



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

P.O. Box 34047, Bethesda, MD 20827

www.womensdemocraticclub.org

House Bill 0031
Maryland Energy Administration – Resiliency Hub Grant Program and Fund
Economic Matters Committee – February 3, 2022
SUPPORT

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

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony concerning an important priority of the **Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC)** for the 2022 legislative session. WDC is one of the largest and most active Democratic Clubs in our County with hundreds of politically active women and men, including many elected officials.

WDC urges the passage of **HB0031** which expands “Resiliency Hub” funding for the Maryland Energy Administration (MEA) Hub Grant Program originally created in 2019 to develop localized grids that can disconnect from the traditional grid to operate autonomously (microgrids). This program is established to construct microgrids and resiliency hubs in high density low- and moderate-income (LMI) neighborhoods in Maryland at no cost to the households. In addition, these hubs develop opportunities for community ownership of solar power and can also serve to reduce the cost of electricity to the hosting site during normal grid operation.

These resiliency hubs address gaps in services or resources in at-risk communities—both during and between disasters such as hurricanes, pandemics, or floods. They have proven to be effective in other cities in the U.S., and Baltimore is one such city that has explored resilience hubs and pulled through bad weather events with great success. Construction is set to begin at another hub in Baltimore, and this bill will provide funding to offset the cost of building even more hubs in other high density LMI communities in Maryland.

Serving as neighborhood facilities that support residents, resiliency hubs coordinate culturally sensitive, multilingual services to better meet the needs of diverse groups of community members. In addition, hubs distribute necessary resources such as food and multilingual information after disaster events such as floods. Year-round, they can offer space and programming for community-building efforts that increase resilience when emergencies occur. Hubs, in fact, enhance a community's quality of life, while at the same time reduce carbon pollution by providing clean and reliable energy during power grid outages.

They are designed to provide a safe place for temporary shelter and relief during days of extreme heat or cold, by supplying emergency heating and cooling capability, refrigeration of temperature sensitive medications and milk from nursing mothers, plug power for charging of cell phone and



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computer batteries, as well as lighting. Year-round, they can offer space and programming for community-building efforts that increase resilience when emergencies occur.

Women and children are the greatest beneficiaries of these hubs, as they make up a disproportionate number of low-income residents. In the United States, more women than men live in poverty. Of all single-parent families in the U.S., single mothers make up the majority. [Single Mother Guide](#) cites 2020 U.S. Census Bureau statistics that show that of nearly 11 million single parent households, 80% are headed by single mothers and 31% live in poverty.

In short, resiliency hubs improve the stability of an LMI community. Resiliency hubs are intended to strengthen the resilience of local communities by serving as meeting places and information centers for the surrounding residents in addition to emergency shelters or hospitals. Hubs provide an opportunity for communities to become more self-determining, socially connected, and successful before, during, and after electricity disruptions. **Most importantly**, when a storm or other disaster knocks out power, it becomes a health and safety threat especially for LMI communities which have an even greater exposure to the adverse effects of electric outages, which can quickly lead to catastrophic outcomes.

WDC speaks out for women and children, especially the most vulnerable. For this reason, we **urge a favorable report for HB0031**.

Thank you for this opportunity to share our views.

Respectfully,

Leslie Milano
President