



**April 8, 2025**

**Testimony to House Committee on Energy and Digital Infrastructure**  
**Jarred Cobb, General Manager of Catamount Solar**

**About Catamount Solar:**

Established in 2011, Catamount Solar helps families, farms and businesses of all sizes use the power of the sun to reduce their dependence on high cost, fossil-fuel-driven energy sources and achieve energy independence. Catamount Solar is Vermont's only employee-owned solar company, providing outstanding wages and benefits to its employees while serving its clients with best-in-class quality and customer service. Because it is a responsible and caring enterprise, Catamount Solar donates 5% of annual profits to Vermont community organizations.

In 2024, Catamount Solar installed 216 clean energy systems, adding 1.4 MW of solar 293 batteries to the grid. We welcomed our 13th, 14th, and 15th worker-owners, and gave back \$27,000 to local community organizations. In the past few years, Catamount has seen increasing demand for solar coupled with batteries. By the end of 2025, we expect this attachment rate to be over 50% which allows solar to be added to the grid in a more measured capacity.

**Support for S.50**

Catamount Solar is supportive of S.50 because it will increase the size of solar net metering projects that qualify for the faster registration process from 15 kW AC to 25 kW AC. It is a recognition of the fact that solar panels have become more efficient - there is more power per square foot in a solar panel. Prior to 2017, solar panels were in the range of 300 watts a piece. They are now almost twice as powerful.

The approval and implementation of S.50 will lead to several benefits for our community:



- More homeowners will be able to cover the electrification of their homes with solar energy. Homeowners are currently hamstrung by old rules and either choose to limit the amount of solar power installed, or opt not to fully electrify their homes. Since 2020, only 11 ground-mounted projects have been built in the entire state of Vermont between the size of 15 and 25 kW. In that same time period, hundreds of solar installations under 15 kW have been installed.
- Solar energy will be deployed faster under the new rule. The registration process for systems under the current 15kW limit is fairly quick and efficient, often taking less than 30 days to complete. It also involves no advance notice to abutters or mandatory review by state agencies, and the CPG and interconnection approval happen almost simultaneously. In contrast, the application process for 15-150kW systems can take a minimum of four months and involves more regulatory hurdles. By extending the faster registration to 25kW systems, customers can avoid the more complex and time-consuming application process for a wider range of residential projects, leading to quicker project completion.
- The current lengthier application process for 15-150kW systems often requires hiring consultants and incurs significant costs. The simpler registration process for projects up to 25kW would likely involve no additional costs.
- A faster registration process translates to quicker project approvals and installations. This will make our business more efficient which in turn allows us to add more solar and batteries to the Vermont grid.

The proposed amendment from Senator Perchlik regarding municipal setbacks is opposed by Catamount Solar and other members of Renewable Energy Vermont. This amendment could introduce significant complications and costs, potentially negating some of the benefits of the increased registration cap.

While this amendment specifies that these setbacks cannot be more restrictive than those for other developments, it would create a cumbersome process involving checking with every town and potentially requiring property surveys, which could slow



down solar deployment and increase costs for homeowners. Catamount Solar believes this amendment should be removed from the bill for the following reasons:

- REV found that in 25 randomly selected municipalities, setbacks varied significantly, from 10 to 100 feet. Moreover, some towns have different setback requirements for different zoning districts, as exemplified by the Town of Mendon with a range of 25-100 feet across 11 districts. This lack of uniformity would necessitate checking with every town before selling and designing systems. Many of these towns have part-time clerks who are already overwhelmed with other business.
- Homeowners without a boundary survey might need to pay for one if they want the project close to a setback, adding extra time and expense to the process. This would extend the due diligence phase by months and could deter customers from moving forward with solar projects altogether.
- We believe this requirement will slow down the deployment of clean energy by creating red tape and unnecessary expense where it doesn't need to exist. Catamount Solar already consults with municipalities and neighbors to ensure the appropriate siting of backyard net metered solar systems.

While we understand the intent behind the amendment, we don't see the problem it is trying to solve for. With the passage of S.50, we wouldn't necessarily be increasing the footprint of ground-mounted solar, so why should we burden an industry already facing market headwinds with more regulations? In the last year, residential solar has slowed significantly in Vermont with higher interest rates for loan products, lower compensation for net metered solar, tariffs hitting every part of the supply chain, and threats to the federal tax credit. We believe that S.50 as originally written will speed up the deployment of clean energy in Vermont and ask this committee to pass the bill as expeditiously as possible.