

**Roger Smith, Co-Director Clean Water Action CT  
Energy and Technology Committee March 4, 2014**

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 5412:  
An Act Concerning Shared Clean Energy Facilities**

Clean Water Action is a national environmental non-profit with Connecticut members dedicated to protecting human health. In Connecticut we have worked on energy-related issues since 1997. We are in strong support of new policy to allow residents to collectively share and own renewable energy systems.

Connecticut has a number of policies and programs to promote locally sited clean energy, but based on our experience with solar outreach in CT, through no fault of their own most residents are unable to participate themselves. Barriers to solar may include having trees on a neighboring property or an east-west roof orientation. Renters have no property on which to install a clean energy system. Some may not have the means to install more than a small system, which by itself may not be financially viable.

The promise of shared clean energy facilities is to overcome these barriers by creating a billing arrangement by which residents can band together and install a renewable system at one location and credit their portion of the electricity generated against their electric bill. It is more cost-effective to install several large systems rather than many smaller ones, and this section would enable ratepayers and system subscribers to receive more benefits for less cost.

**There is legal and regulatory precedent for this throughout our region.** On December 1, 2009 Massachusetts DPU finalized regulations as authorized by the legislature in the 2008 Green Communities Act. The DPU regulations allow municipal government buildings, low-income housing and allow members of the general public (including renters) to benefit. Schedule Z allows for distributed net metering of private solar energy generation within the same utility load zone.

We have been fortunate to be able to meet with the town of **Harvard, MA**, which thanks to this law, now has a shared solar facility in place. The Harvard Solar Garden began as a 300KW system sited on unused land in the town of Harvard and collectively owned and built by subscribing residents. It is currently looking to expand by adding participants throughout the utility's service territory, which would lower costs for all.

We met with Harvard to investigate the feasibility of implementing a similar model in Connecticut, as several CT towns approached us with interest. This legislation would allow similar projects to go forward and unlock clean energy "for the rest of us."