

Hello everyone,

We are Claire and Sophia, students at Middlebury College. We are here representing SNEG, the Sunday Night Environmental Group, a student-led environmental and social activist group. We were founded by Middlebury students in 2005 and have since been leaders in a number of initiatives on campus and beyond, including playing a crucial role in the formation of 350.org alongside Bill McKibben. Our work has included bringing Middlebury College to a commitment to divesting from fossil fuels, attending protests, hosting a number of community based events and talks, collaborating with local organizations, and engaging students to further the climate movement and advocate for sustainability. Our commitments to our communities, to our state, to the natural world, and to our futures are what bring us here today.

The why:

As young people constantly moving around, deciding on career paths, living in temporary housing, going through the lengthy and expensive process of installing permanent solar panels isn't a feasible option. Establishing the right to plug in will allow for the purchase of a portable, renewable source of electricity, which will make an impact for people like me.

As of 2023, according to Efficiency Vermont, the average VT household spends 11% of their annual income on energy (encompassing heating, electricity, and transportation). A household spending over 6% is considered to be high. The energy burden that VT residents face must be addressed in accessible and inclusive ways. Additionally, electricity is the most used energy source in households, accounting for about 44% of total residential sector end-use energy consumption in 2020, according to the US Energy Information Administration.

I want to see a future where we don't have to rely on drilling into the ground and extracting fossil fuels from foreign countries, burning gas and oil and emitting carbon dioxide and pollutants into the air for our energy. I want people like me to be included in this transition. Passing this bill would mean a decrease in energy costs, alongside a decrease in carbon emissions.

The how:

This bill will benefit *all* Vermonters by providing reliable access to solar energy. Experts have explained solar energy access as a marker of environmental injustice based on access and affluence. Across various states including California, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York, nearly 90% of houses with residential panels belong to households with high incomes. This study found that through legislation that targets supporting low- to moderate-income households can increase the proportion of residents that can use solar energy. Access to solar energy correlates to other environmental and social injustices. This bill can enhance a major social injustice by providing an increase of internet access. Today, access

to the internet is essential for well-being by providing increased access to energy. The internet in turn can also be provided to homes, particularly those in rural areas. This is important for creating momentum for further climate justice access. This bill will allow individuals to embark on a solar power journey despite income and housing circumstances..

By eliminating the hurdles from starting to use solar energy, Vermonters across affluence, age, and socioeconomic status can claim autonomy over where their energy is coming from. Access to portable solar provides an essential gateway for sustainable energy and a transition away from fossil fuels.

Thank you for your time, we would love to answer any questions you may have.

References

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