

April 4, 2021

Representative Joseph J. Solomon, Jr.  
Chair, House Committee on Corporations  
Rhode Island State House  
Providence RI 02908

**Re: The Nature Conservancy supports H 6169 to close the 10 MW loophole.**

Dear Chairman Solomon and members of the House Committee on Corporations,

The Nature Conservancy supports House Bill 6169 and is grateful for the leadership of the sponsors: Representatives Speakman, Ruggiero, Cortvriend, Carson, Donovan, Tanzi, Ajello, Morales, and Potter. We respectfully ask you to pass this for a floor vote.

We urge the General Assembly to take action this year to provide the necessary direction to both protect our natural resources and build our clean energy future. The Nature Conservancy supports aggressive action to address climate change – including scaling up the transition to renewable energy to power our electric sector.

However, the expansion of Rhode Island's renewable energy laws, and especially of the net metering program, has had the unintended consequence of triggering significant clearing of Rhode Island forests. There is an urgent need to address the siting and environmental conflicts associated with large net metered projects.

This is a simple bill that would begin to do just that. When the net metering statute was originally drafted, it included a provision limiting system size to 10 MW (approximately 50 acres). However, this was before virtual net metering was a common practice, and the law did not specifically mention that multiple large systems could not be sited next to each other. As a result, in the virtual net metering program, systems are being sized much larger than 10 MW. Because clearing forest land is often the lowest price option for development, we are seeing these larger systems removing large tracts of forested land.

For comparison, the state's other major renewable energy program – the Renewable Energy Growth (REG) program – limits system size to 5 MW and does not allow for development on contiguous parcels.

This legislation would limit system size to 10 MW and eliminate co-location of multiple systems if together they exceed 10MW. However, it would allow for systems larger than 10 MW in "preferred" locations – rooftops, formerly-industrial sites, closed landfills, parking lots, etc – as defined by a report released in summer 2020 by the Office of Energy Resources in partnership with Synapse.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important legislation. It is a small, but important step in growing our clean energy economy in a way that preserves the value of our forested and open space.

Sincerely,



Sue AnderBois  
Climate and Energy Program Manager  
The Nature Conservancy