



**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2015 TESTIMONY TO THE ENERGY & TECHNOLOGY
COMMITTEE SUBJECT MATTER HEARING FROM SUNGEVITY, INC. IN SUPPORT OF
PROPOSED H.B. NO. 6435, AN ACT STREAMLINING THE PERMITTING PROCESS FOR
THE INSTALLATION OF SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC SYSTEMS.**

Founded in 2007, Sungevity is a global solar energy provider focused on making it easy and affordable for homeowners to benefit from solar power. Serving customers across 12 US states, the District of Columbia and in Australia and the Netherlands, Sungevity has grown its business by partnering with local installers and subcontractors, creating local employment in each of the geographies it services. To date, Sungevity has installed over 10,000 systems for a total of over 51 megawatts of deployed residential capacity worldwide.

Solar has emerged as a platform to provide for consumer choice in energy and has experienced tremendous growth across the country. In the first half of 2014, a new solar project was installed in the U.S. every 3.2 minutes. If growth continues at its current pace, the American solar industry could be installing a system every minute and twenty seconds by 2016.

Sungevity emphatically supports HB-6435.

By improving the efficiency of solar permitting statewide, HB-6435 will help lower the cost of solar installations and further expand the accessibility of solar to more Connecticut homeowners who want to control their electricity bills and generate their own clean energy. In addition, making solar energy more affordable will help the state reach its renewable energy and greenhouse gas reduction goals, and create more local jobs.

The price of solar hardware has largely leveled out, making solar 'soft costs' the greatest opportunity in reducing the cost for homeowner's to go solar. Permitting is one of the most significant contributors to these solar soft costs. The U.S. Department of Energy's SunShot Initiative was specifically developed to address solar soft costs, and Connecticut's Green Bank has received funding to undertake initiatives to drive these costs down in the state. Through a multi-stakeholder process soliciting the input of building departments and officials



across the state, the CT Rooftop Solar PV Permitting Guide was developed as a primary product of this initiative, and is the foundation of HB-6435.

Currently, the permit process for residential solar installations varies, sometimes dramatically, from town to town. Cumbersome local permitting rules artificially inflate the cost of residential solar installations. In terms of fees alone, homeowners in one town can pay upwards of \$500 more to get their permit compared to a homeowner in a neighboring town for identical systems. The National Renewable Energy Laboratory estimates that improved permitting practices at the local level will save between \$1,500 - \$3,500 per solar home when factoring in the labor and time required just to pull permits. These are significant cost savings that will make solar power more affordable especially in lower income sections of the state.

The state of California, the nation's largest solar market, recently adopted a streamlined permitting law for residential solar projects. Industry and municipal advocates say the new law will create efficiencies to not only handle solar applications, but in so doing, clear up the backlog and allow for more efficient processing of other permit applications as well.

The cities and counties that have taken the time to streamline their permitting report a 50% decrease in the amount of staff time needed to process the permit applications, according to CalSEIA, a California solar industry group. This frees up more time to spend with truly complication application rather than 'cookie-cutter' small residential rooftop solar systems. This saves money, but it also allows for better customer service not only for the solar industry but for all other industries seeking a permit.

HB-6435 is modeled around the best practices and principles of successful legislation in other solar markets and the recent frameworks and recommendations developed in Connecticut. HB-6435 will help ensure safety and consumer protections while allowing local governments to more quickly and efficiently issue permits. This will create efficiencies and costs-savings on both sides of the permitting desk, helping to create more solar jobs in Connecticut, stimulate the economy and contribute to the state reaching its clean energy goals.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.



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