



VOTE SOLAR

**Connecticut General Assembly
Before the Joint Committee on Energy and Technology**

Oral Testimony of Vote Solar

Regarding SB 224 – An Act Concerning the Capacity and Criteria for Certain Renewable Energy Generation Facilities, HB 5427 – An Act Concerning the Shared Clean Energy Facility Pilot Program and HB 5309 – An Act Concerning Facilitation of the Municipal Residential Solar Application Process.

Sean Garren, Regional Manager - Northeast

March 1, 2016

Thank you Senator Doyle and Representative Reed, Members of the Committee:

I am here today to testify **in opposition** to Raised Bill SB 224, **in opposition** to Raised Bill HB 5427 and **in support** of HB 5309. I will try to be brief.

Quick background on Vote Solar - we are a non-profit, non-partisan grassroots organization with members throughout the U.S. including thousands in Connecticut. Since 2002, we've worked in more than 20 states to remove market barriers and implement policies needed to bring solar into the mainstream.

We oppose SB 224, because it would endanger the competitive market for renewable energy development in the state. We appreciate efforts to increase distributed renewable energy in Connecticut, but feel this bill will lead to a weaker market in the long run. The electric distribution companies ('the utilities') have an inherent advantage over private renewable energy developers due to their control of the electric distribution grid, their guaranteed return on investments and their access to cheap financing. These advantages could lead to private developers backing out of Connecticut's market, thereby reducing customer's choices and hurting the long term growth of the market.

In addition, allowing the utilities to develop and own their own distributed generation, like solar, could create a perverse incentive with regard to their working with private renewable energy developers. Since these private developers would be directly competing with the utilities for market share, this would encourage the utilities to undermine the viability of other projects. Given utility control over interconnection, customer historical data and other integral processes, this could be a dangerous incentive.

We oppose HB 5427, because it would further delay the shared clean energy facility pilot program and drive up the cost of the shared clean energy facilities. While we are grateful to

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the Committee for their continued efforts to make shared clean energy a reality in Connecticut, HB 5427 would push back the implementation of the pilot program by several months and render the program overly costly. The stipulation that utilities only be required to compensate shared clean energy facilities for their valuable clean energy for no more than 15 years would lead to developers having to recover costs and deliver electric bill savings to customers during only the first half of the facility's lifetime. This will make project financing and sales either impossible or quite expensive, thereby drastically driving up the cost of the program and skewing the results of the pilot.

We remain supportive of learning from the extensive study of the Connecticut Academy of Science and Engineering (CASE) and the example of states like Massachusetts, New York, Colorado, Minnesota and California, rather than setting up a small and lengthy pilot program. The CASE study and these state examples both prove the incredible value brought by a statewide shared solar program through increased equity in taxpayer and ratepayer funded renewable energy programs, expanded clean energy development and local economic benefits, such as increased local taxes, electric bill savings and well-paying jobs.

Finally, we support HB 5309, because it will help cities and towns across the state to more effectively and efficiently permit solar development and lower costs for solar projects. The effort put forward by solar companies and State Building Inspector Joe Cassidy to draft this bill has led to an admirable path forward through a complicated set of local, state and private interests.

I thank the Committee for continuing their support of solar development and look forward to working with you to build a competitive and thriving solar market in Connecticut.

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