

June 23, 2023

Dear Chair Barrett, Chair Roy and Members of the Joint TUE Committee,

Please find attached and below my testimony in support of:

- [H.3230 / S.2164](#) which would establish a municipality's right to reasonably regulate solar power locations and prevent the current unfortunate exploitative and massively destructive solar development practices.
- [H.3225 / S.2150](#) An Act to Encourage Solar Development on Buildings and Disturbed Land. Here is a [fact sheet](#) in case that's helpful.
- [H.3144 / S.2089](#) An Act promoting solar energy canopies on large parking lots
- [H3229/ S.2163](#) An Act prohibiting public and ratepayer funding of clearcutting forests and woodlands.

These bills all encourage solar development where it makes the most sense; like built landscapes and disturbed lands so we do not damage or sacrifice our essential ecosystems, climate superheroes like forests, wetlands, and farmlands.

New man-made energy technologies are necessary but not to replace Nature's ancient technologies, which have always regulated the climate, until humans decided they knew better.

Bills [H.3230/ S.2164](#), in particular serve an additional urgent need, because towns are being bullied for trying to protect their lands and natural resources, as we've been [witnessing severe damage statewide](#) by big solar companies, ill-equipped to understand the impact of industrial solar installations on green lands, subsidized by taxpayers with no oversight by the state. This is a climate initiative gone wrong because of short sighted state policies.

As you've heard my neighboring small town of Shutesbury is now being [sued](#), using an outdated 1985 law from when solar was about rooftops. Their zoning bylaws would protect their water supply, and my town Amherst's water supply, which is downhill from the project's proposed 300 acres clearcutting, but this current law [has our hands tied](#) and costing towns time, money and undue stress. This bill would ensure municipalities can pass and enforce reasonable zoning regulations for large industrial solar installations proposed in the wrong place, just as they are allowed to do for any other development.

I've heard industry's concern that this would slow down the build out we should be expediting, but what if the haste and current inadequate practices actually sabotages our intelligently addressing the climate crisis. And if the concern is we need a more centralized streamlined approach, then let's figure one out that considers the unique attributes and needs of our varying landscapes and towns and that works in sync with natural systems.

To those who say the *amount of CO2 emissions decreased by solar arrays is greater than the amount the forest would have removed from the atmosphere*. I ask you to *challenge their math* to include all relevant factors, like the entire ecosystem carbon loss just from clearcutting and soil disturbance, and that...

- more than 50% of the carbon stored is in the soil, its roots and associated microorganisms and fungi
- how destroying the soil structure leaves the land vulnerable to yet more
 - erosion, flooding, drought, fires, disease,
 - threatening water cycle regulation and quality, nutrient cycling and biodiversity.

Forests are so much more than a carbon sink but if you don't allow them to mature, they can never fully realize that long term accumulation of carbon.

If they tell you, it's more expensive and complicated to install solar on built landscapes...Yes, but not as expensive as the **true costs** of losing the interconnected systems nature provides, and that all life depends on.

The Healey administration recently announced the Forests as Climate Solutions campaign to preserve forested land, planning to expand forest reserves and update forest management practices, additionally guided by the Healthy Soils Action Plan, the Resilient Lands Initiative and CECP land preservation goals. Solar siting is on the list of key actions.

And yet we still have this archaic legislation and state subsidies encouraging clearcutting forests and putting productive farmland at risk.

The farmers we talk to are generally not in favor of dual use on prime farmland if they convert high value and diverse crop production to low value sheep grazing and they need our support to apply regenerative farming practices that will improve soil health, nutrient density and ensure our food security, now more at risk with climate derangement and biodiversity collapse. Crop losses so far this year and the pandemic make it clear that we must prioritize the protection of productive farmland. CISA which has helped build our MA local food economy has urged that MA solar incentive policy not jeopardize future farm production, resilience, and food security.

We need a multipronged approach including energy alternatives, reducing consumption/ living within limits, protecting and regenerating the ecosystem that is breaking down, because we have broken natural law.

*It's time the right hand knows what the left hand is doing,
it's time to join the hands of all the branches of our state government,
It's time to untie the hands of the citizens in our towns so we can steward the land and together all
address the climate and biodiversity crisis with a wiser more holistic approach,
to actually leave our grandchildren a healthier planet and more just society.*

Thank you for your noble hard work and for seriously considering my comments.
I can offer materials, references, academic papers and articles to support the points made, if that would be helpful to you.

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