



**Testimony for Public Hearing
Committee on Energy & Technology
Re S.B. No. 9 An Act Concerning Connecticut's Energy Future**

March 1, 2018

**Mother Mary Jennifer Carroll
Superior General of the Daughters of Mary of the Immaculate Conception
314 Osgood Avenue
New Britain, CT 06053**

Last month we celebrated the ribbon cutting for a solar system that provides power to five of the buildings at our campus in New Britain, CT. The large crowd included many members of our religious community, local and state officials, friends of our Institution, and partners of many kinds.

Getting to completion on our solar project required an immense investment of time, labor, expertise, and money. A total of 3,668 solar panels were installed by our contractor EcoSolar on three fields. As a former science teacher, I am proud that we are part of the effort to generate cleaner electricity in our state and our world. As Pope Francis intoned in his encyclical, it is imperative that we take care of our common home. But I have to admit that the earliest spark of this project was economic.

When staring at very challenging financial circumstances, I asked my colleague Karen Kulak to help us find money and new ways of saving. Karen did some investigation and discovered the utilities' Zero Emissions Renewable Energy Credit (ZREC) program. This program would provide a fixed stream of income that would lower the cost of going solar and increase our savings—if we could find a way to go solar.

As many of you know, solar technology requires a significant upfront investment that pays for itself over time. Getting over that hurdle was one of the key challenges for our project. We are grateful for the many hands that made light work of completing our ambitious project. The hands I must highlight especially today are those of the staff at the Connecticut Green Bank. Without their dedicated work to secure financing for the system, we would not have been able to move ahead. The total investment for our 1.2 megawatt solar project was \$2.8 million. The staff of the Green Bank worked over many months to ensure our project would be fully funded. The system is now built and we are on track to save approximately \$1.3 million in electricity expenses over the next 20 years.

Believe me that we have urgent needs for these savings. They will support the residential and care programs for the elderly and for children. They will help us to provide shelter and solace for victims of domestic violence. They will help lower expenses for the Hospital for Special Care's research and education facility. They will also help offset the reductions in funding we will receive from the State and other sources to provide critical health care and housing.

We consider ourselves fortunate to have been served by the Connecticut Green Bank. Their work and their resources enabled us to go solar, save money, and support those in our society most in need. It was discouraging to see our legislators succumb last year to a false conflict between supporting clean energy and meeting our society's and state's most fundamental needs. Pope Francis spoke to this important issue in the *Laudato Si'*: "We are not faced with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combatting poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature."

The people and institutions working passionately to help others access cleaner and more affordable sources of energy must be supported even—and especially—in these difficult times. What good are caring hands if they are tied?

Supporting clean energy projects and investment in the state helps us to care for our planet, drive economic growth and create jobs, and create savings that our residents and institutions can put toward their highest priorities. Other Connecticut residents and institutions deserve the same opportunity we at the Daughters of Mary were given to take advantage of clean energy options. We hope that our legislators have the wisdom to restore funding to the institutions like the Connecticut Green Bank that make such projects possible.