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Honorable Benjamin Downing  
State House, Room 413F  
Boston, MA 02133

Honorable Bradley H. Jones  
State House, Room 124  
Boston, MA 02133

Honorable Brian S. Dempsey  
State House, Room 243  
Boston, MA 02133

Honorable Bruce Tarr  
State House, Room 308  
Boston, MA 02133

Honorable Marc Pacheco  
State House, Room 312B  
Boston, MA 02133

Honorable Thomas A. Golden  
State House, Room 473B  
Boston, MA 02133

March 14, 2016

Dear Conference Committee Members,

The undersigned mayors strongly urge you to reject those provisions of the energy bills now before you that would establish a lower rate for net metering credits that would be far less beneficial for solar projects. Such a significant reduction - from the retail to the wholesale rate - would reduce the cost-effectiveness of municipal solar projects and would be likely to discourage municipalities from creating solar projects in the future.

The increase in solar development over the past decade has been a great benefit to the Commonwealth's cities and towns. For example, with reasonable and fair reimbursement rates from the utilities, Newton has been able to develop half a megawatt of solar power on school rooftops and reduce its overall energy costs as a result. Relying on those rates, we are far along

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towards an additional three megawatts of solar energy -- enough to power 450 homes -- scheduled to come on line by the end of 2016.

In addition to reducing air pollution and lowering our carbon footprint, Newton's new solar projects are predicted to generate about \$4 million in cost savings for residents over the next two decades. If subject to the significant rate reduction that has been proposed, however, we would lose most, if not all, of those savings. Many cities and towns would suffer similar losses on their projects.

If the changes proposed by H.3854 and S.2501 go into effect, some solar projects in our communities will not be completed and others will never get started. This will slow local economic development and cost jobs statewide. When Nevada passed similar rate changes, solar development slowed and solar developers left the state, taking an estimated 1200 clean energy jobs along with them.

The proposed rate change also creates a pernicious double standard, valuing the power that utilities sell to customers at retail, while providing a much lower rate of compensation for locally generated solar power that goes back to the grid. That is unfair to taxpayers, ratepayers, municipalities and the environment, and will make it very hard for any mayor to propose new solar developments.

That gets to the heart of the matter. These bills will significantly impede the future development of solar power in Massachusetts.

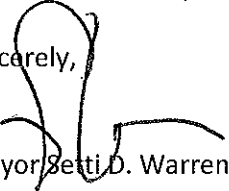
That would be a big setback, not only for the environment and for the Commonwealth, but also for our businesses and residents. Newton has a community solar share program on the drawing board for 2017 that will enable low-income residents and those with homes that are not suited for solar power to share in the savings from municipal solar projects. That project, and dozens if not hundreds of municipal solar installations around the state, will be in serious jeopardy if the bills pass in their current form.

Solar power increases the triple bottom line: it's a win for the economy, for the environment and for our communities. As mayors, we have seen how it leads to lower energy bills, less air pollution and more local jobs. That's why the Massachusetts Municipal Association opposes these rate changes, as does the Environmental League of Massachusetts, Environment Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Chapter of the Sierra Club, Clean Water Action, and other environmental advocates.

Massachusetts has been a national leader on energy - ranked number one in the nation in energy efficiency by the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy. We are also leading the way on solar power. The Commonwealth's cities and towns have been at the vanguard of this transformation, but the proposed legislation threatens to put us on the sidelines.

We ask the committee to produce a final bill that allows communities to continue to host solar facilities on municipal property and to continue to make forward progress towards a clean energy future. We therefore urge you to preserve the beneficial reimbursement rates currently in place for municipal solar development projects.

Sincerely,



Mayor Beati D. Warren  
Newton, MA

List of co-signing Mayors and Town Managers

Mayor Richard Cohen, Agawam  
Mayor Kevin Dumas, Attleboro  
Mayor William Carpenter, Brockton  
Town Administrator Melvin Kleckner, Brookline  
City Manager Richard Rossi, Cambridge  
Mayor Denise Simmons, Cambridge  
City Manager Tom Ambrosino, Chelsea  
Mayor Karen Cadieux, Easthampton  
Mayor Carlo DeMaria, Everett  
Mayor Jasiel Correia II, Fall River  
Mayor Stephen DiNatale, Fitchburg  
Mayor Mark Hawke, Gardner  
Mayor Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken, Gloucester  
Mayor William Martin, Greenfield  
Mayor Edward Kennedy, Lowell  
Mayor Judith Flanagan Kennedy, Lynn  
Mayor Gary Christenson, Malden  
Mayor Stephanie Muccini Burke, Medford  
Mayor Robert Dolan, Melrose  
Mayor Stephen Zanni, Methuen  
Mayor Richard Alcombright, North Adams  
Mayor David Narkewicz, Northampton  
Mayor Ted Bettencourt, Peabody  
Mayor Brian Arrigo, Revere  
Mayor Kimberly Driscoll, Salem  
Mayor Dominic Sarno, Springfield  
Mayor Brian Sullivan, Westfield  
Mayor Robert Hedlund, Weymouth  
Town Manager James McKenna, Winthrop  
Mayor Scott Galvin, Woburn  
Mayor Joseph Petty, Worcester  
Note: Mayor James Florentini of Haverhill and Mayor Jon Mitchell of New Bedford are writing separately.

cc: Speaker Robert DeLeo  
State House, Room 356  
Boston, MA 02133

Senate President Stanley Rosenberg  
State House, Room 322  
Boston, MA 02133

Governor Charlie Baker  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Office of the Governor  
State House  
Boston, MA 02133