



To: Chairman Stefano, Dem. Chairwoman Boscola and Members of the Consumer Protections and Licensure Committee

Re: Public Hearing on Solar Energy's Impact on Pennsylvania Ratepayers

Thank you for giving New Leaf Energy the opportunity to submit comments concerning solar energy in the Commonwealth. New Leaf is a developer of solar and storage projects across the country, and has been in business for over 40 years, previously as part of Borrego Energy. I'd like to focus my comments about the benefits to the hosts of community solar systems. While Community solar can be on land or on a rooftop, I'm going to focus on landowners.

Many landowners that show interest in hosting a project are farmers. Some are not. My company has several interested landowners that want to lease land that was previously used for coal or oil extraction. In these cases, there is little better use for the land. These projects can be challenging if there is still title to the mineral rights, among other things, but community solar offers a second life to these parcels.

Those landowners that do want to lease farmland are, not surprisingly, savvy about where and how they want to lease their land. They are businessmen and women. They want to lease the least productive land, acres where leasing for a project could bring 3-10 times what they otherwise would make from those acres, not including the property tax savings. The system owner pays the property taxes on land hosting the system, including the increased value that the presence of the system brings.

Or in some instances they want to be able continue to be productive on the land while also hosting a system. My company has one interested landowner in the Columbia County area that has had the land in the family for generations. They would like to keep the land in the family. They raise sheep, including some endangered Jacobs sheep through a conservancy program. The sheep and a few other livestock graze on their land. A system would take $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{3}$ of their acres, but the sheep would continue to graze under the system. In fact, doing so would save on maintenance costs for the system. The family intends to use the income from the lease to ensure the land passes down to their children, but also to expand their flock and grow their business. Dual use or agrovoltatics are becoming increasingly common across the country.

This family is but one example of Pennsylvanians from across the state that are interested in and stand to benefit from hosting a system on their property. Our trade association found that there are interested property owners in at least 61 counties in Pennsylvania. Not every one of these projects will move forward, but if SB 550 passes and Pennsylvania establishes a community solar program, property owners across the state will reap the benefits.

Thank you,

Sarah Wochos
Vice President
New Leaf Energy