

March 11, 2020

Honorable Brad Roae  
Majority Chair  
151 East Wing  
PO Box 202006  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2006

Honorable Robert F. Matzie  
Minority Chair  
121 Irvis Office Building  
PO Box 202016  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2016

Subject: HB-531 PA Community Solar Access Bill  
Position: SUPPORT

Dear Representative Roae and Representative Matzie,

My name is Frances Yuhas. I have been working in the solar industry in Maryland since 2005. I am a project manager representing TurningPoint Energy (TPE) and hold a chair position for the Coalition for Community Solar Access (CCSA).

TurningPoint Energy has been successful in developing community solar projects in Maryland to support the Community Solar Pilot Program. We would like to make similar investments in Pennsylvania by participating in the job creation and economic vitality of the Commonwealth that Community Solar provides. The benefits to electricity customers and the wider community are exponential.

In addition to supporting local employment, which typically equates to about 75 jobs per project in the form of consultants, engineers, construction, and related workers, we have also provided direct monetary investment in the communities where our projects reside. Amongst the non-profit organizations that provide needed services to the local community, the services provided by the organizations include:

- supporting families of the local police department through a scholarship fund,
- educating the community in close proximity to the projects through the local high school,
- community investment and leadership fund, and
- assisting rural and urban low to moderate income families in crisis,
- educating and advocating for the homeless and poor.

I have my own 3.2 kW rooftop solar array that has been operating flawlessly for the past 15 years. I joined the solar industry in its infancy in 2005 because I sincerely believe clean energy

is a wise investment and will greatly support initiatives to provide all electricity users with access to clean, competitively priced at the retail level, solar energy. Electricity users can choose to subscribe to it or not.

I am currently actively participating on two Solar Energy Siting Task Forces in Maryland so I am respectful of the perspectives of landowners, the farming community, neighbors, sustainability proponents and the very personal topic of landowner rights. I would apply this experience and consideration to the community solar project development process to Pennsylvania.

### **Community Solar facilities benefit residents who use electricity**

Community solar projects are designed to make solar energy available to all residents who cannot access solar energy by installing solar on their roofs or yards because they do not own their homes or have other obstacles like poor roof configuration, inappropriate orientation or shading from nearby trees or other buildings. Fifty to 75% of American households are not in a position to host a solar array of their own<sup>1, 2</sup>. It is fair to allow all people to have that same opportunity as I have to access solar generated electricity. If enacted, HB531, the PA Community Solar Access Bill will provide locally-sourced solar energy to PECO, PPL, West-Penn, Med-Ed, Pennsylvania Electric and Duquesne Light residential retail customers who choose to subscribe and also have the opportunity to save on their electric bills.

Community Solar projects are not industrial scale. They require less than 50 acres of land depending on the configuration. As an example, using a small portion of land of an existing farm for a solar energy project would still allow for farming to continue on the remaining acreage. *Solar generation can be a compatible use.*

Voting in favor of HB531 will directly support initiatives of the State's Alternative Energy Portfolio Standard with no negative fiscal impact – a win-win for all Pennsylvania residents. It is an exciting time with opportunity for Pennsylvanians to take advantage of choices in electricity supply options. In parallel, TurningPoint Energy and other developers can contribute to a robust economy by making a long-term investment commitment of development dollars and personnel to the state to build a continuing business.

### **The solar industry will support good jobs in Pennsylvania**

The solar industry employs more than 4,219 men and women in Pennsylvania<sup>3</sup>. The Community Solar industry will add to this number considerably. A community solar project will

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<sup>1</sup> Vote Solar, *Community Solar Checklist*, <https://votesolar.org/policy/policy-guides/shared-renewables-policy/community-solar-checklist/>

<sup>2</sup> NREL, *Community Solar*, <https://www.nrel.gov/state-local-tribal/community-solar.html>

<sup>3</sup> Solar Energy Industry Association, <https://seia.org/state-solar-policy/pennsylvania-solar>

employ approximately 75 or more people throughout the development process from design through construction and operation and maintenance. Disciplines include engineering consultants, civil and electrical engineering, real estate attorneys, construction engineers and installation technicians as well as many trades people and related services. However, very early in the development process I meet with the local community and civic leaders as well as township (or borough, village, etc.) staff to introduce myself to learn of the staff's experience with and/or receptiveness to hosting a community solar project in their municipality. I like to understand any concerns that they may have or any uncertainty about what they can expect during the development process. Similarly, I like to familiarize myself with that municipality's discretionary permitting process while providing confidence that I prefer to work under a collaborative approach to ensure our development process is respectful of the municipality's expectations, protocol and processes. This collaborative approach has proven to be successful due to the transparency it brings to the process from both parties.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that you support and vote in favor of PA Community Solar Access Bill, HB531.

Thank you,

Frances Yuhas  
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Member Coalition for Community Solar Access (CCSA)