



NAACP

Maryland
STATE CONFERENCE

HB 31- Support Expanding Clean Energy Microgrids For Low and Moderate Income Communities

**Economic Matters Committee
February 3rd, 2022**

Dear Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and Members of the Economic Matters Committee:

I am Staci Hartwell chair of the Environmental and Climate Justice Committee of the Maryland State Conference of the NAACP. We support HB 31 which expands opportunities for clean energy microgrids known as “Resilience Hubs” in Low and Moderate Income Communities.

The NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Committee advocates for reducing harmful emissions, advancing clean energy, and coordinating efforts to increase the livability of communities while also strengthening their resilience. HB 31 supports all of these goals.

This legislation is vital for expanding access to solar energy and increasing funding for community solar projects in BIPOC communities. Currently, disparities in access to solar energy projects are blatant. In the US, although the rooftop solar industry has experienced roughly 50% growth each year since 2012, Black census tracts have installed 69% less rooftop solar on average¹. These disparities are often attributed to differences in home ownership and income. However, significant disparities remain even after these differences are accounted for. This legislation offers a viable alternative for Black communities in Maryland to access solar energy through Resilience hub projects.

Furthermore, this legislation is important not only as an opportunity to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and increase solar energy usage, but because the mechanism the bill uses- resilience hub microgrids- are an essential tool to build the capacity for BIPOC communities to increase their resilience. As climate change continues to shift weather patterns and increase the intensity and frequency of extreme weather events, disaster preparedness and pro-active resilience measures will be an important aspect of sustaining our communities.

Clean energy investments are often unevenly distributed by race, income, and geography. This important piece of legislation will ensure that Black low and moderate income communities have an opportunity to access clean energy infrastructure that will build their resilience in the face of climate change.

¹ <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41893-018-0204-z>

I request a favorable report on HB 31.

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