March 14, 2016

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

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

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

RE: H.3854/S.2058 An Act providing for the establishment of a comprehensive adaptation management plan in response to climate change

Dear Chairman Dempsey, Chairman Golden and Minority Leader Jones:

We wish to express our appreciation for your efforts to pass legislation that seeks to promote cost-effective solar energy growth and sets the Commonwealth on a path to meet its Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA) requirements.

Following the vote on H.3854 in November, our offices have been contacted by constituents, municipalities and businesses that are concerned this legislation will lead to job losses, jeopardize environmental progress, and raise electricity bills. We respectfully request that you address these critical issues in the Conference Committee, and that the committee report a bill to raise the net metering caps as expeditiously as possible.

In particular, we are concerned that sharp cuts to net metering credit value will irreparably harm Massachusetts’ solar industry and its 15,000 employees. Resetting all new solar projects to the wholesale net metering credit rate will make it prohibitively difficult to finance low-income, community shared solar or municipal projects. In addition, the transition to the wholesale rate for existing projects, while 20 years down the road, will lead to major bill increases for municipalities and other solar customers. Finally, we have heard significant concerns about the provision creating a “minimum monthly reliability contribution” and the impacts that could have on existing solar customers and future solar growth.

In our view, a strong net metering policy, at a minimum, calls for maintaining retail net metering credit value for preferred classes of projects, such as (1) community shared solar, (2) projects that serve low-income housing and low-income ratepayers and (3) municipalities until an official, publicly scrutinized analysis of costs and benefits has been completed. In addition, we ask the Conference Committee to ensure grandfathering of existing systems. We also are in favor of the inclusion of new or expanded programs to achieve solar equity for low-income residents.

We support your desire to reduce costs. However, it is important to note that net metering credits are not subsidies, but rather compensation for the value provided by solar generation exported to the grid. The
state's Massachusetts Net Metering & Solar Task Force determined last year that for every dollar solar costs ratepayers, it returns $2.20 in benefits. Therefore, we hope you will look to reduce costs not by arbitrarily cutting the net metering credit value, but rather by reforming the SREC program, which was designed to be an incentive for solar development.

We hope you can advance a bill to a floor vote at the earliest opportunity, in order to restore investments in our communities and allow businesses to rehire workers who lost their jobs as a result of the net metering caps. Even more urgency has been added now that the Department of Energy Resources has reported that SREC II has reached full capacity, so we must make progress on a successor program.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Best Regards,

Cory Atkins
14th Middlesex

Jennifer E. Benson
37th Middlesex

Kay Khan
11th Middlesex

Smitty
4th Berkshire

Brian Ashe
2nd Hampden

Christine P. Barber
34th Middlesex

Ruth B. Balser
12th Middlesex

Marjorie C. Decker
25th Middlesex

James J. O'Day
14th Worcester

James Arciero
2nd Middlesex

Bruce Ayers
1st Norfolk

Paul Brodeur
32nd Middlesex
Antonio F. D. Cabral  
13th Bristol

Kate D. Campau  
17th Worcester

James M. Cantwell  
4th Plymouth

Evandro C. Carvalho  
5th Suffolk

Edward F. Coppinger  
10th Suffolk

Daniel Cullinan  
12th Suffolk

Diana DiZoglio  
14th Essex

Shawn Dooley  
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Thomas J. Calter  
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Nick Collins  
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Michael S. Day  
31st Middlesex

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16th Worcester

Michelle M. DuBois  
10th Plymouth
Carmine L. Gentile  
13th Middlesex

Sheila C. Harrington  
1st Middlesex

Paul R. Heroux  
2nd Bristol

Kate Hogan  
3rd Middlesex

Kevin G. Honan  
17th Suffolk

Hannah Kanc  
11th Worcester

Mary S. Keefe  
15th Worcester

Peter V. Kocot  
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Kenneth I. Gordon  
21st Middlesex

Jonathan Hecht  
29th Middlesex

Bradford R. Hill  
4th Essex

Russell E. Holmes  
6th Suffolk

Louis L. Kafka  
8th Norfolk

Jay R. Kaufman  
15th Middlesex

James M. Kelcourse  
1st Essex

Robert M. Koczer  
11th Bristol
Stephen Kulik
1st Franklin

Jay D. Livingstone
8th Suffolk

Adrian Madaro
1st Suffolk

John J. Mahoney
13th Worcester

Brian R. Mannal
2nd Barnstable

Christopher M. Markey
9th Bristol

Leonard Mirra
2nd Essex

John J. Lawn
10th Middlesex

James J. Lyons
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Elizabeth A. Malia
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Paul W. Mark
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David K. Muradian
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Angelo J. Pappolo
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Jeffrey N. Roy
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Thomas M. Stanley
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Timothy J. Toomey
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