

Via Electronic Submission

September 8, 2020

The Honorable Norman Needleman
Chair, Energy and Technology Committee
State Senate
Legislative Office Building, Room 3900
300 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

The Honorable David Arconti
Chair, Energy and Technology Committee
State House of Representatives
Legislative Office Building, Room 4034
300 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: NECEC Testimony on LCO No. 3920, An Act Concerning Emergency Response by Electric Distribution Companies and Revising the Regulation of Other Public Utilities

Dear Chair Needleman, Chair Arconti, and Members of the Energy and Technology Committee,

The Northeast Clean Energy Council (“NECEC”) appreciates the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding LCO No. 3920, *An Act Concerning Emergency Response by Electric Distribution Companies and Revising the Regulation of Other Public Utilities* heard by the Energy and Technology Committee (the “Committee”) on September 8, 2020. This bill has prompted a necessary discussion on electric reliability. We believe clean energy can provide significant resilience benefits, emissions reductions, economic development, and cost savings if supported by state policy, and we urge the Committee to include two modest, but important clean energy provisions that would provide customers with greater choice surrounding their energy options.

NECEC is a clean energy business, policy, and innovation organization whose mission is to create a world-class clean energy hub in the Northeast, delivering global impact with economic, energy and environmental solutions. NECEC is the only organization in the Northeast that covers all of the clean energy market segments, representing the business perspectives of investors and clean energy companies across every stage of development. NECEC members span the broad spectrum of the clean energy industry, including clean transportation, energy efficiency, wind, solar, energy storage, microgrids, fuel cells, and advanced and “smart” technologies.

The response by the state’s Electric Distribution Companies (“EDCs”) to Tropical Storm Isaias has highlighted shortcomings in the current electric system design. Now, the Committee has an opportunity to adopt legislation that will provide customers with expanded options for their primary energy and for reliable, clean backup power. We urge the Committee to amend LCO No. 3920 to include two provisions that would help achieve these objectives: support for energy storage and expansion of the Residential Solar Incentive Program (“RSIP”).

Energy Storage

Earlier this year, the Committee heard House Bill 5351, which would set a 1,000 megawatt storage target by 2030 and direct PURA to establish energy storage programs.

Energy storage is a dynamic resource that can provide many benefits to customers, to the grid, and towards the state's greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets. HB5351, which has already been vetted by the Committee, opens the door for the dynamic storage industry to participate in solving the cost, reliability, and emissions challenges facing Connecticut today and in the future.

Energy storage can be configured to provide customers with backup power in the case of future outages. By amending LCO No. 3920 to include the language from HB5351, the Committee will provide the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority with the authority to establish energy storage programs, granting customers greater energy flexibility and choice. This improvement will complement PURA's current work in developing an energy storage compensation program and would provide critical framework for a more comprehensive approach to storage across multiple programmatic platforms.

Residential Solar Incentive Program

The RSIP is due to lapse this fall without legislative action, yet successor programs to replace net metering are not set to begin until 2022. The Committee should act to ensure that residential customers continue to be able to deploy solar on their homes while the successor programs are being designed and implemented. This program is crucial for residential customers who want to deploy solar. RSIP is also responsible for supporting the residential solar industry workforce and, should it lapse, we fear that the industry, which has already experienced significant difficulty in the face of the COVID crisis, would result in additional job losses in Connecticut. We urge the Committee to amend LCO No. 3920 to increase the RSIP goal from 350 megawatts to 450 megawatts to continue this successful program.

And, in order to maximize the value to customers and to the grid, RSIP should include a mechanism to encourage deployment of solar-plus-storage installations. The resilience, capacity, and emissions benefits of such paired installations would enhance the program and help address reliability issues for the state's energy customers.

Conclusion

We thank the Committee for discussing the critically important topic of energy reliability and we urge the Committee to recognize the role that energy storage and RSIP can play in providing resilience for the state's ratepayers. Please contact us with any questions. We look forward to working with the General Assembly as this bill progresses.

Sincerely,



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cc: Members of the Energy and Technology Committee