BEFREE SOLAR

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THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2015

TESTIMONY FROM NICOLE WALDEN IN SUPPORT OF PROPOSED S.B. NO. 730 AN ACT PROHIBITING HOMEOWNER OR CONDOMINIUM ASSOCIATIONS FROM INTERFERING WITH OR PREVENTING INSTALLATION OF SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC SYSTEMS AND PROPOSED H.B. NO. 6435 AN ACT STREAMLINING THE PERMITTING PROCESS FOR THE INSTALLATION OF SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC SYSTEMS.

My name is Nicole Walden and I an Employee of BeFree Solar. Our company is based in Madison, CT where we employ 9 workers.

We have a great deal of experience in the state doing over 300 solar installations so far.

Permitting is perhaps the worst part of a entire solar installation process.

1. We need a state wide permit for solar
2. We need a fixed fee statewide for all solar projects
3. The fee should be based on the 30-60 minutes that towns spend on a permit and inspection.
4. Inspections should allow for video of the site to be used to aid the town in completing its job.
5. Everything regarding permits should be online - fast - and easy.

Right now we have towns charging 2-4% of a value they make up for a solar system installation. This is a tax, not a permit fee. It is far from the cost to the town to check a solar installation. Homeowners are paying $0 up front for a solar system now and so they are becoming less and less likely to install solar when they learn that a permit costs them $1000 to $2000. This is on top of a utility fee of $100 to $1000. We have to go to towns 4 to 6 times (North Haven) and bring various documents in paper in duplicate or triplicate. We are not installing a nuclear power plant, It is a simple generator, and the process towns have for permits is very very very difficult. It is costing homeowners as much as $4000 to to all our permit paperwork and we are simply passing this cost onto a homeowner.

Private condo owners and gated communities should never be allowed to bar a homeowner from installing solar. They are all contributing to the fund and they should be allowed to use it without legal expense.

I do not believe that rebates should go to homeowners who install solar panels on their own because this will lead to many systems that are improperly installed and ultimately lead to fires.

Sincerely,

Nicole Walden

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