
February 9th, 2017

Senator Christopher Bray, Chairman
Vermont Senate and Natural Resources and Energy Committee
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633

Re: Testimony of Payne Morgan, Experience of AllEarth Renewables, Inc. in Vermont's Clean Energy Economy, S.51

Dear Members of the Committee,

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Committee for the opportunity to share my experiences with AllEarth Renewables in Vermont's Clean Energy Economy.

My name is Payne Morgan. I am the Development & Government Affairs Manager for AllEarth Renewables. My duties at the company range from working directly on Vermont group net metered solar projects, market research in other states, and aiding our sales team with knowledge of the changing regulatory landscape for solar. Given these duties, I personally see how public policy directly affects our company's business.

Company Background and Vermont Employment

AllEarth Renewables was founded in 2008 by lifelong Vermonter, David Blittersdorf, to develop solar tracking systems for residential and commercial use. Every solar tracker seen throughout Vermont, and elsewhere, was designed, tested, and assembled at our facilities in Williston. Our core value, that building the products you sell matters, allowed our company to expand nationwide with over 4,000 solar trackers from Vermont to California and work with dealer-installers in 30 states. Redefining the value many consumers in our state and elsewhere associate with the term, "Made in Vermont".

Currently, we employ 31 employees, across a range of ages, skill sets, and educational backgrounds. Our oldest employees are in their 60s and our youngest, myself, is 23-years-old. Over half are employed in either the direct manufacturing of our product or another STEM related field: encompassing electrical engineering, mechanical engineering, construction, or research & development. We employ graduates, and current students, from the University of Vermont, Vermont Law School, St.

Michael's College, Middlebury College, and draw very significantly from Vermont Technical College. Additionally, we are proud to claim veterans of the United States Air Force in our employment mix.

Outside of our own Williston offices, we work directly with several Vermont dealer installers for the end use of our product, as well as Vermont materials suppliers for our manufacturing processes. These dealer installers include: Solar Pro Vermont of Arlington, Green Earth Energy of Brandon, Smith and McClain of Bristol, Nunez Electric of Swanton, SolarTech of Sutton, Net Zero Renewable Energy of Chester, O'Meara Solar of East Orange, Apex Solar of Burlington, and Engineer's Construction, Inc. of Williston. Our Vermont material suppliers include: Grennon's Hands on Solder Works of Bristol, North East Precision of St. Johnsbury, NSA Industries of St. Johnsbury, Precision Contract Manufacturing Image-Tek of Springfield, SAC Fasteners of Williston, and Vermont Plastic Specialties of Williston. In addition, we currently work with over 90 active dealer installers nationally across the continental United States.

Personal Background and Vermont Employment

As the youngest employee of AllEarth Renewables at 23. I am paying off my undergraduate student loan debt aggressively, while also having the resources to pursue my master's degree in Vermont via Vermont Law School's Masters of Energy Regulation & Law (MERL) program. I wake up every day excited to go to work, and feel empowered by the work I do. I have a good life.

The reason I have a high standard of living is not because of any unique personal attributes that I possess, it is because I chose to move here, where our Clean Energy Economy has thrived. Originally from Up-State New York, I was granted practical job experience by working a summer internship with the Vermont solar company, SunCommon, while still in college. That experience in Vermont allowed me to gain additional experience while finishing my final year in school by working at NYSERDA. In turn, both experiences allowed me to procure a full-time employment offer with AllEarth Renewables prior to my graduation in May of 2015. I made my full-time move to Vermont in June of that same year. Both my time and positions at AllEarth have provided me with the personal benefits of employment, something many Vermonters my age lack, but also an in-valuable foundation for a future career in the renewable energy sector. A sector which, for Vermont, ranks third in solar jobs per capita when compared to other states¹.

¹ The Solar Foundation National Jobs Report 2016, Appendix A: <http://www.thesolarfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/National-Solar-Jobs-Census-2016-Appendix-A.pdf>

Opportunities and Challenges for S.51

We support the Senate's measure to establish a statutory goal of 90% by 2050. Energy is a highly-regulated industry, with ever changing rules, and by consolidating the state's overarching energy goals into statute we hope the state will achieve a more consistent and comprehensive plan. For the uncertainty surrounding persistent regulatory review and change in the renewable energy sector is one of the greatest "soft-costs" facing our company's further business expansion in Vermont, and personally, my further professional expansion in Vermont.

Our ambitious overarching public policy goals should be applauded, for they are on par with states like California, New York, and Massachusetts. However, from an industry perspective these "goals" are not the public policy that directly affects day-to-day business decisions such as attracting new capital to our projects, hiring new employees, or having to retain or lay off employees. Those decisions are affected by the public policy statutes and regulations which provide the playing field on which we daily engage. I speak about the siting statutes, the 5.100 net-metering regulations, or the SPEED program. For if these public policies are not established in such a way to us to *consistently* build the infrastructure and attract the capital that moves our state towards its 90% by 2050 goal, it will not be reached and any talk of further business expansion leading to greater employment should be muted. And my story remains an outlier in employment statistics.

When public policy goals and daily statutes conflict, such as 2015's net-metering caps being met, not only does the state slow the pace or feasibility of reaching the percentage goals, but individuals like me lose jobs. I will attest that at the time of 2015's net metering cap, I watched friends and colleagues in the industry go through the process of being laid off. A sad story when nationally, per the Solar Foundation, the solar industry in 2015 added jobs at a rate nearly 12 times faster than the overall economy.

Despite my young personal success in Vermont, given the current lack of synchronicity between broad goals and daily statutes, I find it doubtful I will be able to stay here in the long-term.

The title of this bill, the "Consolidated Clean Energy Planning and Economic Opportunity Act", provides hope that it will aid in mitigating these concerns. By consolidating a concise goal of 90% by 2050 in statute, the state will achieve greater consistency in its long-term energy plans and allow for an overarching state policy that aims to achieve the energy future we want to see. Therefore, allowing AllEarth Renewables, and other companies in Vermont's Clean Energy Economy, to make more informed

long-term business decisions about Vermont. Some of which, may lead to more young graduates being given the same opportunities I was provided in 2015. Therefore, not only growing Vermont's workforce, but its *young* workforce.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on this matter.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Payne Morgan", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Payne Morgan

Development & Government Affairs Manager

AllEarth Renewables, Inc.