



June 2, 2015

Senator Benjamin Downing
Representative Thomas Golden
Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy

Dear Chairman Downing, Chairman Golden:

I write on behalf of Community Labor United and the Green Justice Coalition (GJC), which we convene. GJC supports the growth of clean energy in Massachusetts and urges the Legislature to lift caps on solar and advance solar policy that allows all communities access to the growing green economy. Distributed energy generation like solar provides a critical hedge against the volatile costs of fossil fuels while creating jobs and improving public health.

Thanks to Massachusetts' leadership on solar, renters, low- and moderate- income people can use shared solar and virtual net metering to reduce their utility bills. Unfortunately, the net metering cap blocks the very kinds of projects that allow these communities to thrive on clean energy.

Top-class apprenticeship programs like those at IBEW 103 are enabling more Massachusetts residents to enter good jobs in the clean energy sector. We need to grow programs like these, ensure every community has access to them, and secure pathways to employment so that people across the state can green their own neighborhoods through companies that hire a local, diverse workforce.

Caps on solar are eliminating jobs and opportunities we need to be expanding. Above all else, the legislature must raise the solar net metering cap in 2015. Beyond that, I urge you to support S1770 and H2852, *An act relative to net metering, community shared solar and energy storage* which, in addition to lifting the cap, would encourage growth of accessible community-owned solar projects.

Low income people and people of color disproportionately bear the burden of fossil fuels and suffer the brunt of economic inequality. GJC believes that we can leverage energy efficiency and clean energy to bring opportunity home to those who have shouldered the greatest burden. In Worcester, Lynn and Holyoke, GJC member Neighbor to Neighbor is pushing for shared solar projects. Two of these communities are in National Grid territory, and the third is within a municipal utility territory. In Southeastern Massachusetts, the Coalition for Social Justice is working to advance efficiency and renewable energy as the region faces the closure of New England's largest coal-fired power plant.

We are proud that Massachusetts is a leader on solar: it diversifies our energy mix, creates jobs, cleans our air and through community shared projects, provides residents access to direct utility bill savings that might otherwise escape them. Please act in 2015 to raise the net metering cap and support policies that ensure all communities have access the benefits of and jobs in solar.

Sincerely,

Darlene Lombos
Executive Director
Community Labor United