



October 22, 2019

To: Senator Argall, Chair of the Senate Majority Policy Committee

Dear Senator Argall,

Thank you for giving Coalition for Community Solar Access the opportunity to discuss renewable energy policies in Pennsylvania. Coalition for Community Solar Access is a national Coalition of businesses and non-profits working together to expand customer choice. Our mission is to empower all American households and businesses that seek home grown energysources through community solar. We work with customers, utilities, local stakeholders, allies and policymakers to develop and implement best practices that ensure community solar programs provide a win-win-win solution. The solution begins with the customer. Our members are solar industry leaders and are engaged at every step of development ensuring these best practices are not theoretical but are applied and practiced. Many of our members are headquartered in Pennsylvania, and other members are interested in investing in our Commonwealth.

Community Solar 101

Community solar refers to local solar facilities shared by multiple community subscribers that receive credits on their electric bills for their share of the power produced. Community solar provides homeowners, renters and businesses equal access to the economic benefits of solar generation regardless of the physical attributes or ownership of their property. Today, almost 50% of American household and businesses do not have access to solar because they rent, lease, live in multi-tenant buildings, don't have the financial means to invest in residential solar, or have a roof or property that cannot host a solar array¹. Community solar provides anyone who pays an electric bill access to solar energy without the need to install a solar system on site. It expands access to solar for all, provides energy choice for customers and diversifies our energy generation sources with home grown energy. This ultimately builds a strong, distributed, and more resilient electric grid.

Economic Benefits

There are 40 states that have at least one Community Solar Facility online and 19 states (CA, CO, CT, DE, HI, IL, MA, MD, ME, MN, NC, NH, NJ, NY, OR, RI, SC, VT, and WA and Washington, D.C) that have passed legislation to enable community solar facilities. This has created thousands of jobs nationwide and is spurring local economic investments in each of those states. Currently, Senator Scavello has introduced SB705 and Representative Kaufer has a companion bill in the house, HB531, which will enable Community Solar projects in the Commonwealth. When these bills pass, Pennsylvania will see a new stream of corporate investments from the solar industry. One of CCSA's partner organizations, Vote Solar, and the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) modeled the economic benefits of the legislation and found \$706.4 million in local economic benefits if 500MW of Community Solar was built in Pennsylvania. This does not include any local taxes that will be collected from these projects. On average, the Commonwealth will see just over \$40 million per year for the next 25 years, the minimum life of a solar facility. The Jobs and Economic Development Investment or JEDI model looked at direct,

¹ [National Renewable Energy Laboratory](#)

indirect, and induced impacts to employment, earnings and economic impacts for the Commonwealth. The economic output refers to the value of production in the state or local economy.

Innovation and Skilled Labor Pipelines

There would be a 26% increase in solar jobs within the first 5 years and over 1,050 of those jobs will be sustained, full-time positions, paying an average wage of \$33/ hour. This will create \$316.6 million in economy stimulating earnings for Pennsylvanians. According to a report by Penn State's College of Agriculture Science on Population Trends and Employment, we are experiencing both a decline in population and job opportunities in the rural counties of our state². Many of the new solar jobs created by enabling Community Solar legislation will be in non-urban communities, where the community solar facilities will be built and maintained. With 40% of employers finding it difficult to hire qualified staff³, there are numerous opportunities to develop a pipeline of innovated and skilled labor in non-urban communities with solar technologies.

Act 58 and Emerging Technologies

Last year, Act 58 was enacted, giving the PUC statutory authority to approve alternative rate mechanisms for electric, natural gas, and water or watershed utilities. This provides utilities the opportunity to seek rate changes based on performance-based incentives and decoupling. The Act provides utilities a mechanism to receive adequate revenues while supporting more efficient systems and emerging technologies. Community solar provides an opportunity to work with the utilities as well as performance-based incentives that benefit the customers, the EDCs, and assist with LMI connections. Maximizing opportunities under Act 58 will lead to revenue certainty for the utilities, more efficient energy cost for the consumers, and greater access to solar. Ultimately, spurring economic growth for the Commonwealth and job opportunities for local communities.

Income Opportunities for Farmers and Landowners

The agriculture industry is central to Pennsylvania's rich history, economy, and contributes a significant amount annually to the state's exports. The Commonwealth is home to the "Mushroom Capital of the World" and home to some of the most successful dairy farms in the nation. After five straight years of declining milk prices⁴, Pennsylvania dairy farmers are suffering, and the Commonwealth is experiencing a loss in family farm ownership⁵. Community solar installations are an effective means of supplementing income to help keep family farms financially viable in challenging and changing markets. Farmers or landowners may opt-in to leases with solar developers and use a portion of their land to host a solar facility. These developers use agricultural conservation best practices, designed to preserve the land and often return it to more fertile condition than before the arrays were installed. In turn, the farmer is

² Penn State Report: Pennsylvania population trends mirror employment changes since 2000

³ The Solar Foundation: Pennsylvania Solar Jobs Census 2018

⁴ Reading Eagle: Study suggests 9 ways to improve Pennsylvania's milk market

⁵ Pennsylvania: USDA Farm Service Agency and Agriculture

provided year-round, stable income to secure and sustain their family farming businesses and proud heritage.

Energy Independence, Innovation, and Remaining an Energy Leader are Important to Pennsylvania Constituents

A recent poll conducted by the University of Texas and Clear Path found that 83% of all Pennsylvanians support taking action to accelerate the development of clean energy⁶. On closer analysis, 85% of Pennsylvania Conservatives believe investing in clean energy technologies is a matter of national security and can make us less dependent on energy from the middle east⁷. Additionally, 86% of Pennsylvanians believe American innovation will create economic growth and job opportunities at home⁸. Innovation and independence are Pennsylvania's historic core values, and our energy tradition reflects them. Pennsylvania has always been a leader in energy production and solar is the next energy frontier. Investing in the expansion of homegrown energy sources that will grow our generation options, like community solar, will ensure the Commonwealth will remain a national energy leader well into the future. Continued bi-partisan support of SB705 and HB531 will create access to community solar that will strengthen energy choice, increased security, spur economic opportunity, and build a more resilient electric grid for every community while meeting the demands of Pennsylvania's energy future.

Sincerely,

Leslie Elder, Mid-Atlantic Director
Coalition for Community Solar Access

⁶ [ClearPath Polling](#)

⁷ [ClearPath Polling](#)

⁸ [ClearPath Polling](#)