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H. 289 – Good Intentions but One Big Flaw

Mr. Chair and members of the committee. Thank for the chance to testify today. I know your time is short and you want to get this bill moving. I also know that months of work has gone into an agreement between the environmental/climate non-profits and the utility companies.

- The goal of this bill is a good thing. Our laws need this update. But this bill has a major flaw that hurts Vermonters' ability to participate in developing and benefitting from solar energy in our state.

BACKGROUND

I have spent my entire 42 year career creating and developing renewable energy businesses with one goal, fight climate change. I started and grew NRG Systems to be the world leader in wind energy measurement systems. I built a wind farm in Georgia, VT and another in Russell, MA. I endowed a chair at UVM to work on renewable energy and funded the Renewable Energy Degree creation at VTech. And I founded AllEarth Renewables to build innovative community-based solar systems throughout Vermont and the US.

- I believe strongly that we need to electrify everything we can - **EVERYTHING** - to transform our economy by moving away from fossil fuels. It is great to have this necessary goal. But it more important to do it.
- Eliminating group net metering - as you have proposed - threatens Vermont renewable energy jobs and the home-grown Vermont solar industry that has been a such a success. Group net metering helps Vermonters do the right thing. Why would we take it away in one fell swoop?
- It is especially powerful for towns, schools, affordable housing developments, small businesses and others that don't have enough roof space for their own solar

panels. I hope you have heard testimony from schools and non-profit housing developers about how this would hurt their efforts to integrate solar into their buildings. If we are going to build all this new housing, shouldn't it be powered by community solar?

- These are community solar projects that work. And I have developed them all over Vermont. And so have other companies.
- You may not know this, but the threat of group net metering elimination has the effect of driving solar companies like mine to Maine, New Hampshire and New York, where they can build projects. Why would we do that? Why would we incentivize community solar companies to move, along with their Vermont employees?
- Group net metering allows Vermont solar companies to build solar projects elsewhere in the state and sell the energy at a discount. Again - why would we eliminate that program?
- The transformation to renewable energy requires us to build all sorts of different projects. We need them **ALL**. Are we really going to depend only on the utilities to develop these projects and believe the projections for buying energy from off-shore windfarms and nuclear plants to meet our goals?

CONCLUSION

H. 289 takes away one of Vermont's most successful programs and replaces it with nothing. Are we going to wait for this Public Utility Commission to plan, design and create a program to replace net metering?

I urge you to remove the net metering section and allow the community solar companies to continue serving their customers. Leave the Net Metering statutes as they are.

Thank you.