

Oral Testimony – Howard County Council Hearing on CB19-2026

Joint Renewable Energy Power Purchase Agreement

March 17, 2026

- Good evening, Chair Jones and members of the Council. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the solar Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) that is the subject of CB19-2026. I am Cornell Brown, Chief Operating Officer for the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS).
- As outlined in the HCPSS **Sustainability Policy 6080**, the Board believes that sustainability within the school system is the responsibility of all individuals as well as the collective organization. The Board supports sustainable practices that create a healthy environment, engage our employees and students in developing environmental literacy, and strengthen our operations. Additionally, to align with the purpose, standards, and responsibilities of Policy 6080, Implementation Procedures on the topic of sustainability delineate the coordination of systemwide efforts, including HCPSS's support for actively participating in achieving Howard County Government's (HCG) goal to cut greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.
- Joint Climate and Sustainability MOU between the Partners:
On August 11, 2025, HCG, HCPSS and Howard Community College (HCC) executed a collaborative Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on climate and sustainability initiatives. One initiative under the MOU required that we engage the market for the purpose of executing a Joint Renewable Energy Power Purchase Agreement.
- HCG, HCPSS, and HCC, as Partners, seek to jointly enter into a renewable energy power purchase agreement (PPA) with a power provider (CI Renewables) for a period of 25 years. This PPA will provide renewable energy in the form of solar electricity with substantial savings estimated over the expected 25-year term of the PPA. As part of the PPA, the power provider is responsible for the capital costs related to the installation of solar panels and associated components.
- As reflected in Board policy and the MOU, it is our goal to align this Clean Energy requirement with other sustainability initiatives being planned. Most notable is HCPSS' effort to implement **Energy Performance Contracting and**

Behavior-based Energy Conservation Programs by engaging Energy Service Companies for the purpose of financing upgrades to HCPSS facilities through energy savings generated by energy conservation measures and organizational behavior modifications. Additionally, this effort will include an **Education and Community Engagement** component focused on collaborative activities, programs, and publications to strengthen environmental education for students, boosting public awareness, leveraging data and information to advance best practice, and promote other efforts that strengthen environmental sustainability and climate action.

- Under this effort there are eight (8) HCPSS sites contemplated for solar development and they include:

Site Name	Address	Type	Expected Capacity (kW DC)	Anticipated Placed in Service Date
Route 40/Marriottsville Road Property	2865 Marriottsville Road, Ellicott City, MD 21042	Ground	2579	2027
Harper's Choice Middle School	5450 Beaverkill Rd, Columbia, MD 21044	Rooftop	665	2026
Murray Hill Middle School	9989 Winter Sun Rd, Laurel, MD 20723	Rooftop	383	2026
Triadelphia Elementary School	13400 Triadelphia Rd, Ellicott City, MD 21042	Rooftop	444	2026
Guilford Elementary School	7335Oakland Mills Rd, Columbia, MD 21046	Rooftop	396	2027
Wilde Lake High School	5460 Trumpeter Rd, Columbia, MD 21044	Rooftop	571	2026

Central Office	10910 Clarksville Pike, Ellicott City, MD 21042	Rooftop	298	2027
Clemens Crossing Elementary School	10320 Quarterstaff Rd, Columbia, MD 21044	Rooftop	331	2026

- The installation of rooftop solar would be staged in a way to avoid disruption of student instruction. These sites remain subject to adjustment or removal under the terms of the PPA, including the results of detailed, site-specific feasibility studies to assess their suitability for solar.
- It is proposed that HCPSS' undeveloped Marriottsville Road Property (located on Route 40) be developed to house ground-mounted solar panels. An additional fiscal benefit includes HCPSS receiving an annual lease payment starting at \$10,000 and increasing to \$25,000 based on securing federal tax credits.
- Again, the PPA creates no additional capital expenditure. The nature of a PPA is such that the power provider is responsible for the capital costs related to the installation.
- This PPA is estimated to yield long-term operating budget savings. The savings estimated or HCPSS range from about \$8.2 million to \$9.7 million dollars.

Year and amount of solar generated on HCPSS sites	Electric Bill Savings at \$0.1096/kWh	Electric Bill Savings at \$0.12/kWh
FY27 (1,172,633 kWh)	\$36,727	\$24,531
FY28 (4,156,599)	\$141,119	\$98,128
FY29 (5,967,932)	\$218,462	\$157,078
Lifetime of the PPA – 25 years	\$9,734,803	\$8,285,551

- Some of the HCPSS solar projects would be completed in FY27 and FY28, with all HCPSS sites to be completed by FY29. As a result, the bulk of HCPSS's annual cost savings would materialize after FY29.
- With that, I am available for discussion or to respond to questions.



HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY

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Testimony of Tim Lattimer, Administrator of the Office of Community Sustainability CB19-2026 - Joint Renewable Energy Power Purchase Agreement

March 17, 2026

Good evening Chair Jones, Vice Chair Rigby, and members of the Council. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on CB19-2026. Together with the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS), and Howard Community College (HCC), the Administration proposes to enter into a renewable energy power purchase agreement (PPA) jointly with a solar developer, CI Renewables, for a period of 25 years.

As you likely recall from your 2020 approval of our first solar PPA, a solar power purchase agreement is a financial arrangement where a third-party developer installs, owns, and maintains a solar system on a customer's property with zero upfront costs to the customer. The customer usually agrees to purchase the electricity produced at a fixed, lower-than-utility rate for a long-term period, typically 20 to 30 years.

With your approval in 2020, the County previously executed a solar PPA that is the largest in Maryland. The projects under that PPA were built by CI Renewables. Today, those projects collectively generate more than half of the electricity used by County government buildings. By locking in a competitive fixed price per kilowatt hour of generation over the 25-year life of that 2020 agreement, we estimate that it will save the County well over \$30 million in electricity costs over that period and likely much more if BGE's electricity rates continue to rise as expected.

Over the past six years, other local jurisdictions and organizations such as the National Association of Counties, the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), and the Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN) have lifted up Howard County's solar PPA as a successful model to reduce climate pollution and lower costs, without adding any additional operational or maintenance burden to County staff and budget. These groups and other local jurisdictions have sought Howard County's advice on how to set up similar projects in other communities.

Drawing on this prior PPA experience and in line with our strong commitment to climate action, County Executive Ball joined with HCC President Dr. Daria Willis and HCPSS Superintendent William Barnes to agree on pursuing a joint solar PPA as contemplated in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on climate and sustainability cooperation they signed last August. The County, HCPSS, & HCC chose the power provider through a competitive bidding process that we undertook jointly. We interviewed four highly qualified companies from a field of seven bidders.

At no up-front capital cost to the County, HCPSS, or HCC, this proposed PPA will produce solar electricity and save operating expenses for all three partners over its 25-year term. Our conservative estimate is that this agreement would save the County government about \$3 million to \$3.5 million in energy costs over the 25-year life of the PPA. Collectively, we estimate that this new agreement would save the Partners a total of approximately \$11.8 million to \$13.9 million over 25 years.

Our projected cost savings are conservative estimates. With the likelihood of continued increases in conventional utility supply and distribution prices, we may well see greater savings by locking in lower fixed rates now under this PPA.

As the County saw with its 2020 PPA, the nature of a PPA is such that the vendor is responsible for the up-front costs related to the solar installations, as well as ongoing maintenance, operations, and ultimate

decommissioning. The only expenses to the County, HCPSS and HCC will be the cost of purchasing the electricity generated by the solar arrays, which is at a lower rate than what we currently pay. This solar PPA rate will remain the same for 25 years, even if utility prices continue to rise.

With multiple partners and a fast-changing policy landscape – especially at the federal level - this has been a complex and challenging negotiation. We anticipate that HCC and HCPSS boards will act on the proposed PPA at their meetings on March 25 and 26, respectively, ahead of the Council’s anticipated action on April 6. In the meantime, we expect to send you a package of minor amendments to portions of the PPA text arising mainly from some changes to the scope or timing of some of the projects and additional legal reviews.

The federal government’s passage of the “One Big Beautiful Bill” (OBBB) last July severely compressed the timetable for solar projects to qualify for federal tax credits of as much as 30% under the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). Securing the County Council’s approval in early April would give the best chance for the power provider to secure “safe harbor” for federal investment tax credits, thus keeping project costs down. Delayed approval beyond that time will make it much less likely that our vendor would be able to expend the minimum required for the solar equipment needed for the projects by July 4, 2026, which is the cut-off date for “safe harboring” a project’s eligibility for up to 30% in federal investment tax credits. Such a delay could necessitate an increase in the vendor’s rate for electricity under the PPA that may exceed what Partners are prepared to pay.

Over the 25-year life of this proposed PPA, we estimate that it will eliminate nearly 130,000 metric tons of climate pollutants. That equates to taking about 30,300 gas-powered passenger cars off the road for a year.

The Administration team is grateful to our HCPSS and HCC colleagues for their outstanding cooperation throughout this process. This partnership sends an important signal to the community about our close collaboration that promises to endure for many years. It also shows our collective commitment to climate action and to countering the upward spiral of electricity costs while producing energy that is cleaner, cheaper, and readily deployable, thus saving a significant amount of county taxpayer dollars.

Finally, I especially want to thank and recognize my OCS colleague and the County’s Energy Manager, Leah Miller. She is an exceptional public servant who has shown incredible diligence, creativity, and tenacity in advancing the County’s interests under our 2020 solar PPA, as well as with this new, more complicated PPA along with many other clean energy and energy efficiency initiatives. Leah is here with us this evening and we both stand ready to address any questions. Thank you.