



April 12, 2024

Senator Nick Frentz
Energy, Utilities, Environment and Climate Committee
Senate Office Building
Saint Paul, MN

Re: The Great Plains Institute support for SF 5271

Dear Chair Frentz and Committee Members,

I am writing in support of SF 5271, which would help expand opportunities for communities throughout Minnesota to take advantage of SolarAPP+, an online permitting tool that streamlines and improves governmental permitting for home solar installations and reduces obligations on staff time for municipalities.

The U.S. Department of Energy and the National Renewable Energy Laboratory created the Solar Automated Permit Processing (SolarAPP+) tool. This online permitting software is free to municipalities and removes a resource-intensive and time-consuming review process by automatically determining compliance with safety and code criteria for a proposed home solar and battery system. SolarAPP+ offers direct financial benefits to homeowners, local governments, and Minnesota's growing solar industry.

The Great Plains Institute works with cities and counties across Minnesota to remove barriers and lower costs for property owners to benefit from the solar energy resources that are on their home, business, or land. The SolarAPP+ tool is a component of the national SolSmart voluntary certification program for local governments. Minnesota is a national leader in communities that are enrolled in or certified by SolSmart (over 50 communities), such as the cities of Austin, Hutchinson, Mountain Iron, and St. Francis, and Pine, Carlton, and Stearns counties. SolarAPP+ would directly benefit these and other communities as the market demand for residential solar accelerates.

Critically, cities and counties benefit from SolarAPP+, freeing up important staff resources, saving taxpayer funds, and improving the citizens' experience and energy bill savings. As of April 2024, more than 170 communities across the United States have adopted or are piloting the SolarAPP+ software, with more than 37,000 permits processed across the United States. We hope to expand this opportunity throughout Minnesota.

Thank you for your consideration of SF 5271, and support of expanding solar access and energy choice to all Minnesotans.

Sincerely,

Brian Ross
Vice President, Renewable Energy