failed to include the addition of such considerations to the CPCN process, USSEC is hopeful that such factors will be included in the final CPCN rules that are expected to be issued by the PSC by the summer of 2021.

By passing HB 298 in the 2021 legislative session, the General Assembly would be effectively providing timely direction to the PSC to ensure that the revised CPCN rules and process includes an assessment of the climate change impacts of proposed electric generation stations.

USSEC encourages this Committee to support this bill.

We thank you for your consideration.

Submitted on behalf of USSEC:

Isaac Meyer, Compass Government Relations Partners