



March 21, 2023

Re: Support of SF2688

Chair Frentz and committee members,

Vote Solar is a non-profit advocacy policy organization working to repower our communities with sunshine and build a thriving clean economy with affordable solar energy for all. I am the Midwest Regional Director for Vote Solar and a lifelong resident of Minnesota, and I am writing in support of the concepts included in SF2688.

Minnesota's Community Solar Garden (CSG) Program was first established in 2013. It was the nation's leading CSG program until very recently - with over 800 megawatts of installed capacity in 2022. The CSG program has enabled over 28,000 Xcel Energy customers to subscribe to over 400 sites. These are residential customers, government entities, schools, office buildings, or agriculture-related entities who otherwise would not have direct access to the benefits of distributed solar.

Community solar, rooftop, and mid-scale (5-10MW) market programs are key components to equitable decarbonization, as well as a reliable and resilient grid. Distributed solar, including CSGs, provide benefits such as community wealth building, and local job creation. Today, rooftop and community solar in Minnesota provide under 3% of our state's power overall - consequently both have a lot of room for growth. Local solar is built close to where the power is used, so there's little to no delivery cost other than interconnection (interconnection upgrades are currently the responsibility of the project developers). The considerations of delivery cost and utility profit margins must be included in the discussion of the costs & benefits of CSGs. When these factors are included, the pricing of utility-scale and distributed solar are much more comparable.

The CSG program does not currently contain explicit provisions that address solutions for energy-burdened customers. Vote Solar urges the advancement of policy that expands the CSG program's reach to low-to-moderate income customers, non-profit institutions, and environmental justice communities. SF2688 includes the Community Access program language that will help modernize the state's CSG program and reach more of these subsets of customers. Programs aimed at reducing energy burden can be bolstered by:

- eliminating the ability of developers to check credit or income
- requiring developers to have at least 50% residential subscribers
- requiring developers to have at least 25% low-income subscribers
- Preference for governmental entities and nonprofit institutions



The Community Access portion of the bill strengthens the equitable distribution of local solar benefits while reducing energy burden and increasing environmental benefits for customers - all of which are crucial in creating a healthier climate and thriving communities. We must ensure the energy transition benefits all customers and does not exacerbate past harms created by centralized fossil fuel generation.

I urge committee members to support a robust CSG program and distributed generation market in Minnesota. Together we can create a clean energy future that strengthens Minnesota's communities and provides benefits to individuals most affected by climate change, energy inequity, and environmental injustice.

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