



February 1, 2022

SUPPORT Senate Bill 256: Maryland Energy Administration – Resiliency Hub Grant Program and Fund

Chair Kelley and Members of the Committee:

The Climate Access Fund supports SB256, and we thank Senator Beidle for her leadership on this issue.

My name is Lynn Heller. I'm the founder and CEO of the Climate Access Fund, which is a statewide nonprofit Green Bank that is focused on reducing the electricity bills of low-income households through access to community solar. We do this by: (1) raising low-cost financing to incentivize community solar developers and their investors to serve more low-income households than they otherwise would; and (2) developing community solar projects on already-developed land for the benefit of low- to moderate- income ("LMI") communities.

The Climate Access Fund supports SB256 because we believe climate change is an urgent threat to Marylanders and the state must take action to reduce its impacts. Extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and more severe, they will continue to do so, and we need to prepare for them – particularly in under-resourced communities where residents are less likely to be able to access basic needs and services in a crisis. Resiliency hubs located in LMI communities (most likely on the rooftops of commercial buildings) have the potential to provide access to electricity for essential needs -- refrigeration for medicines and food, heating and cooling -- during power outages. And they do so without having to use greenhouse-gas emitting diesel generators, but rather by storing renewable energy in batteries. SB256 calls for a consistently-funded resiliency hub program.

The Climate Access Fund also supports SB256 because it prioritizes resiliency hubs that are combined with community solar. That means that during the 99% of the time the electric grid is operational and power from the battery is not needed for the resiliency hub, at least 30% of the power generated by the solar array would be consumed (virtually) by LMI households rather than by the building owner.

Maryland's Community Solar Pilot Program allows Maryland households to sign up for power being generated somewhere other than on their own rooftops, and they get a credit – usually at a discount, sometimes as high as 25% – on their electricity bill. This helps alleviate the energy burden (the percent of income spent on energy) of Maryland's LMI households. The energy burden of LMI households is typically at least three times higher than the energy burden of non-LMI households.



By prioritizing resiliency hub projects combined with community solar, the program has the potential to benefit LMI households year-round through discounted electricity, rather than only during power outages. It's a win-win.

The Climate Access Fund urges a favorable report on SB256. Thank you.

Lynn Heller, CEO
Climate Access Fund Corporation
lynn@climateaccessfund.org
(410) 371-6276