



Olivia Bartlett, DoTheMostGood

Committee: Economic Matters

Testimony on: HB0376- Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard – Municipal Electric Utilities

Position: UNFAVORABLE

Hearing Date: January 14, 2021

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Mautz

DoTheMostGood (DTMG) is a progressive grass-roots organization with more than 2000 members who live in a wide range of communities in Montgomery and Frederick Counties, from Bethesda near the DC line north to Frederick and from Potomac east to Silver Spring and Olney. DTMG supports legislation and activities that keep its members healthy and safe in a clean environment. DTMG strongly opposes HB0376 because it will erode the State's Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard (RPS) which are necessary to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and fight climate change that threatens all Maryland residents – particularly those on the Eastern Shore.

HB0376 seeks to return the RPS for municipal utilities to what was in place in 2019, before passage of the Clean Energy Jobs Act, and limit the annual percentage requirements of the State's RPS for municipal electric utilities to 20.4% in total, including only 1.95% from solar energy and capping offshore wind at 2.5%. In 2019, the General Assembly passed landmark legislation to increase the percentage of clean renewable energy in Maryland's RPS to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and combat the existential threat of climate change.

Maryland is one of the states most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Climate change has had drastic impacts on the Chesapeake Bay and Maryland's Eastern Shore. Warming climate has resulted in warmer waters in the Bay, which decreases dissolved oxygen and exacerbates the Bay's fish-killing "dead zones", and contributes to algal blooms. Rising water temperatures in the Bay stress fish, reduce the population of striped bass, and put other temperature-sensitive species, such as eel grass, a critical habitat plant, at risk. Growing soybeans and corn is becoming more difficult in low lying areas of the Eastern Shore because of saltwater intrusion and flooding due to sea level rise from climate change.

Therefore, this is not the time to limit or disincentivize generation of electricity from solar and wind. We will lose a lot more farms to saltwater intrusion from sea level rise if we do not switch to solar and wind energy as fast as we can. Leasing now unfarmable fields for solar installations is a good investment in our children's future and would bring clean renewable energy to needy communities. The proposal to cap the percentage of offshore wind energy

appears to be an attempt to undermine the windfarm undergoing permitting off the coast of Ocean City. Limiting the percentage of clean renewable electricity just means that more will come from dirty “renewable” sources, such as incineration, that spew toxins into the air.

There are five municipal utilities in Maryland, in Frederick, Talbot, Washington, and Worcester Counties. Officials from those utilities and from these jurisdictions testified last year that a similar bill in the 2020 General Assembly session would save them money. However, costs for solar and wind energy are dropping every year. While it might be appropriate to allow municipal utilities to request exemptions to the current RPS through the end of their current electricity purchase contracts, while they work to find suppliers that can meet the statewide RPS more affordably, it is not appropriate to allow municipal utilities to sidestep Maryland’s renewable energy goals forever through this proposed legislation.

For all of the reasons mentioned above, DTMG strongly opposes HB0376 and urges an **UNFAVORABLE** report on this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

Olivia Bartlett
Co-lead, DoTheMostGood Maryland Team
olviabartlett@verizon.net
240-751-5599