

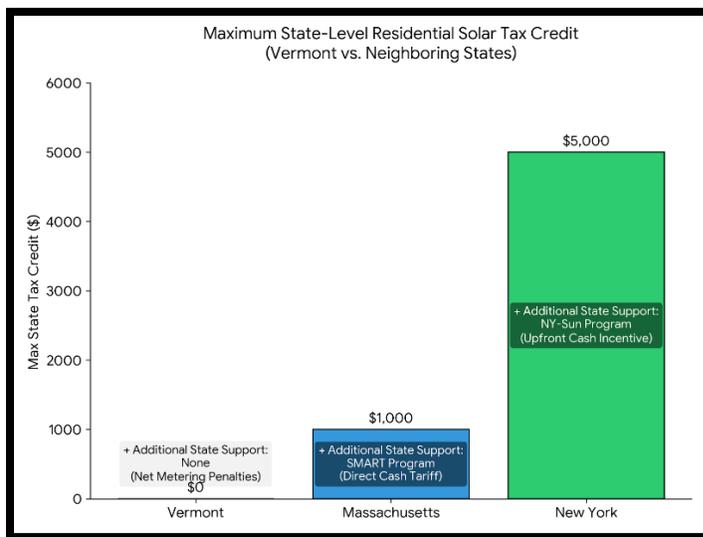
Chair James and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony. My name is Alexander Mintz, and I am the Owner and CEO of Power Guru LLC , a local solar installation business based here in Vermont.

I am writing to strongly urge the Committee to advance **H. 716**.

In recent testimony before this Committee, the Department of Public Service characterized the residential solar industry as reliant on "subsidies" and harmful to non-solar ratepayers. As a business owner on the front lines of Vermont's clean energy transition, I must correct the record.

Vermont does not subsidize residential solar. Unlike neighboring states such as New York and Massachusetts, which offer thousands of dollars in direct state tax credits and upfront cash incentives, Vermont relies on Net Metering—a basic billing mechanism designed to compensate local generators.



Unfortunately, the Public Utility Commission (PUC) and the Department of Public Service have increasingly weaponized this mechanism. Through the biennial update process, the state has applied aggressive "negative adjustors" (currently at a punitive $-\$0.04/\text{kWh}$) to actively penalize homeowners who adopt solar.

H. 716 is vital legislation that will freeze these punitive adjustors and provide the regulatory stability our industry needs to survive. I urge you to consider the following economic realities:

1. The "Cost Shift" Narrative Contradicts Independent Data The Department claims compensating net metering at retail rates creates a "cross-subsidy" that harms low-income ratepayers. Independent, national research debunks this narrative. A comprehensive review by the Brookings Institution concluded that net metering is frequently a net economic benefit to *all* ratepayers because the localized benefits (reduced peak demand, avoided infrastructure costs) outweigh the retail credit. The Department's "avoided cost" calculation relies on wholesale bulk prices, which completely ignores the multi-million-dollar local transmission and distribution upgrades that distributed rooftop solar prevents.

2. Failing to Account for Real-World Installation Costs The Department has testified that the PUC adjusts rates based on installation prices. However, with the expiration of the 30% Federal Investment Tax Credit at the end of 2025, the net price of a solar installation for a Vermont family spiked by over 30%. Instead of adjusting compensation upward to account for this massive loss of federal capital, the state has maintained its punitive -\$0.04 penalty. This has pushed the payback period for a residential system past 15 years, ensuring solar is now only accessible to the wealthiest cash-buyers.

3. Stifling Forward-Thinking Investments in Grid Resilience Vermont's grid modernization relies on homeowners adopting smart panels, battery storage, and heat pumps. Residential solar is the foundational, private-capital investment that makes these technologies affordable for a middle-class family. By rendering the base solar investment unfinanceable through aggressive adjustors, the state is inadvertently killing the deployment of private capital into vital grid-resilience technologies.

4. Declining Installations Prove Policy Failure, Not Market Saturation The Department has pointed to decreasing net metering installations over the last several years. This decline is not a natural market shift; it is the direct, intended mathematical result of the PUC's negative adjustors. Pointing to a dying market as justification to continue the punitive policies that are killing it is counterproductive to Vermont's statutory climate goals.

5. Maximizing Local Economic Value vs. Utility-Scale The Department has implied a preference for utility-scale solar. This ignores the local economic engine of rooftop solar. National solar census data consistently shows that residential solar creates roughly 26 jobs per megawatt installed, compared to roughly 2 jobs per megawatt for utility-scale. Shifting away from distributed generation means wiping out the local Vermont workforce in favor of out-of-state utility contractors.

6. The Practical Reality of Billing Complexity The Department claims reforming the net metering formula adds "billing complexity." For installers and customers, the *current*

adjustor system is the true administrative nightmare. Utility bills are now so convoluted that installers must hold dedicated appointments just to teach Vermonters how to read them. Furthermore, the current rules require the costly physical installation of redundant "generation meters" just to quantify the state's penalties, creating added hardware costs, complicated wire runs, and aesthetic issues. H. 716 simplifies billing and drastically reduces friction for Vermonters.

Conclusion Driving small, local solar companies out of business to save the average ratepayer pennies is not a sustainable economic strategy. We need the legislature to step in and stop the active penalization of clean energy generation.

I strongly urge you to support H. 716 to freeze the negative adjustors, protect local green jobs, and keep solar accessible to everyday Vermonters.

Thank you for your time, your service to the State of Vermont, and your consideration of this critical bill.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alexander Mintz". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the left of the typed name and contact information.

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