



MARCH 04, 2014 TESTIMONY FROM MICHAEL TRAHAN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF SOLAR CONNECTICUT, INC., IN SUPPORT OF CGA H.B. 5412 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING SHARED CLEAN ENERGY FACILITIES.

Solar Connecticut is the state's business and education association working to support policies that encourage awareness of solar power and promote a sustainable solar energy workforce.

In 2013, a little more than 1,500 residential solar electric systems were installed in Connecticut. That's twice the number of systems installed from the year before, and more than the previous three years combined. Today, nearly 4,500 Connecticut homeowners have installed solar electric systems incentivized through the electric ratepayer clean energy surcharge.

The reasons for the growing interest in solar electric is [1] the CGA's 2011 restructuring of solar incentives, [2] a growing number of solar electric installer businesses, [3] innovative - first in the nation - policies developed by the Clean Energy Finance and Investment Authority (CEFIA), and [4] most importantly, a dramatic drop in the cost of residential solar electric power.

In simple terms, the average solar electric system installed today is 50-percent larger than systems installed three years ago and costs 25-30 percent less than what homeowners were paying three years for those larger systems. 50 percent more electric power for 25-30 percent less cost.

It's now clear that the ratepayer-funded incentive program first launched in 2004 has done what the architects of the program intended ... reduced installed solar electric costs. The ratepayer surcharge has been an excellent investment for the electric ratepayer.

This success has occurred despite a solar electric market limited to a minority of electric ratepayers. According to the federal National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) the majority of ratepayers - as many as 75 percent- are not good candidates for solar because they live in apartment buildings or their home rooftops are either too small, too old, too shaded, too cluttered with mechanicals, or simply doesn't face the sun.

These ratepayers have paid into the clean energy surcharge for years, but current law prohibits them from banding together to co-own an off-site solar system and paid for the electricity generated there that's uploaded to the electric grid.

Electric power companies in leading clean energy states are voicing support for shared solar policies as a way to make solar available to all their customers. Policy makers there support the concept of helping homeowners become more independent and sustainable in meeting their own energy needs. We feel the same should occur in Connecticut. After all, this is the purpose of the now 10-year old solar electric incentive program.

We've reached the point where installed price and consumer interest are now in line. What's left is for the appropriate regulatory policy that makes solar available for all ratepayers who pay for incentives.

H.B. No. 5412 is a proposal patterned after a new law in the District of Columbia. As a stated leader in clean energy, we ask that Connecticut lawmakers adopt similar legislation currently in place in D.C. and other leading clean energy states.