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Martin Mador, Legislative Chair

Committee on Energy and Technology  
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Testimony in Support, Only if Expanded, of  
SB 394 AAC Virtual Net Metering and Certain Zero or Low Emission Generation Projects

I am Martin Mador, 130 Highland Ave., Hamden, CT 06518. I am the volunteer Legislative Chair for the Connecticut Chapter of the Sierra Club. I hold a Masters of Environmental Management degree from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.

Virtual net metering is a significant tool which addresses using renewable energy projects to improve the financial condition of Connecticut towns. It unifies the energy performance of all energy consumption in all town buildings, and allows towns to offset the cost of grid energy with energy generated by renewable energy installs. Maximizing VNM is a win all around.

However, Connecticut towns have not been able to take advantage of renewable energy projects through virtual net metering because of an artificial cap on the number of these projects. Many towns ready to proceed with these projects have been prevented by the cap, **which serves no public purpose whatsoever**. It does protect those focused entirely on “cost shifting”, while ignoring the manifold benefits to us all of maximizing renewable energy.

We note that there is no legislation in 2016 calling for a Value of Solar study.

SB 394 addresses this issue. However, it does not remove the cap. It simply enlarges it somewhat. Only the stranded municipal projects which could meet an April 1 application deadline, with permits in hand, would qualify. This deadline is actually three months before the effective date of the bill.

We must remember that lowering costs to a town is certainly good for all electric ratepayers in the town. This provides an incentive to towns to install renewable energy projects which would participate in VNM ratesetting.

We clearly understand that we must move to renewable energy sources. We must do this as fast as possible to meet our promises and goals to address climate change. We must do this as an effective tool to reduce energy costs. This is especially true as the cost of renewable energy installs has plummeted in recent years. The cap must be removed. Establish a cost/value of solar. Reserve the right to amend it over time. **But do not use this as an excuse to delay the program.**

So SB 394 is a work in progress, but in no way nearly enough. The draft language must be amended to eliminate these caps.