

Dear Committee Advisor Mike Molzahn,

After the tragedy in Texas, the need to adapt a more sustainable, equitable, affordable energy system has become more urgent.

Minnesota's equitable clean energy future will be a tapestry woven from commonsense, deliberate policy changes. I believe that four bills that you are considering today contain critically important changes to the current energy policy landscape that will help make solar energy more accessible and beneficial to customers throughout the state.

By introducing the Solar for State Parks and Solar for Schools initiatives, the legislature rightly considers prioritizing certain solar customers and dedicating funding to make these projects a reality. The Solar for Schools initiative takes this prioritization one important step further by ensuring that 50 percent of the grant funding from the Renewable Development Account (RDA) is reserved for schools in low-income communities. That, combined with the thoughtful attention to integrating STEM curriculum for students and providing technical assistance to schools, makes this bill a compelling use of RDA funds.

The other two bills - HF 1226 and the PV Demand Credit bill - provide critically important and overdue clarity to the statutory foundation of Minnesota's solar energy policy. HF 1226 removes language that was initially designed to support solar and wind energy's growth but is now counterproductive. It unnecessarily and unfairly pits smaller solar projects against larger projects - while natural gas projects get to bid into the market at higher rates. The bill concerning the PV Demand Credit removes specific barriers and burdens currently facing solar customers in two utilities: Otter Tail and Minnesota Power. Instead of being seen as an asset in reducing peak energy demand, solar and energy storage customers in these service territories are billed onerous "spot" demand charges that result in them being over-billed and undervalued. Rather than attempting to capture that full demand value through statute, the bill language tasks utilities to work with the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (MPUC) to find a fairer and more accurate way to value their solar customers.

As somebody who cares deeply about a future free from climate injustices, somebody who believes in the job creation and local economic development potential of solar energy, and somebody who holds onto hope that our legislative leaders pass the policies we need to make the equitable clean energy future a reality, I urge you to move these bills out of Committee and to support their passage. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Sharon Grimes  
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