



2023 Maryland Solar Lobby Day Action Toolkit

Making community solar permanent & working for everyone

Lobby Day Agenda:

12:30 - Meet at Asbury United Methodist Church, 87 West St, Annapolis, MD 21401 3rd Floor Conference Room

12:30 - Lunch at same as above

1:00 - Walk to Capitol & Group Photo

1:00 - 5:00 - Meetings

Toolkit Resources:

- Learn about community solar (P.3)
- Tips and tricks for how to lobby (P.5)
- Sample agenda for meetings with your legislator (P.6)
- How to amplify your impact (P.8)
- What to do after today (P.9)

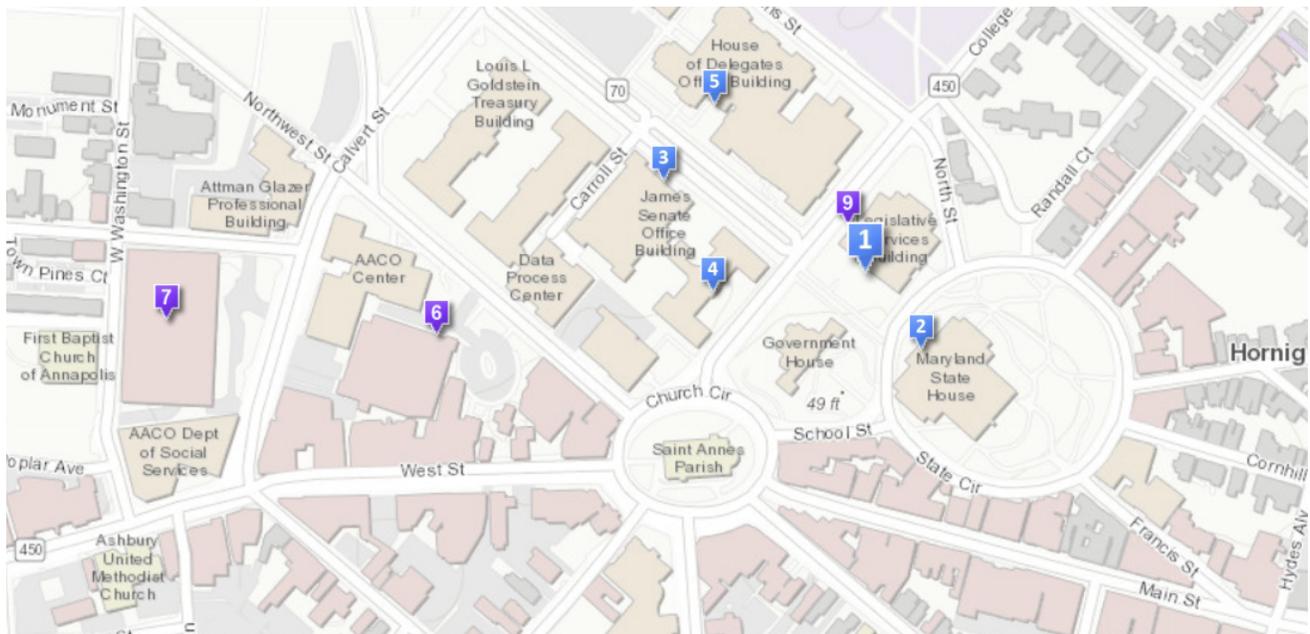
Day of Contact:

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Where to go:



1. Department of Legislative Services
2. Maryland State House
3. Miller Senate Building
4. James Senate Building
5. Lowe House Office Building
6. Gotts Court Parking Garage
7. Whitmore Parking Garage

Learn about the issue | HB 908/SB 613 and Community Solar

What is community solar?

A federal study estimates that nearly half of all U.S. households and businesses are unable to host solar systems. Community solar, sometimes called “shared solar,” offers the benefit of solar to those who can’t, or prefer not to, install solar panels on their homes. This often is the case for renters, condo and apartment dwellers. The solar arrays are located throughout the community and enable individuals, businesses, or organizations to purchase or subscribe to a “share” in a community solar project. Participants who join the community solar program receive a credit on their electric bill each month for the energy produced by their share.

Background/Issue:

The community solar pilot authorized by the legislature will sunset in 2024. Since the pilot program was authorized by the general assembly in 2015, community solar has increased access to solar, generated clean and reliable energy and produced meaningful cost-savings for participants. If the community solar program is made permanent it is estimated that it will contribute at least 100 MW of capacity development each year. In 2022, the legislature approved an increase in project size from 2 MW to 5 MW. Currently community solar subscribers pay two bills: one to the electric utility and another to the community solar subscriber organization.

Solution:

The legislature should **pass HB 908 / SB 613 to renew the community solar program and make it permanent**. SB 613 also includes consolidated billing for community solar, which streamlines community solar billing and crediting onto the existing utility bill. Community solar shares the benefits of solar with the entire community, opens the door for more Marylanders to access solar and serves as a boost to new solar development.

