

**Policy Position of the Advocates for Herring Bay
Regarding SB 744: A Blueprint for Solar Energy in Maryland
Testimony by Jeff Plewes
February 19, 2019**

Supporting SB 744 and proposing additional language to focus the study on economic incentives for preferred siting of solar development.

As Maryland aims toward a clean energy future, we face a great challenge in balancing our solar energy goals with other land-use and environmental needs. Without that balance, we run the risk of not achieving our in-state solar goals or, conversely, overtaxing our valuable agricultural and natural resources when other approaches would suffice. Expanding the diversity of solar types and sites is key to achieving that balance.

We commend the sponsors of SB 744 for recognizing the need for balance. Enacting this bill will launch an urgently needed dialog among stakeholders, laying the foundation for a consensus on how Maryland can sustainably transition to alternative energy sources.

In our view, one of the Commission's greatest contributions will be the study of financial incentives for developing solar on preferred surfaces. Well-designed incentives are needed to support solar projects on previously developed surfaces and on underutilized or impaired open spaces, like rights-of-ways and reclaimed mines. Such projects are currently less economic than large-scale projects on undeveloped land, and if this disparity continues, Maryland's in-state solar generation will lack sufficient diversity.

The Commission's study of financial incentives could lay the groundwork for achieving a diverse mix of solar generation if subsection (f)(iv) is amended to ensure that the study has three components:

1. First, it should focus on siting-based incentives for installing solar on the types of surfaces listed in subsections (f)(ii) and (f)(iii).
2. Second, it should focus on incentives that provide predictable, long-term economic support. While grants, loans, and other existing programs are helpful, they are limited in scope and effectiveness.
3. Third, it should build on the experience of other states. Massachusetts, for example, is seeing early success from a program that includes price "adders" for solar on non-greenfield surfaces.

With this amendment, SB 744 will put Maryland on a path toward achieving our shared vision for an environmentally sustainable future. We urge the Committee to favorably report this bill, including our proposed amendment. An illustrative example of legislative language is shown below.

Example of potential legislative language

New text is highlighted in blue

On page 4, line 3, strike (iv) and insert the following:

(iv) options for implementing siting policies and preferences identified by the Commission, including changing existing laws and regulations and developing new financial incentives, *particularly options being developed in other states that may be feasible and effective in providing predictable, long-term economic incentives for installing solar energy systems on the surfaces identified in (f)(ii) and (f)(iii).*