



**Committee: Economic Matters**

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

**Organization: WISE**

**Submitting: Monica O'Connor Environment/Climate Legislative Liaison**

**Position: Favorable**

**Hearing Date: February 3, 2022**

Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing our testimony today. WISE is an all-volunteer women-led group of advocates formed in Anne Arundel County, with over 600 members. WISE urges you to vote favorably on HB0031.

HB0031 establishes, in statute, a Resiliency Hub Grant Program in the Maryland Energy Administration (MEA) that is somewhat similar to an existing program. 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 with climate change. An additional benefit is that solar power investments in at-risk communities can reduce the cost of electricity to the community facility during normal operations.

HB0031 creates 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, MEA has a similar grant program, however, the bill makes some important changes. First, the bill requires operation of a resiliency hub for at least 10 years versus 5 years under the

current program. Second, it adds wage and labor requirements for contractors and subcontractors. Finally, the bill shifts \$500,000 in special fund spending under the Resiliency Hub Grant Program, from SEIF to RHGPF, which has 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. HB0031 will help more Maryland low and moderate income communities be better prepared for future weather extremes by creating a permanent source of funding for resiliency hubs. We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.