



**Commonwealth of Virginia House of Delegates Commerce and Energy Committee
January 24, 2022**

Testimony of Andrew Gohn on Behalf of the American Clean Power Association
OPPOSE – House Bill 172

Andrew Gohn – Eastern Region Director of State Affairs

Chair Byron, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in opposition to House Bill 172.

I am Andrew Gohn, Eastern Region Director of State Affairs for the American Clean Power Association (ACP). American Clean Power is the voice of companies from across the clean power sector that are powering America's future and providing cost-effective solutions to the climate crisis while creating jobs, spurring massive investment in the U.S. economy, and driving high-tech innovation across the nation. ACP works to champion policies that will transform the U.S. power grid to a low-cost, reliable, and renewable power system.

In 2020, the General Assembly gave localities several "new tools in the toolbox" to manage solar energy development. In addition to raising additional revenues through the revenue share option, host localities gained the power to negotiate a siting agreement with a solar or storage developer. As a result of this legislation, solar development could provide major voluntary payments for critical infrastructure, such as broadband access, public education or capital improvements. To date, siting agreements have successfully enabled solar development to move forward while providing generous revenues to host localities.

However, HB 172 uses the siting agreement construct to place an extensive regulatory burden on solar developers. By requiring the project be invisible from public secondary roads, the legislation implies that merely seeing solar panels – which adorn tens of thousands of rooftops across the Commonwealth- is a problem the state must urgently address.

If glare is a concern, it is worth noting solar panels are designed to capture, and not reflect, as much light as possible. Studies indicate that the potential glare from solar arrays is comparable to glare from a body of smooth water. Modern PV panels reflect as little as two percent of incoming sunlight, which is about the same as water and less than soil or even wood shingles. However, HB 172 does not require visual screening from bodies of water or wood shingles.

Compliance with HB 172 would raise the cost of clean energy by forcing solar projects to shrink in size, or add expensive visual screening measures, such as a vegetation or fencing, on the perimeter of the project. ACP urges the committee to reject HB 172, and maximize the economic benefits solar power can provide the Commonwealth