- **Shares the benefits of solar with the entire community**
 - Solar is one of the fastest growing and most popular sources of clean energy
 - Solar provides direct benefits to the community and increases the reliability of the grid
- **Opens the door for more Marylanders to access solar**

- This program is the pathway to make solar affordable and accessible to families regardless of their income or housing situation
- Supports a dedicated funding source that will help low- to moderate income households benefit from community solar
- Consolidated billing will streamline and increase access to community solar
- **Serves as a boost to new solar development**
 - Community solar attracts new solar developers and provides consumers with more options
 - A 2018 report by the Maryland Public Service Commission (PSC) found that increasing solar energy in Maryland would have more than \$3.9 billion in economic impacts and create 2,200 jobs (lasting 10 years).

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Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

Margaret Mead

 SOLAR UNITED
NEIGHBORS

”

Lobbying your representatives in-person

Meeting with your representatives in person is generally the most impactful way to lobby. Both one-on-one and group meetings (typically no more than four people) are effective.

General lobbying steps/tips

- During the meeting
 - Make sure to allow lots of opportunity for the legislators (or their staff) to speak about their positions and concerns. You want to encourage your legislators (or their staff) to talk so you can learn more about their thinking. It's a good idea to take brief notes as long as it's not distracting.
 - If you do not have the answer to a question, say so. Offer to find the answer and provide it to the legislator later. We can help you find the information they need.
 - Close the meeting by thanking your representative (or their staff) for the meeting and tell them that you will send a follow-up email.
 - If your representative opposes your position: - Calmly express your disappointment. Ask what kind of information the representative would need to reconsider their position. Offer to send more information via email. Solar United Neighbors can help you get this information.
- After the meeting
 - Immediately after the meeting, write up brief notes or review/clarify notes taken during the meeting.
 - The day after the meeting, call or email the person(s) you met with to express your thanks for the meeting. Include any follow-up information. Ask the representative to support/oppose the bill. If your legislators said they will support your position, thank them and urge them to encourage their colleagues to follow suit.

Sample Agenda for Meeting with an Elected Official on HB 908/ SB 613:

- Address by proper title (e.g. Delegate or Senator) and use professional tone
 - It's a good idea to take brief notes as long as it's not distracting.
- Thank them for the opportunity to meet and do a quick round of introductions.
 - Identify yourself by name, town and, if relevant to the issue/bills, profession and organizational affiliation.
 - Here's a blurb on Solar United Neighbors, if you want to mention SUN:
Solar United Neighbors is a non-profit organization that helps people and communities go solar, join together, and fight for their energy rights. SUN represents more than 13,000 solar supporters in the state and have helped 920 homes & organizations go solar in Maryland providing 7.7 MW of local solar energy and \$20.4 million in local economic development. SUN helped pass the original community solar pilot program legislation in 2015.
- Explain purpose of meeting. Update/personalize:
 - We are here to talk about the importance of growing community solar in Maryland to provide energy bill savings, community economic development and jobs, and meet our clean energy goals.
- Pass out bill fact sheet and Maryland distributed energy factsheet handouts
- Ask for their support for:
 - HB 908/ SB 613: Electricity - Community solar energy generating systems program introduced by Senator Benjamin Brooks & Delegate Luke Clippinger
- Explain how the bill would affect you/solve a problem/bring benefits for your family, business, and community. Here are some potential talking points:
 - The existing community solar is a pilot program that ends in 2024, we need to pass HB 908/ SB 613 to continue to grow community solar in Maryland.
 - If anyone is a community solar subscriber, you could talk briefly about what it means to you to participate and the utility bill savings.
 - Emphasize multiple benefits of community solar in representative's district and statewide:
 - reduce and control energy costs
 - create local jobs & economic development
 - provide energy resilience
 - cleaner air
 - lower heat trapping pollution & etc.

