



Senate Bill 557

Public Utilities – Electric Generating Systems – Net Metering and Community Solar Energy

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Finance Committee

Date: March 6, 2018

From: Leslie Knapp, Jr.

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 557. The bill will give counties greater flexibility to undertake and site net metering and community solar projects.

As introduced, SB 557 increases the maximum generating capacity of a net metering electrical generating project or a community solar project from 2 megawatts to 10 megawatts. If the project is located on a brownfield, there is no generating capacity limit. The project must comply with local land use and planning laws. MACo understands that amendments will be offered to: (1) limit project size to 30 megawatts on brownfields; (2) limit the projects to county-owned property; (3) limit project ownership to a county or a third party under agreement with a county; and (4) ensure that—for community solar projects—all subscribers are located in the county.

MACo supports the bill as introduced and has no objections to the amendments described above. Net metering and community solar projects help create a more robust and decentralized energy grid. Siting community solar projects on county lands or brownfields reduces the pressure to convert prime agricultural land or open space into solar facilities. The bill does not alter the statewide maximum limit of 1,500 megawatts for net metering projects. According to the bill's fiscal note, there remains ample capacity under this cap, with 461 megawatts used as of June 30, 2016.

SB 557 provides reasonable flexibility for counties to undertake useful and needed net metering and community solar projects. The bill's provisions encourage the siting of community solar sites on brownfields or less desirable lands, relieving some development pressure on more desirable agricultural lands or open space. Accordingly, MACo requests the Committee give SB 557 a **FAVORABLE** report.