

Honorable members of the Energy and Technology Committee,

I live in Willimantic and am a member of the town of Windham Energy and Sustainability Committee. I am also an Emeritus Professor of Nutritional Sciences at UConn. As a scientist, I am well aware of climate crisis and the requirement that we take bold steps now to avert its worst consequences. I therefore write in support of HB 5232, HB 5231, and HB 5052. These bills can help our state transition towards diminished greenhouse gas emissions, enable a cleaner energy mix and provide economic opportunities.

By establishing uniform tax treatment for solar projects and requiring community benefits for more renewable energy projects, HB 5232 incentivizes investment in a clean future. The bill also simplifies application and approval processes that have been keeping us from reaching Connecticut's full solar potential, especially for solar canopies. Finally, it will create jobs and infrastructure in the communities that need them most by encouraging installation of significant residential solar projects each year and prioritizing low-income residents and distressed municipalities.

HB 5231 seeks to help reach Connecticut's significant untapped solar potential as highlighted by the Green Bank. I fully support these measures to expand the pace and scale of renewable growth, including maximizing federal funds by temporarily suspending solar program caps, and allowing oversized commercial or industrial rooftop solar projects to use a netting tariff. Please suspend the caps for longer to keep up this momentum.

Please consider modifying the study provision in section 3 of HB 5231 to reauthorize the community solar program now and increase the cap to 100MW per year, instead of waiting for a PURA study. We have the information now required for action. The SCEF program provides direct bill credits to low-income households throughout the state, ensuring equitable distribution of the benefits of renewable energy.

I support HB 5052 to increase use of solar power on Connecticut's school buildings wherever feasible, and to make it easier to pay for such projects.

Solar energy is crucial to our future and can help our local economies. I ask that the committee support these three bills and consider others that round out Connecticut's renewable future with interconnection investments, wind power, and storage targets and incentives. I hope you also put forward bills that support ultra-efficient heating and cooling technologies and home weatherization programs that cut climate pollution and family energy costs.

Sincerely,

Hedley Freake  
327 South Street, Willimantic CT 06226.