

Dear Energy and Technology Committee member,

We appreciate your work on improving the reliability of the state's electricity grid while increasing utility accountability and advancing the state's environmental goals with LCO 3920. I especially appreciate the bill's expansion of eligibility for the microgrid and resilience grant program, as well as the bill's recognition that adherence to the state's greenhouse gas reduction goals is a critical element of improving the reliability and resilience of our electricity grid.

I support this great start to ensure that Connecticut's electric utilities will be prepared to meet the challenge of increasingly frequent storm events as a result of climate change, while recognizing the need to support clean, reliable, and affordable electricity generation in a manner that leverages competition, reduces ratepayer risk, and achieves the state's climate goals.

But there are a few very important issues I would like to see added to this bill to make it even more effective:

Expand energy storage. Increased energy storage is essential to building resilience and reliability into our electricity grid. Coupled with rooftop solar, energy storage systems provide power for customers when the grid itself is down. Utility-scale battery storage is already being installed by many utilities (<https://www.nrel.gov/docs/fy19osti/74426.pdf>). Such facilities avoid the need for fossil fuel-powered peaker plants which add to greenhouse gas pollution when in operation.

Prohibit further expansion of natural gas pipelines. Every project that increases natural gas consumption leads to increased greenhouse gas emissions that endure for the lifetime of the project, typically for many decades. This contravenes our state's statutory intent of reducing overall greenhouse gas emissions. A case in point is the application of NTE to expand a natural gas feeder for its Killingly Energy Center power plant. It would produce a maximum of over 2,200,000 tons of CO₂e (carbon dioxide greenhouse gas equivalent) per year, continuing for the stated lifetime of the KEC of at least 30 years.

Expand the Residential Solar Investment Program (RSIP) to provide more economical solar options to homeowners and lower the burden on the grid. Like many sectors of the economy, the solar industry was negatively impacted by COVID-19, and expanding the RSIP program would provide the stability and support needed to ensure that we remain on track to more widely deploy solar and energy storage systems in the state. This is good for improving the reliability and resilience of the grid and is also a smart COVID-19 recovery measure.

Keep solar net metering until 2022. As with the expansion of RSIP and energy storage, maintaining the current net metering program for another year will provide stability to the solar industry and ensure predictability for homeowners looking to invest in clean, renewable technology. Given the other challenges facing the state, this would also allow PURA to focus on its grid modification efforts instead of a rushed new tariff program.

Thank you for tackling these important issues. Connecticut needs comprehensive climate change policies today for a better tomorrow.

Sincerely,
Dr. Henry Auer
New Haven, CT