



Testimony on S2371/A4226/3731

Assembly Telecom & Utilities Committee

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Incentives Must Prioritize Green Jobs and Solar Installations for NJ Businesses and Residents-- Especially on Rooftops, Parking Lots, Landfills and Brownfields

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I thank you for your interest in solar energy. As a nonprofit organization that promotes smart growth for a strong economy and healthy environment, New Jersey Future supports renewable energy. My comments today focus somewhat narrowly on how these bills will affect economic growth in the state's priority growth areas and how it will affect our farmland and open spaces.

As you know all too well, New Jersey's solar successes depend upon incentives – the SRECs. SRECs drive the market. By making them available for solar facilities connected to 69Kv (high-capacity) transmission lines, this bill will open much of the southern part of our state for solar installations. This will benefit New Jersey residents, local governments, institutions and businesses that have been blocked by limited capacity from connecting to the grid. **This provision will also provide opportunities to out-of-state solar installers who want to construct utility-scale facilities on open space and farmland—unless you put strong criteria in place that prioritize and protect solar incentives for New Jersey residents, local governments, institutions and businesses who install solar in a net-metered fashion.**

As of last spring, most solar installations in the state were off-the-ground – only 15% were ground-mounted. Not only is there high demand for roof-mounted solar, but our research shows that New Jersey has more than enough rooftop capacity: about double the capacity needed to meet its 2026 goal for solar. In addition, there are acres of parking lots and parking structures, brownfields and landfills and ground-mounted solar sites that are net-metered, each of which can host solar facilities. **All of these locations – rooftops, parking facilities, brownfields and landfills, and net-metered ground-mounted sites– offer rich opportunities and green jobs for electrical workers and solar installers.**

Utility-scale solar installations on open lands, on the other hand, pose a direct threat to New Jersey's efforts to preserve farmland and the agricultural industry, and undermine taxpayers' multi-billion dollar investment in Green Acres and farmland preservation. The Energy Master Plan correctly recommends not incentivizing solar in these areas. **New Jersey Future urges you to amend this bill to give BPU the clear authority to deny or reduce solar incentives for ground-mounted, utility-scale solar installations, based on their impact on agriculture and the environment.** Such an approach would help implement the Governor's new State Strategic Plan, which calls for lining up state spending with its goals for economic growth and land preservation.

Thank you for your consideration.