

Bill H5580 Net Metering System Size Limits - Comments

Sol Power is a RI solar installation company based in Charlestown. These are our comments on bill H5580 regarding net metering system size limits.

We support increasing the size limit for small scale net metering solar systems to 25kW, regardless of usage. This allows RI homeowners to install enough solar to meet their electrical needs without removing the sizing restriction entirely. Residential solar adopters can electrify their homes while the 25kW limit prevents egregious system sizing.

There are a few key changes we suggest for the current language of the bill:

The Public Utilities Commission (PUC) ruled in docket 23-05-EL that excess net metering credits are determined based on annual usage. The current language is ambiguous and states “applicable billing period.” This needs to be updated to “applicable **annual** billing period” to clarify the PUC ruling.

Increasing the small system size limit to 25kW will alleviate headaches, complaints and delays for new solar adopters, installers, and the utility. Solar systems under 25kW in size contribute 3% of RI’s net metering credits. This change will allow a portion of those systems to nominally increase the number of solar panels installed. The net result is a negligible change in net metering costs. **The value of solar net metering should remain unchanged.** Changing the value of solar will retroactively anger 10,000 homeowners who have already invested in solar and create headaches for the future of the industry. **Wholesale rates should not be used for residential customer incentives**, they are designed for wholesale electricity suppliers. The current Last Resort Service rate is better suited for residential solar incentives because it is easier to explain and calculate.

Fixing the issues with small scale solar net metering system sizes would have a tremendous benefit for our business, the RI solar industry, solar adopters, and meeting our state’s climate goals. Currently, the utility will not allow all homeowners to offset their electricity usage with clean solar energy. This needs to be fixed by increasing the cap on small system sizes to 25 kW. It is important while doing so to update the law to match the PUC’s ruling on an annual billing period for credit calculations, and to leave the value of solar unchanged, since increasing the system size limit for small scale systems (3% of net metering) will have a negligible impact on the costs of net metering.

Sincerely,
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