



8 February 2024

Senator William C. Smith, Chair
Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Written Testimony

SB49: Restrictions on Use – Solar Collector Systems – Alteration

Position: Favorable

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 49, Restrictions on Use – Solar Collector Systems – Alternation. I am Robin Dutta, the Executive Director of the Chesapeake Solar and Storage Association (CHESSA). Our association has over 100 member companies in the solar and energy storage industries. Many members are Maryland-based. Others are regional and national companies with an interest and/or business footprint in the state. Our purpose is to promote the mainstream adoption of local solar, large-scale solar, and battery storage throughout the electric grid in order to realize a stable and affordable grid for all consumers.

I am here to provide favorable testimony on SB49, Restrictions on Use – Solar Collector Systems – Alternation, which would clarify and strengthen current law to help homeowners protect their freedom to choose residential solar from unreasonable restrictions from a community organization. It is essential that all Maryland energy consumers are able to choose solar for themselves, both to protect individual choice but to help Maryland advance an equitable clean energy future.

As Marylanders fully electrify their buildings and purchase electric vehicles, they will become more reliant on the electric grid than at any previous point. The grid of the future will have the combined roles that today's grid, natural gas system, and gas stations have. For the grid to serve those roles, it will need to look and act differently. It will need to account for higher statewide electric loads, and greater electric demand in peak periods. And, the higher peak demand gets, the more expensive the electric grid becomes, due to expensive infrastructure expansion and higher peak energy pricing. If clean energy policy lowers peak demand, it lowers the cost of the grid.

Access to solar unlocks many more options for families. Installing solar is often done in conjunction with installing home battery storage, and when coupled solar plus storage systems can provide back-up power when the grid goes down. Electric vehicle owners are also often solar owners. Solar only, and solar plus storage systems can help lower the cost of powering electric vehicles. A 2020 study showed that surveyed participants were 66 percent more likely to own an electric vehicle if they owned solar. And researchers at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory [published an scholarly](#)



[journal article](#) where they found that electric vehicle adoption could increase a household's likelihood of adopting solar for themselves.

This link is significant, and ties to the stability of Maryland's grid of the future. Residential solar, especially when paired with battery storage, can decrease the grid impacts of electric vehicles. It can save homeowners money on both EV charging and home energy usage. However, this link needs to be influencing energy policy, and SB49 can help fill this gap. [In a 2023 report](#), the U.S. Department of Energy estimates that nationwide peak demand will increase by over 40 percent by 2050, largely from electric vehicle adoption. If Maryland's electric future follows anywhere near the projected national trend, it needs to step up the clean energy build-out throughout the state at the same time as handling fossil fuel retirements. That means unreasonable restrictions from community associations could hurt statewide clean energy goals in addition to preventing homeowners from choosing where they receive their energy.

It is essential that Maryland's clean energy scale up comes at the lowest cost with the highest value. Put another way, Maryland needs to lower that runaway peak demand that could come from electric vehicle adoption. Not prioritizing such a path could burden already-burdened families with higher costs for electric grid projects that are unnecessary. When there are more distributed clean energy systems in communities, there are greater assets to increase reliability and resiliency. These solar systems can also be key grid assets that can support local energy demand and help prevent that runaway peak demand.

For these reasons, CHESSA strongly supports SB49. Achieving an equitable clean energy transition will take everyone's efforts. Community associations should not be placing unreasonable restrictions on residential solar, and we think this legislation will prevent them from happening.

Please reach out with any questions on solar and storage policy. CHESSA is here to be a resource to the committee.

Sincerely,

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