

To: Council President Stewart and Council Members
From: David Blockstein, Ph.D.
Date: September 8, 2025
RE: ZTA 27-25

Dear Council President Stewart and Council Members

I am David Blockstein, [REDACTED] Sycamore Ave., Takoma Park, MD. I have a doctorate in ecology. I am co-Director of Solve Climate 2030, a project of the Center for Environmental Policy at Bard College and am the founder and former Executive Secretary of the Council of Energy Research and Education Leaders (CEREL).

I am pleased to support Expedited Bill ZTA 27-25. The legislation is a necessary step to meet the county's greenhouse gas reduction and climate goals, enhance equity and reduce costs for county residents.

In 2019-2020 I was honored to serve on the Clean Energy Working Group of the Advisory Committee that helped produce the [Montgomery County Climate Action Plan](#). Community Choice Energy (Community Choice Aggregation -CCA) was the top priority of our working group. We wrote: "An "opt-out" Community Choice Energy (CCE) program would allow the County to purchase renewable energy on behalf of electricity customers in the County. A CCE program would allow the County to aggregate the electric loads of residents and small businesses in order to negotiate more favorable terms with an electricity supplier or enable the direct purchase of power from a renewable generation source . In a CCE program, the electricity of participants would still be distributed by one of the three utilities (Pepco, BGE, and Potomac Edison) that serve the County . However, the CCE program would enable the County to choose an electricity supply that is greener than the default service provided by the local utilities . An opt-out CCE program would replace the basic service offered by the utilities, and residents and businesses would need to opt out if they did not want to participate " ... "Through a CCE program, important energy decisions can be made at the local level rather than by an investor-owned utility or a for-profit competitive electricity supplier. In addition, a CCE program could potentially deliver price stability and cost savings to residents and small businesses." (page 119).

I encourage all council members to view a video of less than 2 minutes about CCA
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dMJoooxkYoo>

Analysis of GHG mitigation actions with the highest emissions reduction potential (Figure 30) identified CCE/CCA as the most important action that the County can take to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions with a score of nearly 30. The next most impactful action had a score of 26 (pages 99-100).

In a letter signed by 10 members of our working group to the Montgomery County delegation to the State legislature in support of Community Choice Energy Act SB 315 in

2020, we wrote, (CCA) “would be a ‘game changer’ because it changes the default electricity option to clean renewable energy. One of the barriers to use of renewable energy is that it is often very confusing and difficult for a consumer to figure out how to switch to renewable energy. It is hard to believe that given the choice to opt out of clean energy, consumers would choose more dirty energy. This is especially true because the changed economics of solar energy and battery storage, make it cheaper to have renewable energy. The price of solar energy generation has dropped by 90% in the past decade and the price of wind energy generation has dropped by 70% in the past decade, making these sources less expensive than any other source of energy. The costs of battery storage have also dropped rapidly and recent technological breakthroughs are being commercialized allowing cost effective back up storage for renewable energy”.

In the 5 years since we sent that letter, the Montgomery County pilot was approved, the Maryland Public Utilities Commission has adopted guidelines, the costs of renewables have continued to drop and the climate crisis has accelerated faster than forecast.

It is time for the County Council to enact ZTA 27-25, “establish a community choice aggregator (“CCA”) within the Department of Environmental Protection and designate the Director of the Department of Environmental Protection as the responsible entity for its operations and functions” (staff report). There is still a long process ahead before all county residents will be able to benefit from Clean Energy. ZTA 27-25 is the next step.

Thank you for your support of clean, lower cost energy and climate stabilization.

David E. Blockstein

David Blockstein, Ph.D.