

Thank you Chairman Briglin and members of the Committee.

My name is Dee Gish and I am representing the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission. Two Rivers is in its third year of working with towns on enhanced energy planning in response to Act 174 – the Energy Development Improvement Act. Along with analyzing current and future energy use across the transportation, heating and electric sectors, and establishing efficiency targets and recommendations to transition away from fossil fuels, part of the enhanced energy planning process is helping towns identify areas both preferred and constrained for renewable energy development. Towns we have worked with spend many hours carefully considering and delineating maps to identify preferred and constrained areas for renewable energy systems. Some preferred areas are easy to identify, such as town highways where three-phase power lines are prevalent. But it is impossible to identify every parcel that may be ideal for renewable energy development. In addition, some towns are reluctant to identify and map individual, privately owned parcels as preferred, as they do not want to appear to favor one land owner over another. Many of our towns have found that, when approached by a landowner or developer, writing a joint letter of support identifying a specific location as preferred is an extremely valuable tool to allow for renewable energy development. Since January, 2017, of the **16** Section 248 applications that have been proposed or fully applied for in our region, **10** of them have requested and have received Two-River's signature on joint letters of support. Without the provision for a joint letter of support, a landowner who would like to host a renewable energy system on their property, but that is not mapped as a preferred site in the Town Plan, would need to wait up to 8 years through the Town Plan adoption process to have their property identified as preferred and receive the preferential siting adjustor that may make the project financially viable. As the Public Utility Commission considers changes to Rule 5.100, I would like to urge them to maintain the provision that allows towns to identify preferred sites through the joint letter of support. The ability to carefully review a proposed parcel for preferred status and then issuing a joint letter of support from both the municipal and regional perspective, has been instrumental in moving renewable energy projects forward in the Two-Rivers' region.