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MAYOR

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HB0031

February 3, 2021

TO: Members of the Economic Matters Committee

FROM: Natasha Mehu, Director of Government Relations

RE: House Bill 031 - Maryland Energy Administration – Resiliency Hub Grant Program and Fund

POSITION: Support

Chair Wilson and Vice Chair Crosby and Members of the Economic Matters Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 31.

HB031 supports a unique and impactful grant program and funding mechanism that is beneficial to jurisdictions across Maryland that are working hard to expand solar power and battery storage in low-income communities. The Resiliency Hub Grant Program and Fund provides essential funding for cities and counties across the State of Maryland looking to establish Resiliency Hubs, which help to bridge the gap in critical community needs before, during, and following disaster events. It prioritizes funding for resiliency efforts by establishing a Resiliency Grant Program Fund as a special, non-lapsing fund and expands revenue and funding sources for resiliency efforts in Maryland. Additionally, the bill provides \$500,000 annually to this Resiliency Fund.

Baltimore City is leading nationally and internationally in the establishment of Resiliency Hubs and has worked closely with the Maryland Energy Administration over the years to expand solar power and battery storage opportunities to non-profit partners on the frontlines of building resilience in their communities. The Resiliency Hub Grant Program is currently supporting the development of solar power and battery back-up solutions for 3 service-based community organizations in Baltimore with the potential to support more. Back-up power capabilities at these sites is essential to ensuring continuity of operations and community support in extended power-outages. On-site solar power generation provides cost-savings for these organizations (that are invested right back into their communities), reduces emissions, and provides access to renewable energy that would otherwise be cost-prohibitive. Started in 2016, Baltimore City's

Community Resiliency Hub Program is critical to increasing community preparedness and resiliency in marginalized communities as the region faces intersecting and compounding climate and health hazards.

The City currently supports 18 Community Resiliency Hubs, with plans to expand to 30 over the next few years. The existing Hubs have been essential partners to the city in providing life-saving services and resources to highly vulnerable community members during the COVID-19 Pandemic, serving as COVID-testing and vaccine distribution sites due to their existing commitment to support health, safety, and resiliency in their often hard-to-reach neighborhoods. Many Hubs also supported emergency food and PPE distribution, as well as water and box fan distribution during extreme heat season. All these efforts were critical, but increased costs for these organizations (e.g., additional refrigeration and storage space and higher utility costs due to increased operations). The Resiliency Hub Grant Program Fund enhances the funding landscape for resiliency in Maryland and the Baltimore region and expands the realm of what is possible for these frontline organizations dedicated to serving their communities.

We respectfully request a **favorable** report on House Bill (HB) 031.