



**Committee: Economic Matters**

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

**Organization: Climate Justice Wing of the Maryland Legislative Coalition**

**Submitting: Laurie McGilvray, Co-Chair**

**Position: Favorable**

**Hearing Date: February 3, 2022**

Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

Thank you for allowing our testimony today in support of HB0031. The Maryland Legislative Coalition (MLC) Climate Justice Wing, a statewide coalition of over 50 grassroots and professional organizations, 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 with extreme weather events exacerbated by 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. 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 has the ability to serve about 3,000 residents who live easily 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 projects funded in 2021 are located in Baltimore - City of Refuge, Empowerment Temple, and Miracle City Church.

HB0031 will help Maryland low and moderate income communities be better prepared for future weather extremes by creating a long-term source of funding for resiliency hubs. We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.