

**Testimony of Susan Eastwood, Chair, Ashford Clean Energy Task Force
Before the Energy and Technology Committee on SB 334, Minor Revisions to
the Energy and Technology Related Statutes and HB 5427, AAC the Shared
Clean Energy Facility Pilot Program
March 10, 2016**

To Senator Doyle, Representative Reed and other members of the Energy and Technology Committee,

My name is Susan Eastwood; I am a resident of Ashford and the Chair of the Ashford Clean Energy Task Force. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of SB 334, An Act Concerning Minor Revisions to the Energy and Technology Related Statutes, and in opposition to HB 5427, as it now stands.

Solar is growing quickly in the U.S. and will be a major source of energy in near future. Connecticut is no exception. Over 15,000 CT homes now have solar panels – a 50% increase in 2015 alone! Solar saves residents money, adds jobs to the economy and benefits the planet. The average Connecticut home that goes solar has the climate impact of planting 155 trees per year, not burning 3 tons of coal, or not driving 18,000 miles per year.

Despite federal and state incentives and leasing programs that make solar economical attractive, 80% of CT residents cannot put solar on their roofs. Their roofs may be shaded; they may rent houses, or live in an apartment. Shared or community solar is a sensible way to make solar available to all. Shared solar is a large solar array that provides power for many “subscribers” who each purchase a portion of the energy produced and the savings from solar are credited towards their bill. Anyone with an electric bill could benefit from solar power.

Renewables are the wave of the future. The climate change goals set by the Paris agreement are intended to hold the rise in temperature to below 2 degrees C, and will require the cooperation of all countries in the world. Connecticut has set a similar goal of reducing carbon emissions by 80% below 2001 levels by 2050. This means, simply put, that we must change the way we provide Connecticut homes and businesses with the energy we need to maintain our quality of life. The Governor’s Council on Climate Change is now working to plot the path to meeting this goal.

The Solutions Project (<http://thesolutionsproject.org/infographic/#ct>) models how 100% of Connecticut’s energy needs can be met using renewable energy sources by the year 2050 through combined methods as well as conservation. In this model, residential solar provides just 4% of this energy, while shared solar provides a whopping 41%. To move towards this goal by 2050, just 34 years off now, we need to get moving.

Twelve states, including New York and Massachusetts, have shared solar in place and they are developing their capacity now. Those states are now attracting millions of dollars in solar investments – while Connecticut lags behind, it is leaving these resources on the table. Last year, a bill was introduced in the CT State Legislature which would have made the changes to the

electrical billing laws necessary to enable shared solar in our state but the Energy and Technology Committee chose to move cautiously, approving just two pilot programs to test the waters. As you well know, one allows 2mW to be developed in UI territory and the other allows 4mW system in Eversource area. Unfortunately, the pilot program is already behind schedule. In my opinion, the pilots are unnecessary because there is plenty of evidence that it can work from the other states where it is in practice now.

SB 334 is a straightforward bill aimed at clarifying the language for the pilot program and allowing it to move forward. Assuming that the pilot is to continue, this is a needed fix to enable it to move forward. HB 5427 has the same good intentions but is flawed by the 15 year time frame, which may cause the financing models not to work. I concur with the many others who have given testimony on the need to lengthen the time period to 25 years or more. It only makes sense to make it correspond with the expected life of the solar panels, and to be consistent with how most solar financing plans work. Therefore, I support SB 334 and oppose HB 5427 unless the time frame is changed.

But fixing the pilot doesn't really fix the problem, or move us forward towards our goals. We know that shared solar works. Why not skip the pilot, and enact a full shared solar program so everyone can access the benefits of solar power?

This year, the E&T Committee has a chance to reconsider and either clarify the issues causing the delay or abandon the pilots in favor of moving ahead with shared solar now. I urge this Committee to approve shared solar now so Connecticut can continue to be a leader in renewable technology, can grow new businesses, and can meet our climate change goals by encouraging clean energy in our state.

The future of solar is our future. It is in your hands.

Thank you.

Susan Eastwood
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