



**Before the General Assembly of the State of Maryland
Senate Environment and Transportation Committee
January 28, 2021**

**Testimony of David W. Murray
Executive Director
Chesapeake Solar & Storage Association
SB 414: Climate Solutions Now Act of 2021
FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 414. I serve as Executive Director of the Chesapeake Solar & Storage Association, CHESSA, formerly known as the Maryland-DC-Virginia Solar Energy Industries Association (MDV-SEIA). CHESSA is the local trade association representing over 4,500 solar installers, developers, manufacturers, and other solar workers in Maryland. Our members also provide energy storage solutions to households, businesses, schools, local governments, and utilities throughout the region. CHESSA is a recognized state affiliate of the Solar Energy Industries Association.

CHESSA is broadly supportive of this transformative legislation that places Maryland on a stronger path to addressing climate change. This legislation prioritizes equity and a just transition away from fossil fuels. These elements fundamental toward achieving a 100% clean energy economy. We applaud Senator Pinsky and fellow sponsors of this landmark legislation for their leadership and dedication toward our clean energy economy.

Given this legislation is broad in scope, the following testimony will solely comment on the parts of the legislation that directly affect the solar industry.

Solar-Ready Rooftops: CHESSA supports SB 414 encouraging solar-ready rooftops throughout the state. Given that the structure, shading and orientation of the roof may make a project infeasible, these provisions help facilitate greater rooftop solar deployment on new buildings. Not only will this save building owners – which often are the state or county– critical funds in the long term, but will help Maryland achieve its ambitious in-state solar energy goals by 2030.

CHESSA makes a minor recommendation to this section, adding on page 24, Line 2 “...panels-
AND PRIORIZES PANEL PLACEMENT ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE ROOF.”

Reallocation of SEIF Monies: SB 414 proposes to ringfence at least \$500,000 from renewable energy projects to the Healthy Soils Program. The Healthy Soils Program is in essence an agricultural program. Carbon sequestration is just one of several Healthy Soils Program goals, the first listed in its authorizing legislation is to “Improve the health, yield, and profitability of the soils of the State.” CHESSA does not believe that ringfencing funds from the SEIF is an appropriate use of the fund, as the Healthy Soils Program does not reduce fossil fuel consumption, reduce energy burdens on Maryland’s most vulnerable citizens, or increase clean energy generation. Given we are far from our 2030 goal of generating 50% of our electricity



from renewable resources, its vital we do not direct funds from clean energy deployment. CHESSA proposes striking Lines 14-17 on Page 35.

Community Solar Deployment: Since the community solar program's inception in 2015, solar developers have been unsure whether rooftop community solar arrays are exempt from personal property taxes. Given this financial uncertainty, many community solar projects have not been pursued on rooftops, as a personal property tax liability makes the project more expensive. Without clarification from the General Assembly, the association doubts that community solar developers will target rooftops for this type of deployment, due to the increased costs of installation.

Should the General Assembly clarify that all rooftop, brownfield, or canopy community solar arrays are exempt from personal property tax, it would facilitate greater deployment of projects of these types. We applaud SB 414 for including this important provision.

However, lines 24-27 on Page 39 solely apply this exemption to community solar arrays serving at least 51% of low- or moderate-income customers. The association believes all rooftop solar arrays should be exempt from personal property tax, regardless of the subscribers. Thus, CHESSA recommends striking "THAT SERVES MORE THAN 51% OF KILOWATT-HOUR OUTPUT TO LOW- OR MODERATE-INCOME CUSTOMERS, AS DEFINED IN REGULATIONS OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION."

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

David Murray
Executive Director
Chesapeake Solar & Storage Association (CHESSA, formerly MDV-SEIA)