



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 Summit Ridge Energy (SRE) the opportunity to submit comments concerning solar energy in the Commonwealth. SRE is the nation's leading long-term owner-operator of community solar assets. Our team develops and acquires small to medium sized solar energy and battery storage facilities. In fact, we own the largest community solar project in the nation, which is proudly sited on a large commercial roof. To date, SRE has deployed over \$850mm in capital and we own over 100 operating solar and storage facilities across the country. We are headquartered in Arlington, VA with over 120 employees working across offices throughout the country including here in Pennsylvania. SRE is also a proud member of the Coalition for Community Solar Access (CCSA), who actively works with customers, utilities, local stakeholders, allies and policymakers to develop and implement best practices that ensure community solar programs provide a win-win solution for the Commonwealth.

Community Solar 101

Community solar will allow the private sector to work in collaboration with our local utilities to provide local energy to our communities and reduce costs to customers. Community solar refers to home-grown, third-party owned, solar facilities shared by multiple subscribers who receive credits on their electric bills for their share of the power produced. Today, more than 50% of American households and businesses do not have access to solar due to common barriers such as roof attributes, financial limitations to entry, or property ownership. Community solar provides anyone who pays an electric bill access to solar energy without the need to install a solar system on site. It expands access to solar for all, creates competition, drives down electric prices, provides energy choice for customers, and diversifies our generation sources.

Savings for Consumers

This session, Senator Brown has introduced [Senate Bill 550](#) to enable community solar in Pennsylvania, providing guaranteed savings to subscribers and ensuring the benefits these are realized by all rate classes. Anchored in current statute and regulations, community solar can be enabled without the need for expansion of net metering and provides utility options for compliance with the Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards. Furthermore, community solar modernizes the grid with private capital, does not require state taxes for Commission oversight, and contemplates developer fee structures for utility programmatic administrative costs. Lastly, community solar can aid the Commonwealth in maximizing federal investments and tax credits for low-to-moderate-income consumers and energy communities.

Economic Benefits

According to an analysis from [Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences' Center for Economic and Community Development](#) the construction of new community solar facilities in the commonwealth would generate an estimated \$1.8 billion in economic impact, create over \$793 million in labor income, and support 12,000 total jobs in various sectors across Pennsylvania. The study analyzed 235 planned



community solar projects across 48 counties which can move ahead if community solar legislation passes the General Assembly. Once operating, Penn State research projected that these facilities would generate over \$83 million in economic output annually and generate an additional \$575,000 in annual real property taxes for 48 rural and urban counties. Report author Tim Kelsey of Penn State's Center for Economic and Community Development observed that ["These projects will not be confined to just one region, but rather will be spread across broad swaths of the state, offering counties the potential to capture jobs and tax revenues in their own local economies."](#) The Commonwealth would also see a 75% increase in local solar jobs, paying family sustaining wages. This will create \$1.06 billion in economic earnings for Pennsylvanians. Many of the new solar jobs created provide opportunities to develop a pipeline of innovative and skilled labor in rural and urban communities alike, allowing the Commonwealth to rethink and reshape economic development through emerging technologies.

Summit Ridge Energy and other CCSA member companies have already been making large investments in the Commonwealth, in anticipation of enabling community solar. Over \$15 million dollars have been committed or spent in these communities in the past four years, including cash payments to farmers, landowners, non-profit organizations, and building owners. These dollars can help fund schools, lower property tax burdens for seniors, fund critical infrastructure needs, emergency services, or other priorities deemed by the authority having jurisdiction.

SB550 [presents an enormous opportunity for farmers in Pennsylvania to obtain year-round and dependable income to improve the economics of their farms by leasing a small portion of their land for community solar development.](#) This is a practice that is becoming increasingly popular in rural America. Community solar installations are an effective means of supplementing income to help keep family farms financially viable in challenging and changing markets.

Community Solar Siting

Community solar facilities are considered a distributed generation resource, meaning they are connected to the grid and serve customers in a single utility territory. Community solar does not use the transmission side of the grid. These facilities would be statutorily limited to no larger than 5MW and strictly prohibited from building projects on neighboring parcels, ensuring they stay small and community based. Typically, 1MW project would require approximately 4-6 acres of underutilized land to develop. Therefore, a 5MW project would be no larger than 30 acres of land. A study conducted by Penn State found just over 4,000 acres would be required to build 1,000MW of solar, assuming all facilities are developed on agricultural land. Importantly, community solar siting is not limited to farms and can be sited effectively on brownfields, landfills, and rooftops.

Ultimately, passing Senator Brown's [SB550](#) will save Pennsylvanian's money while building a stronger, lower cost, and more resilient electric grid. Summit Ridge Energy looks forward to the opportunity to work with Chairman Stefano, Democratic Chairwoman Boscola, and all members of the committee to bring this new economic opportunity to our state and save consumers money.

Sincerely,

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