

DRAFT – DO NOT DISTRIBUTE

Dear President Rosenberg and Speaker DeLeo:

RE: Continuing strong support for solar energy in Massachusetts

The Arlington Board of Selectmen is writing to ask you to support continued development of solar energy in Massachusetts by (1) raising the cap on net metering (2) maintaining a fair value for net metering credits, taking into account project size and type, with continued valuation of credits at full retail rates for small projects, and (3) creating a new solar incentive program to reach more ambitious solar energy goals after the current goal of 1,600 megawatts (MW) is reached. We believe this is the only way that Massachusetts will be able to achieve continued progress and meet our ambitious solar energy and climate goals.

Massachusetts has a long history of developing renewable energy policies that have yielded significant economic and environmental benefits, and we appreciate the efforts of the Administration and the Legislature to preserve our Commonwealth's national leadership in energy efficiency and renewable energy. We believe that a balanced, long-term energy plan with a variety of energy sources providing safe, efficient and reliable energy is essential in order to maintain and increase Massachusetts' economic growth while providing a high quality of life for our residents.

Electricity from solar energy is absolutely essential. Massachusetts has become a leader in solar energy development, with over 900 MW of installed solar capacity statewide. Indeed, this far exceeds the original goal of 250 MW by 2017, and the Commonwealth is well on its way to achieving the current goal of 1,600 MW by 2020, if not sooner.

Local efforts to install solar power systems on residential, commercial, and municipal properties have underpinned this success. Arlington has been a leader in these efforts and has a thriving solar energy market, including being home to the solar installation company SunBug Solar. When we participated in the 2012 round of Solarize Mass, there were approximately 40-50 solar power systems in town, including at least three commercial building systems. Nearly 160 systems were added through the Solarize Arlington campaign and today, there are several hundred systems in operation or development, with permits issued for nearly 100 systems in just the last six months. In addition, we recently installed over 700 kW of solar power on six of our schools, which will save the town money, contribute to statewide emissions reduction targets and provide an important learning opportunity for our students. All of this is clear evidence that the policy framework established in the Commonwealth has been successful.

To sustain progress and continue building on the Commonwealth's previous achievements, the Arlington Board of Selectmen strongly favors raising the net metering caps. Net metering is an essential part of solar development financing. The caps have already been reached in the National Grid and Unitil service territories,

DRAFT – DO NOT DISTRIBUTE

stalling municipal and private projects currently under development and precluding new ones from beginning. We are concerned that soon the applications for projects in other areas, including Arlington, will hit their cap limits as well.

Moreover, the value of net metering credits must be kept at a reasonable level. Current policy, in many instances, is to value net metering credits at the full retail rate. Several of the solar bills under consideration would decrease the value of net metering credits for new projects, once the goal of 1,600 MW is reached. We appreciate the intentions of these bills to support municipal and privately owned solar projects and sustain solar development. But we are concerned that some proposed changes in the net metering policy could risk future projects.

In addition, since the SREC II incentive program will expire when we have reached 1,600 MW of solar capacity, we strongly support the creation of a new program that would lower costs for ratepayers while allowing us to achieve even greater long-term solar energy goals and take full advantage of the federal tax credits, which have just been extended.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Kevin F. Greeley
Chair, Arlington Board of Selectmen

CC:

Hon. Charlie Baker, Governor
Hon. Kenneth J. Donnelly, Senator,
Hon. David M. Rogers, Representative,
Hon. Sean Garballey, Representative,
Hon. Thomas H. Golden, House Chair, Joint TUE Committee
Senate Chair: Hon. Benjamin P. Downing, Joint Conference Committee
House Chair: Hon. Brian Dempsey
Senate Minority Member: Hon. Bruce E. Tarr
House Minority Member: Hon. Bradley H. Jones, Jr.
Senate Member: Hon. Marc R. Pacheco
House Member: Hon. Thomas A. Golden, Jr.