

DAVID S. LAPP
PEOPLE'S COUNSEL

WILLIAM F. FIELDS
DEPUTY PEOPLE'S COUNSEL

JOSEPH G. CLEAVER
DEPUTY PEOPLE'S COUNSEL

— OPC —
OFFICE OF PEOPLE'S COUNSEL
State of Maryland

6 ST. PAUL STREET, SUITE 2102
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21202
WWW.OPC.MARYLAND.GOV

BRANDI NIELAND
DIRECTOR, CONSUMER
ASSISTANCE UNIT

BILL NO.: House Bill 31
Maryland Energy Administration –
Resiliency Hub Grant Program and Fund

COMMITTEE: Economic Matters

HEARING DATE: February 3, 2022

SPONSOR: Delegate Charkoudian

POSITION: Support

The Office of People's Counsel supports House Bill 31, Maryland Energy Administration – Resiliency Hub Grant Program and Fund to create a grant program administrated by the Maryland Energy Administration to fund Resiliency Hubs. The resiliency hubs are solar PV or battery storage microgrid/facilities that provide electricity to low and moderate-income communities during extended power outages in order to provide emergency heating and cooling, refrigeration of temperature-controlled medications, and charging for cell phone and computer batteries. An extended power outage is defined as one lasting more than four hours.

Resiliency hubs would provide important public benefits through local community centers that serve essential energy needs of customers during times of severe weather. The hub would be available to charge cell phones and batteries for important communications needs, enable residents to stay warm or cool in adverse conditions, and safekeep medications during extended power outages.

Under the bill, MEA is to create a competitive grant program for eligible state and local government agencies, businesses, and non-profit groups who can apply for the Resiliency Hubs grants. The grant applications must serve primarily low and moderate-income communities, and applicants must commit to operating the Resiliency Hub for at least ten years. The funds to support the Resiliency Hubs Program come from the fines and penalties collected by the Public Service Commission. Those fines and penalties

currently are paid to the General Fund. Federal grants and appropriations from the State budget can also support the Resiliency Hubs Grant Program. The program receives an initial allocation of \$500,000 from the Strategic Energy Investment Fund. MEA is to coordinate the Resiliency Hubs Grant Program with Maryland Department of Emergency Management.

OPC supports the creation of these community-based facilities to provide for essential energy and communication needs for low- and moderate-income communities during extended outages. Outages from severe weather events can lead to long periods before restoration of service and threaten the health and safety of customers. The resiliency hub will help provide for the basic needs of customers during those events.

Recommendation: OPC requests a favorable report on House Bill 31.