



**Olivia Bartlett, DoTheMostGood**

**Committee:** Economic Matters

**Testimony on:** HB0031 – Maryland Energy Administration – Resiliency Hub Grant Program

**Position:** Favorable

**Hearing Date:** February 3, 2022

**Bill Contact:** Delegate Lorig Charkoudian

DoTheMostGood (DTMG) is a progressive grass-roots organization with more than 3000 members across all districts in Montgomery County as well as a number of nearby jurisdictions. DTMG supports legislation and activities that keep residents healthy and safe in a clean environment and which promote equity across all our diverse communities. DTMG strongly supports HB0031 because it will help Maryland's low and moderate income communities be better prepared for future weather extremes by creating a permanent source of funding for resiliency hubs.

Microgrids or "resiliency hubs" are localized electrical grids that can disconnect from the traditional grid and operate independently during extended traditional grid outages, such as those due to extreme weather events. As global warming drives climate change, this will happen more and more often. We have all heard about the catastrophic failure of the energy grid in Texas during the major storm last winter, and we've all experienced electricity outages here in Maryland, even though our grid is better managed and more robust. As the back to back to back winter storms this year have emphasized, even Maryland needs more resiliency.

Resiliency hubs are community facilities designed to provide emergency heating and cooling capability, refrigeration of temperature sensitive medications and milk from nursing mothers, power for charging cell phones and computer batteries, as well as emergency lighting. Resiliency hubs provide clean, reliable, and affordable energy during power outages, which are likely to become more frequent as extreme weather events become more common due to climate change. An additional benefit of resiliency hubs is that solar power investments in at-risk communities can reduce the cost of electricity to the community facility during normal operations.

HB0031 will create a permanent Resiliency Hub Grant Program Fund (RHGPF), which is funded in part by \$500,000 annually from the Strategic Energy Investment Fund (SEIF) and by fines and penalties collected by the Public Service Commission. Currently, the Maryland Energy Administration (MEA) has a similar grant program, but HB0031 will make some important changes:

- First, HB0031 will require operation of a resiliency hub for at least 10 years versus 5 years under the current program.
- Second, HB0031 will add wage and labor requirements for contractors and subcontractors.
- Finally, HB0031 will shift \$500,000 in special fund spending from SEIF to RHGPF for the Resiliency Hub Grant Program, which will have no net effect on MEA's overall special fund revenues and expenditures.

Resiliency hubs funded to-date provide low and moderate income communities with facilities that can serve them in an emergency. For example, St. Jude Regional Catholic School in Rockville is the first MEA-funded project to open in 2021. St. Jude has expanded their services to the community such as providing support in the event of a blackout due to a weather emergency or natural disaster. The resiliency hub can serve about 3,000 residents who live within walking distance of the hub. Solar panels can recharge batteries during daylight hours and batteries provide power at night keeping residents safe and comfortable until power has been restored. The three new 2021 projects are all located in Baltimore: City of Refuge, Empowerment Temple, and Miracle City Church.

We need to invest in resiliency technology. Enactment of HB0031 will help expand microgrid development in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods; develop opportunities for community ownership of solar energy; and coordinate emergency preparedness efforts and funding in a way that maximizes federal funds for these efforts.

Therefore, DTMG strongly supports HB0031 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report on this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

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