



TO: Members of the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy
FR: Ben Hellerstein, Environment Massachusetts
RE: Testimony in Support of H. 2852 and S. 1770, *An Act relative to net metering, community shared solar and energy storage*
Tuesday, June 2, 2015

Good afternoon. My name is Ben Hellerstein, and I am a campaign organizer with Environment Massachusetts. I would like to thank Chairman Downing and Chairman Golden for the opportunity to offer our comments today.

Environment Massachusetts is a statewide, citizen-supported environmental advocacy organization. With more than 50,000 members and activists across Massachusetts, we work to fight global warming, protect our air and water and the places we love, and stand up for the environmental values that Bay Staters share.

Our message is simple: it's time to go big on solar. Within the next few years, we can get a large and growing chunk of the energy we use from the sun.

Massachusetts has a habit of setting ambitious solar goals and then achieving them far ahead of schedule. When the original target of 250 MW was first established, many thought that it was too optimistic. And then, of course, we hit it three years ahead of schedule. Then, Governor Patrick set a goal of 1600 MW by 2020. At that time, it was an ambitious goal. But now, as the current administration acknowledges, it looks like we'll reach 1600 MW before the end of 2018.

In our current discussion of solar policy options, we should see 1600 MW not as an endpoint, but as a benchmark on the way towards more and more solar. It's time to think about what comes next for solar in Massachusetts, and how we can get as much solar in our state as quickly as possible.

Last year, we asked ourselves: How far can Massachusetts go on solar? In October, we released a report showing that Massachusetts can get 20% of its electricity from the sun by 2025. Our report, *Star Power: The Growing Role of Solar Energy in Massachusetts*, shows that we can reach 20% solar by 2025 if solar grows at rate of

30% per year. Compare that to the 127% annual growth rate we've seen over the past three years.

There is plenty of room in Massachusetts for more solar development — in fact, more than 700,000 commercial and residential rooftops in the state could host solar panels.

Achieving a goal of 20% solar by 2025 would reduce carbon pollution by the equivalent of the emissions from 1.2 million cars.

There's no question that solar is popular. In a recent MassINC poll, solar power was the most popular option to replace the region's coal and nuclear plants, with 73% support.

And we're seeing strong support for ambitious solar goals from leaders in communities across Massachusetts. More than 350 local elected officials have signed a letter urging Governor Baker to adopt a goal of 20% solar by 2025. The letter was signed by the mayors of some of Massachusetts' biggest cities, including Cambridge, New Bedford, Springfield, and Holyoke. It also includes city councilors and select board members from smaller communities like Lunenburg, Kingston, Marion, Bolton, and Wales.

Additionally, more than 560 small business leaders have added their names in support of 20% solar by 2025. Most of these businesses have no direct financial stake in the solar industry. They signed on because they know that solar power is good for their local economy, their environment, and their community.

We respectfully ask you to advance legislation along the lines of H.2852 / S.1170, filed by Reps. Mark and Calter and Sen. Eldridge. Any legislation should:

1. Set a goal of getting 20% of Massachusetts' electricity from solar by 2025.
2. Fully consider all of the benefits of solar energy. In addition to the economic benefits of keeping energy dollars within local communities and the environmental benefits of avoided pollution, you should consider savings from reduced peak demand, the hedge that solar energy provides against higher fuel costs, and avoided transmission and distribution costs.
3. Avoid undercutting existing programs that we know are succeeding, including net metering, community solar and the SREC program.
4. Ensure that the benefits of solar are available to all classes of customers.

We've only begun to make use of Massachusetts' vast solar energy potential. With the right state policies in place, Massachusetts can continue to lead the nation towards a solar future.

For questions or additional information, please contact me at ben@environmentmassachusetts.org or 617-747-4368. Thank you for your consideration, and for the opportunity to share our comments today.