

March 4, 2014

Sen. Bob Duff, Chairman, & Rep. Lonnie Reed, Chairwoman
Committee on Energy and Technology, Room 3900
Connecticut General Assembly
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Sen. Duff & Rep. Reed:

I am submitting comments in response to the proposed Act Concerning Shared Clean Energy Facilities (HB 5412) referred to the Energy and Technology Committee last month. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the proposed legislation.

We are gratified by this effort to make clean, sustainable energy available to all Connecticut residents and to build on forward-thinking legislation such as PA 1180, which in 2011 established the nation's first "green bank" and the Clean Energy Finance and Investment Authority (CEFIA).

Next Step Living is a five-year old energy solutions provider based in Boston with 125 employees in our New Haven office. As a mission-driven company, we believe that solar adoption at the residential level is an important step towards mitigating the impact of climate change. We are very much in favor of the goal to allow for the use of shared clean-energy facilities in the State.

We support HB 5412 and submit the following comments for your consideration:

Equal-Opportunity Access.

We are strong proponents of community, or shared, solar. The data shows that 80 percent of consumers that want to "go solar" cannot do so for a variety of reasons. Those reasons include, among others, multi-family unit living, home orientation, roof shading and renter status. We believe that community solar will enhance consumer choice and provide access and more social equality for that 80 percent of the market. We strongly support efforts to increase access to solar PV ownership for the entire population and to rapidly increase that access for those residents, who by no fault of their own, do not have access to solar PV.

**Diversification.**

Energy is a lot like a portfolio. It should be diversified. It's clear that New England and the State of Connecticut need more diversification: Coal and nuclear power plants are closing. We're beholden to natural gas, and because of that, consumer costs are driven by the commodity price of natural gas. Late last year in Massachusetts, for example, NSTAR, a Northeast Utilities company, sought and received a 30-percent increase in what it could charge consumers because of an anticipated usage spike due to cold weather. This prolonged winter has boosted the cost of natural gas by almost an order of magnitude.

Proposed Modification.

Since we believe providing consumers with access to solar power is critically important for the reasons of equal opportunity and diversification outlined above, we want to ensure that that access is meaningful, that the market can support consumer adoption. To that end, we recommend a change to section (1)(D):

(1) "Shared clean energy facility" means a Class I renewable energy source, as defined in section 16-1 of the general statutes, that (A) is served by an electric distribution company, as defined in section 16-1 of the general statutes, (B) is within the same electric distribution company service territory as the individual billing meters for subscriptions, (C) has a nameplate capacity rating of three megawatts or less, and (D) *has at least two subscribers*;

We believe that developers must dedicate part of their system to the residential market, so we ask that "at least two subscribers" be changed to "no single user has more than 10 kw."

Thank you for your consideration and for your efforts.

Sincerely,

Geoff Chapin
CEO