portable solar testimony

SUBJECT: **Support for House Bill No. 7269** (Plug-in Solar)

FROM: Bill Ibelle, co-chair CARI Politics Team
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Dear Chairman Solomon and members of the committee:

I am writing in support of H7269 (Plug-in solar).

This bill should be a no-brainer because it helps us meet our climate goals with **no cost to the state,** and **no cost to ratepayers**. In fact, it will save participants more money on their electric bills than the governor's entire package of environmental program cuts combined.

But that's not all. This bill addresses a host of high-priority needs in addition to its environmental benefits. For example:

Equity

* Plug-in solar will democratize residential solar by providing an option that is within the financial reach of almost everyone. While rooftop solar produces far more electricity and saves consumers more money over time, the up-front cost for purchase and professional installation runs about $20,000-$30,000. In contrast, a plug-in unit costs between $400 and $1,000, depending on how much power you want. While it won't run an entire household, it will reduce energy bills substantially by reducing the amount of energy you have to buy from the grid.

Units pay for themselves in 3-5 years and last 20 years. An added advantage for renters is that they can take the units with them when they move.

Simplicity

With plug-in solar, you don't have to pay an electrician or specialized installation company. You just buy a certified unit in a retail store, plug it into a standard electric socket, and set up the panel. It takes about 15 minutes from beginning to end. It's that simple.

Safety

Plug-in solar has been used for years by more than a million households across Europe without any significant safety concerns. The proposed legislation requires Rhode Islanders to use units that have been safety-certified by the Underwriters Laboratory.

Economy

Plug-in solar will help lower electric rates by:
1) reducing our dependence on natural gas, which is the real cause of high rates, and
2) delaying the activation expensive "peaker plants" during periods of high demand. These peaker plants are far more expensive to run than any other form of energy, which is why they are only activated as a last resort.

Common sense

Prices for natural gas are rising, while the price of clean energy is falling. This price gap has been accentuated by the Iran war, which illustrates how vulnerable natural gas prices are to international events. It's no coincidence that Rhode Island has the highest dependence on natural gas in the country—and also has the nation's fourth-highest electric rates.

Energy of the future

Europe, China, India, and Brazil are all transitioning to clean energy because it's cheaper and because it's the energy of the future. Continuing to invest in energy produced by fossil fuels is investing in stage coaches after the invention of the automobile, or buying typewriter stocks in the age of computers. You can do it, but if that's your choice, you are sure to get left behind.