

PUBLIC COMMENTS- JOINT INTERIM STANDING COMMITTEE ON GROWTH AND INFRASTRUCTURE

July 27, 2022

My name is Bari Levinson. I am a resident of Reno, and a retired physician from San Rafael California. I am also a volunteer with Sierra Club, although these comments are my own.

One thing I noticed when we moved to Reno is the paucity of rooftop solar panels. I am dismayed by this, given that Nevada has the perfect environment for solar power generation. I learned that the lack of rooftop solar was primarily due to the reduction in net metering rates by the PUCN in 2015. Fortunately, the legislature reversed this with a very good bill in 2017 (AB405) that restored adequate net metering rates. So, thank you! I am currently taking advantage of this law and putting solar on my roof this year.

But rooftop solar is not available to many people in Nevada. Whether they rent, can't afford to put panels on their roofs, or have a roof that is not situated well for solar panels, many Nevadans simply cannot take advantage of solar energy. They are missing out on the financial benefits over time, and on being a part of the transition to renewable energy.

Access to solar energy is also an environmental justice issue. The black, brown, and indigenous communities are most likely to suffer from increased energy burden, spending a greater percentage of their income on electricity. They also live in areas most affected by pollution from fossil fuel power plants. We must do more to provide affordable clean energy to these frontline communities.

One excellent solution is to use urban solar arrays, otherwise known as community solar. This provides an opportunity for all Nevadans, including renters and others that cannot take advantage of net metering, to access solar power.

As you all know, the legislature did pass an "expanded solar access" bill, AB465, in 2019. The goal of this bill is to expand solar access and lower electricity prices for thousands of Nevadans priced out of traditional rooftop solar systems. AB465 requires NV Energy to provide for at least 3, and not more than 10 community based solar resources. This is a pilot program to see how community solar can work in our state.

Three years after the passage of AB465, NV Energy has only one operational community solar site, at the Mojave High School in Las Vegas, with two other sites under construction, planned for completion late this year or early next; one is in Reno and the second is in Las Vegas.

While this may be considered progress, it is not extensive nor fast enough for the people suffering right now with high energy burden. It is also too slow in helping Nevada quickly ramp up its supply of renewable solar energy and reduce its use of fossil fuel power production.

I am asking the Nevada Legislature or the PUCN to hold NV Energy accountable to quickly expand this program to the maximum of 10 community solar sites allowed in AB465; and move from there to expanding to much more community solar in Nevada. The climate emergency is NOW, and we must address it in a speedy and equitable manner.