



September 30, 2021

Chairman Jason M. Stanek
Commissioner Michael T. Richard
Commissioner Anthony J. O'Donnell
Commissioner Odogwu Obi Linton
Commissioner Mindy L. Herman

Mr. Andrew S. Johnston, Executive
Secretary,
Maryland Public Service Commission,
William Donald Schaefer Tower
6 St. Paul Street, 16th Floor

**MAREC Action comments concerning Maryland Public Service Commission
Public Hearing in Case No. 9666, SKIPJACK OFFSHORE ENERGY, LLC AND US
WIND, INC'S OFFSHORE WIND APPLICATIONS UNDER THE CLEAN ENERGY
JOBS ACT OF 2019**

Chairman Stanek and members of the Maryland Public Service Commission,

Good evening and thank you Mr. Chair, members of the Maryland Public Service Commission (PSC), for the opportunity to speak in strong support of offshore wind. The PSC's commitment to public feedback is much appreciated.

My name is Evan Vaughan, I am deputy director of the Mid-Atlantic Renewable Energy Coalition (MAREC Action), a non-profit organization representing over 30 utility-scale wind and solar developers active in Maryland and throughout the PJM grid region. Ørsted and US Wind are both members of our organization.

Though our primary business office is in Delaware, I am a Maryland resident and taxpayer. Like a growing number of Marylanders, I am concerned about the impacts of climate change and want my electricity to come from renewable sources.

Offshore wind represents an opportunity to produce that energy right here in Maryland, while also growing our economy and taking a meaningful, large-scale step in the fight to mitigate climate change.

Maryland's State Assembly has delivered legislation, namely the *Offshore Wind Energy Act in 2013* and the *Clean Energy Jobs Act in 2019*, to achieve growth in renewable energy and offshore wind specifically.

Now it is up to the PSC to act quickly to implement the legislature's direction. We appreciate the PSC's urgency thus far on the second round of offshore wind procurement and implore you not to delay in awarding the full authorized amount of 1,200 megawatts (MW) of offshore wind through this OREC round.



Offshore wind energy is Maryland's largest-scale renewable energy resource and harnessing it will deliver substantial economic benefits.

Proposals currently under consideration by the PSC would each create thousands of good jobs in Maryland and hundreds of millions of dollars in new private investment. And those are only the direct benefits. Secondary benefits will include increased workforce development, new state & local tax revenues, the potential for new recreational fishing opportunities around turbine foundations, and much more.

As we heard during Tuesday's hearing, there is staunch support for offshore wind from the skilled trades and Maryland port communities. All offshore wind proposals currently under consideration would make major investments into Maryland manufacturing to support the growing offshore wind industry nationally.

Maryland's leadership at this critical moment for offshore wind will help position the state for additional long-term economic gains as a hub of U.S. offshore wind activity.

Offshore wind costs have come down significantly as well. The average unsubsidized cost of offshore wind energy has dropped 27 percent since 2016 alone according to data from Lazard, an investment firm.¹ More powerful turbines, economies of scale, and U.S. supply chain investments are contributing to these costs declines.

Offshore wind also represents a major opportunity for Maryland to cut greenhouse gas pollution. A study from the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory found that adding offshore wind in PJM, where Maryland is situated, will cut carbon emissions faster than in the New York or New England grids.² Furthermore, offshore wind works well alongside solar PV and land-based wind technology to diversify and strengthen the renewable energy supply. Increasing renewable energy use also reduces demand pressure on traditional fuel sources—natural gas and coal—making these fuels less expensive and more reliable at times of high demand.

I understand that offshore wind represents a change, a positive change for many Marylanders, but a change none-the-less. We heard some comments on Tuesday about the potential impact of offshore wind on tourism. There have been

¹ Calculated by a comparison of average estimated offshore wind LCOE in [Lazard's 2020 analysis](#) and [their 2016 analysis](#).

² https://www.energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2018/04/f50/offshore_eri_lbnl_format_final.pdf



several robust studies showing coastal tourism would benefit from offshore wind development.

America's first offshore wind facility off the coast of Block Island provides the most illustrative example. Wind turbines at Block Island are within three miles of the island's coast, much closer than proposed in Maryland. Even if larger turbines are used in Maryland, Block Island's wind farm's 3-mile proximity makes it much more visible from shore. Even so, extensive study by the University of Rhode Island³ found that the wind farm's impact on tourism has been positive. From page 24 of that study, "We find that the installation of the Block Island Wind Farm acted not as a tourist deterrent, but as tourist attractant." Additionally, recreational fishers flock to the site, as the turbines create artificial structures and habitat for various species of fish—including black sea bass. People visit the island just to see the turbines.

In conclusion, I want to again thank the PSC for your close attention to offshore wind and the economic and environmental benefits it can bring to Maryland. MAREC Action strongly supports approval of ORECs for the maximum 1,200 MW of offshore wind supported by Maryland state law.

Best regards,

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³ https://espis.boem.gov/final%20reports/BOEM_2018-068.pdf