

**MARCH 11, 2013 TESTIMONY FROM SOLAR CONNECTICUT, INC. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
MICHAEL TRAHAN IN SUPPORT OF HB 6326 AN ACT CONCERNING PROPERTY TAX
ABATEMENTS FOR SOLAR THERMAL RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCE INSTALLATIONS.**

ABOUT SOLAR CONNECTICUT - SolarConnecticut (*SolarConn*) was formed as an education group in 2007 when there were less than a dozen solar installation companies operating in Connecticut. Today, there are over 100 solar electric and solar thermal (hot water heating) installer companies scattered across Connecticut authorized to offer state ratepayer-funded solar incentives to residential/commercial property owners. *SolarConn* promotes the use of solar energy through its work with installers, manufacturers, product developers, suppliers and those working in job training and education.

WHY WE SUPPORT HB 6326 - It is the policy of the state to promote and encourage the use of solar energy systems and to limit obstacles to their use. Therefore, the implementation of consistent, statewide standards to achieve timely and cost-effective installation of solar energy, such as the manner in which state-supported commercial solar installations are managed at the local level, is a matter of statewide concern.

Coordinated, statewide policies that lower the cost of solar, including a statewide tax policy will (1) increase the deployment of solar, (2) improve the state's ability to reach its clean energy goals, (3) create jobs in this state and, (4) shorten the period that ratepayer-funded solar incentives are necessary.

Currently, residential installations of solar thermal and solar electric systems are exempt from local property tax. HB 6326 would simply extend the same tax waiver currently enjoyed by residential property owners to commercial property owners. Several of the most progressive solar states have blanket policies (residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural) on property tax exemptions on solar including New Jersey, Nevada, Massachusetts, Arizona, and California -- the largest solar market in American.

PROPOSED CHANGES - There is conflicting language in the bill.

1. The bill title " ... **ABATEMENTS FOR SOLAR THERMAL RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCE INSTALLATIONS**" suggests the bill impacts only solar thermal installations. We don't believe that's the intent of the bill.
2. The RE technologies named in the proposed new section, " ... *Class I or nonresidential solar thermal renewable energy source* ... " is different than what the bill title states.
3. The statement of purpose reads, " ... *property taxes due for solar panels.*" We don't believe that's the intent of the bill.

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We suggest the intent of the bill is to affect ... "*Class I or nonresidential solar thermal renewable energy source.*" This was the definition determined by a bipartisan group of Planning and Development committee members last year and eventually approved by the 2012 state House 147-0.

Moving forward, there are competing RE property tax exemption bills in play this session. We ask that the Planning & Development committee work to merge the technology definition in HB 6326 with the language already adopted by the Energy committee last week in SB 203.

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