

**Comments in Support of House Joint Resolution 545, “Clean energy; Dept. of Energy to study barriers for local governments to purchase”**

Submitted by Randall Freed, January 28, 2023

Counties and municipalities throughout VA – including Alexandria, Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, Prince William, Richmond, and Charlottesville – are doing their part to solve the climate change problem by committing to reduce carbon emissions by 2030.

Emissions associated with the electricity used in buildings is the top emission source in most of these jurisdictions. Though the grid is decarbonizing, it’s not decarbonizing fast enough to meet many carbon goals.

One of the best strategies available to local governments is to purchase electricity that’s cleaner -- i.e., has lower CO2 emissions per Megawatt-hour -- than the grid average. Though this is allowed in the VA code through “municipal aggregation”, the financial, legal, and regulatory barriers are so high, and so complex, that no county or municipality has yet implemented this strategy.

For example, when Loudoun County wanted to evaluate this option after an initial feasibility study determined its viability, the county estimated that a full study would cost them \$1 million in consulting fees, which they deemed as too expensive for their budget. (See "Loudoun Now" article, Dec 1 2022: "Loudoun Committee Suggests Dropping County Electric Aggregation Study"). Prince William County is also examining municipal aggregation as part of their Community Energy and Sustainability Master Plan.

We need a study at the state level to determine how to lower the barriers. HJ545 meets this need by directing the Department of Energy to study the barriers for local governments to directly purchase clean energy or to facilitate the purchase of clean energy by their constituents.

This common-sense measure deserves bipartisan support. **Please vote yes on HJ545.**

Thanks for your consideration!

Randall Freed

6151 Hemlock Ct

Manassas VA 20112