

Via Electronic Mail

March 2, 2021

The Honorable Joseph J. Solomon Jr.
Chair, House Committee on Corporations
Rhode Island General Assembly
Providence, RI 02903

Re: NECEC Testimony on House Bill No. 5327

Dear Chair Solomon:

The Northeast Clean Energy Council (“NECEC”) appreciates the opportunity to provide this written testimony in support of H5327, An Act Relating to Public Utilities and Carriers – Net Metering. NECEC urges the committee to act favorably upon this bill that would take a meaningful, if modest, step forward for community solar in Rhode Island. We thank the Committee for its consideration of the legislation and request that the proposal be advanced expeditiously this session.

NECEC is a clean energy business, policy, and innovation organization whose mission is to create a world-class clean energy hub in the Northeast, delivering global impact with economic, energy and environmental solutions. NECEC is the only organization in the Northeast that covers all of the clean energy market segments, representing the business perspectives of investors and clean energy companies across every stage of development. NECEC members span the broad spectrum of the clean energy industry, including clean transportation, energy efficiency, wind, solar, energy storage, microgrids, fuel cells, and advanced and “smart” technologies.

The primary purpose of community solar, which was passed into law in 2016 by the General Assembly, is to allow members of a community the opportunity to share the benefits of solar power even if they cannot install solar panels on their property. They can join together and buy power from clean energy projects while reducing their energy costs. While modest compared to many other states in the northeast, Rhode Island’s community solar program represents an important opportunity to bring the benefits of local, clean energy to a broader group of consumers.

As you are aware, the Office of Energy Resources (“OER”) has conducted a lengthy stakeholder process to consider an expansion of the Community Remote Net Metering Pilot, a process in which NECEC has been closely involved. The legislation currently before your Committee would provide a modest increase in the program that will provide market certainty, while incorporating certain program changes.

NECEC is particularly supportive of the proposal to require a percentage of subscribers to be low- and moderate-income. Equity must be a component of our entire suite of clean energy policies, as we ensure that *all* communities are benefitting from the transition to a clean energy economy.

NECEC is concerned, however, with the proposal for the capacity rights for Community Remote Net Metering projects to transfer to National Grid. Capacity is an increasingly important value stream for projects. If the capacity rights are transferred automatically to National Grid, projects may be prevented from pairing with energy storage now, or in the future. This is due to the way in which the regional grid operator, ISO New England, treats paired solar and energy storage projects. We encourage the removal of the section regarding capacity rights.

Overall, NECEC supports this legislation for an expansion of the community remote net metering program as community solar is not only important to ensure Rhode Island meets its climate goals, but also to ensure that all residents are able to partake in the clean energy economy.

Thank you in advance for considering this important proposal to continue Rhode Island's path towards a clean energy future. Please do not hesitate to contact either one of us with questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Jeremy McDiarmid
VP, Policy & Government Affairs



Sean Burke
Policy Associate

cc: Nicholas Ucci, Commissioner, Office of Energy Resources