

**Written Testimony of Susan Eastwood,
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Energy and Technology
Committee
March 10, 2009**

**Written Testimony in support of HB 6635, An Act Concerning Solar
Power**

My name is Susan Eastwood and I am speaking on House Bill 6635.

I am here representing the Ashford Clean Energy Task Force and Conversations for a Green CT, an environmental group active in Eastern CT.

Senator, Fonfara, Representative Nardello and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to address this important issue.

There are many reasons to support HB 6635. Increasing renewable energy sources in CT will create jobs and new business opportunities, it will reduce the need to build new dirty power plants and transmission lines, and may even lower electricity costs. Most important, it will help to clean up our air and improve the health of many of our residents. Since solar is the most abundant renewable energy source, I feel that it should be our first priority. Encouragement and support of solar is an investment in the future of our state.

Thanks to the Clean Energy Efficiency Fund solar rebate program CT now has over 900 residential solar installations, and requests for many more. Solar rebates for towns and businesses are also making a big impact. Our town of Ashford has applied for a grant to put in solar panels on our school and fire station. People in town are very excited about the chance to save on electricity costs and be a leader in renewable energy. But unfortunately the rebate program is out of money and those requests will be denied unless the legislature continues its good work in supporting solar rebates for residences and towns. I urge you to do so, by approving HB 6635 this session.

The Solar Lease Program is becoming more popular; many people have been looking into it, especially since the funding for solar rebates has dried up. But income limits on eligibility have kept interested people with

good sites from being able to do solar installations. A local resident wrote to me with her "solar story":

"We looked into leasing solar panels through the CT Solar Leasing program and we were resoundingly rejected by the installer last Thursday due to too much shade. My mom is looking into it for her house on top of Spring Hill, but may be just above the income requirements to be eligible to lease. I guess I would therefore like the income limits to be raised. It seems that appropriate locations should drive that market just as much as income limits. We fall within the income limits, but don't have the location. She has the location to actually generate solar and wind power to put back into the grid, but may not meet the income limits as they are currently set."

Because income limits are based on median income by town, they vary a great deal. In my own household case, our income is over the limits for Ashford but if we lived in the neighboring town, we would qualify for the program. Perhaps setting the limits by a state median income would be more reasonable. Renewing funds for the Solar Rebate program would also enable people with good sites and higher incomes to install solar systems.

There are many, my town, many of our residents, myself, who would like to be able to install solar or other types of renewable energy systems locally, but we really can't afford to do so without some help, especially in this economy. Please support HB 6635 and give renewable energy a chance in CT!

Thank you for you time and attention.

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