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Written Testimony of Christopher Phelps, Program Director
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Energy & Technology Committee

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Supporting HB 5788, An Act Establishing A Solar Roof Program

Senator Fonfara, Representative Fontana, and members of the committee: Environment Connecticut is pleased to offer this testimony supporting HB 5788. This legislation establishing a goal of ten thousand solar roof installations in Connecticut over the next four years would be a modest, yet important step towards a cleaner, renewable, home-grown energy future for Connecticut.

Our colleagues at Environment California recently worked to enact that state's legislation establishing a similar program on a much larger scale. That legislation, the "million solar roofs" bill is intended to spur California to invest \$3.2 billion over 10 years towards building a million solar roofs generating over 3,000 megawatts (MW) of power.

A similar, and proportional, commitment to solar roofs here in Connecticut might encompass a goal of 100,000 solar roofs in our state within a decade. Such a program would greatly help reduce our dependence on fossil fuels, diversify our energy resources, and help keep electric prices under control. Very importantly for our state, solar power is very effective in reducing peak electric demand because generation from solar systems is highest on hot summer afternoons when peak demand is at its highest.

Solar technologies have moved rapidly from serving niche markets to a mainstream energy source. With the right programs, policies, and incentives, Connecticut can increase the speed with which solar power becomes cost-competitive for Connecticut's consumers and businesses. Investing today in measures, such as HB5788, our state can encourage an increase in demand, and create incentives for the solar industry to create efficiencies through large-scale adoption of solar technology that will help reduce the price of solar technology, pushing down the cost of solar power in the long run.

Incentives such as this should include both commercial and residential solar markets, and be sustained for a period beyond the initial four-year period envisioned in HB 5788. They should include cost reduction controls such as mandatory incentive declines over time, and encourage efficient design and installation of solar systems.

Incorporating solar power in new construction is an important, cost-effective policy tool that should be incorporated in such legislation. Some estimates show that installing solar systems as part of new construction is as much as 33 percent cheaper than doing so on an

existing home or commercial building. Building with solar also allows architects to design buildings appropriately with simple steps such as orienting homes to maximize solar effectiveness, and ensuring landscaping provides shade without reducing the effectiveness of solar systems.

HB 5788 provides an excellent starting point for creating an expanded program to increase Connecticut's electric generation from solar power over the next decade. If our state committed to a program one tenth of scale of California's, we would install 100,000 solar roofs over the next decade that would generate as much as 300 megawatts of electricity. In the process of doing so, Connecticut would stimulate job creation in a competitive solar power industry serving the energy needs of Connecticut homeowners and businesses.

Environment Connecticut urges your support for HB 5788 as a significant step towards a cleaner, renewable, secure energy future for our state.

Sincerely,

Christopher Phelps
Environment Connecticut