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

Tuesday, March 10, 2009

Written testimony regarding HB 6635, An Act Concerning Solar Power

Representative Nardello, Senator Fonfara, and members of the Committee:

Environment Connecticut submits this testimony supporting Raised House Bill 6635. This legislation will implement policies to create a self-supporting solar power industry in Connecticut and result in the installation of at least 370 megawatts of solar electric generation serving homes, businesses and public buildings statewide within 10 years or less.

The Connecticut General Assembly has enacted some of the most visionary energy efficiency and clean energy public policies of any state in the nation. These include one of the earliest Renewable Portfolio Standards, energy efficient appliance standards, the regional greenhouse gas initiative, mandatory global warming caps, and clean energy incentives through the state clean energy fund. However, one area where Connecticut continues to fall short is in its support for widespread installation of solar power and the creation of a viable, self-supporting solar power industry.

States across the nation are "going big" with solar power. California was one of the leaders in this effort with its "million solar roofs initiative." After that program got off the ground in 2006, it took California less than two years to install more new solar power systems than in the previous ten years. That program's goal is to install 3,000MW of solar power by 2016. The bill before you today, HB 6635, represents a similar goal, scaled down to match the size of the state of Connecticut, to "go big" with solar in our state. (For more information on the California solar programs, please refer to <http://www.environmentcalifornia.org/energy/million-solar-roofs>.)

Solar power can play an important part in Connecticut's energy future. The 370MW target established in this bill represents approximately 5% of our state's peak electricity demand. By relying on solar power to meet this energy need, our state can reduce its reliance on the most expensive fossil fuel power plants, reduce emissions of global warming pollution in order to meet the mandatory caps in PA #08-98, and increase our use of clean, domestic energy sources.

At the same time, this legislation will create "green" jobs supporting the solar power industry here in Connecticut. In the Northeast, our neighbors in states like Massachusetts,

of solar power on public buildings while reducing electric costs for taxpayers through long-term power purchase agreements and similar mechanisms.

Solar Commercial Buildings

Connecticut's commercial and industrial rooftops provide enormous solar power potential. These large, flat, and sunny rooftops can accommodate the larger solar power systems that will enable the state's solar industry to achieve significant economies of scale and reduce the overall costs of solar power. HB 6635 creates a new solar renewable energy credit (SREC) market to incentivize the installation of over *185MW* of larger-scale solar power projects.

Utility Scale Solar

Incentives for large-scale solar power installations with capacities from 2MW to 20MW can quickly jump-start solar power development in Connecticut and create near-term jobs supporting such installations. HB 6635 proposes a modified policy based upon the existing Project 150 framework to support installation of *50MW* of utility-scale solar power capacity statewide.

Together, these provisions of this bill can create a viable, sustainable solar power industry serving Connecticut's families, businesses, schools, nonprofit organizations, municipalities and state government. In doing so, we can build at least 370MW of new solar power generation for our state and significantly increase our state's use of clean, renewable energy. In so doing, Connecticut can also support the creation of new "green jobs" to help our state's economic recovery and future growth.

On behalf of Environment Connecticut's statewide membership, I urge the committee to approve HB 6635.

Sincerely,

Christopher Phelps
Program Director
Environment Connecticut