- Also the importance of consolidated billing for community solar (this is included in HB 908 & SB 613)
 - Puts the community solar charge and credit on the customer's existing utility bill.
 - Utilities already do similar crediting and charging for other services
 - Increases accessibility and simplicity of community solar
- Allow lots of opportunity for the legislator to speak about her/his positions and concerns.
- If the representative supports your position: 🎉
 - Thank them and ask them to co-sponsor bill and to encourage fellow representatives to support
 - If they are already a sponsor, thank them! 🙌
 - Senator Benjamin Brooks introduced the bill in the Senate
 - Delegate Luke Clippinger introduced the bill in the House
 - Senate Co-sponsors include: Brian Feldman, Mary Washington, Nancy King, Benjamin Kramer, Craig Zucker, & Sarah Elfreth
 - House Co-sponsors include: Amprey, Boafu, Charkoudian, Cullison, Ebersole, Feldmark, Fennell, Foley, Fraser-Hidalgo, Kaufman, Kerr, Robbyn Lewis, Jeffrie E. Long, R. Long, Lopez, Pasteur, Qi, Queen, Ruth, Shetty, Stephanie Smith, Stewart, Terrasa, Valderrama, Vogel, Watson, Woods
- If the representative opposes your position: Calmly express your disappointment and ask what kind of information would be needed to reconsider and offer to send more information via email.
- If you do not have the answer to a question, say so and offer to find the answer and provide it to the legislator with your follow up email. SUN can help you find the answer.
- Close the meeting by thanking your representative for the meeting and say that you will send a follow-up email. 📧
- 📷 Before leaving, ask to have a picture taken with the representative and please share the picture on social media with tag @solarunitedneighbors for Facebook and @solarneighbors for Twitter.
- Follow up ASAP by email with the information and restate your position. Find your legislators' email addresses here: mgaleg.maryland.gov then click "Members" and "Find My Representatives" or ask SUN. Please share your notes and experience with us at advocacy@solarunitedneighbors.org

Use the power of social media to help amplify your impact.

Throughout the day, please share your pictures on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram with the hashtag #solarunitedneighbors and tag your elected officials.

Take a sun selfie and post it on social media.

Use your phone to take a selfie or get a group of solar supporters together to take a picture and post it on your favorite social channels. Tag us on Facebook or Instagram [@solarunitedneighbors](#) or Twitter [@solarunited](#) and use the hashtag #solarunitedneighbors

Sample Social Media Post text to use: Maryland, it's our time to shine. I support #solar for my neighbors!

Bonus points if you take a photo with your legislator, post and tag us!

What to do after the event:

Thank you to your legislators

Send an email to thank your representatives for meeting with solar supporters today!

Take action. You can keep community solar shining in Maryland! [Send your message](#) to urge state legislators to support legislation that will make the community solar pilot program permanent.

Write a letter to the editor. Getting original letters to the editor (LTE) published in local papers is a great way to inform the public about a bill. It also sends a clear message to your local legislators and decision makers. Most policymakers monitor any mention of their names in local papers. Learn more about how to write an [LTE here](#).

Share your solar story. Sharing your solar story can help inspire leaders to recognize the benefits of solar and how it impacts their constituents. [Complete our simple form](#) to share your story and photos with other prospective solar owners.

Other ways to get involved after the lobby day.



Sign up to receive updates from Solar United Neighbors
solarunitedneighbors.org/MD



[Join the SUN Maryland Solar Action Team](#) to learn more ways to
advocate for solar



Tell your friends and family how solar benefits everyone
solarunitedneighbors.org/maryland



[Donate](#) to Solar United Neighbors

Thank you for joining us for the Maryland Solar Lobby Day!

Additional Solar/Storage related bills SUN is tracking

SB 664: Grant for residential solar bill

- Introduced by Senator Feldman.
- expanding access to grants from Maryland Energy Association (MEA) for rooftop solar
- supported by a coalition of solar companies and Solar United Neighbors called Maryland Rooftop Solar Coalition.
- defines low-income as 175% of the federal poverty level. A family of four would qualify as low-income if they make less than \$52,500.
- defines moderate-income as 80% area median income (AMI). AMI is defined by US Housing & Urban Development (HUD) by city or county area. In Montgomery County it is less than \$90,000 for a family of 4 and in Baltimore City it is less than \$89,400 for a family of 4.
- the MEA grants are funded by compliance fees paid by electric utilities.
- this bill allocates the first \$5 million and 10% of any additional funds to new solar systems that benefits low or moderate income residents, overburdened or underserved communities, or public entities in overburdened or underserved areas.
- 90% of the fees collected beyond \$5 million would support any new small solar systems.
- MEA solar grants would be up to \$500 per kW of capacity up to a \$5,000 max per system.
- Hearing on 2/28 at 1pm

SB 143/ HB 68: Net metering bill

- Introduced by Delegate Korman and Senator Feldman
- Improves net metering policy in Maryland, specifically it:
- provides for indefinite rollover of credits
- assigned to House: Economic Matters - hearing was on 2/9

SB 103: State tax credit bill

- Creates state tax credit of: \$15,000 or 25% of the solar system cost, whichever amount is less.
- (It sounds like the cost of this bill is high and it is unlikely to pass)

SB 663 / HB 839: Make-ready and residential battery incentive

- introduced by Sen. Feldman & Del. Qi
- Provides upfront rebate for necessary electrical work to upgrade electrical service for electrification; provides rebate program for solar & storage facilities; requires utilities to provide benefits for grid services; rebate recipients need to commit to provide grid services; Incentive for resilient multi-family dwellings
- hearing in House Environment and Transportation committee 2/23 at 1pm