

KATHY CASTOR
14TH DISTRICT, FLORIDA

SELECT COMMITTEE ON
THE CLIMATE CRISIS
CHAIR

COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND COMMERCE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
CONSUMER PROTECTION AND
COMMERCE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENERGY



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0914

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
2052 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-3376

DISTRICT OFFICE:
4144 NORTH ARMENIA AVENUE
SUITE 300
TAMPA, FL 33607
(813) 871-2817
www.castor.house.gov

February 9, 2022

The Honorable Wilton Simpson
President
409 The Capitol
404 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100

The Honorable Lauren Book
Democratic Leader
228 Senate Building
404 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100

The Honorable Chris Sprowls
Speaker
420 The Capitol
402 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300

The Honorable Evan Jenne
Democratic Leader
316 The Capitol
402 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300

RE: Help Floridians Lower Electric Bills: Keep and Improve Solar and Net Metering

Dear President Simpson, Leader Book, Speaker Sprowls and Leader Jenne:

Last year in the United States, 20 climate disasters each caused over \$1 billion in economic losses through severe storms, tropical cyclones, flooding events, drought, wildfire, and a winter storm.¹ Florida alone experienced \$600 million in economic losses in 2021 from climate disasters.² Despite these costs, the state of Florida has failed to adopt policies to reduce greenhouse gas pollution that fuels disasters, more frequent flooding, extreme heat - and thereby increase costs for Floridians. This failure persists even though clean energy is cheap energy: the cost of rooftop solar has dropped by 64% in the last decade and with the right state and local policies to address soft costs, costs could fall even further.³

Florida is blessed with abundant and affordable solar energy, and all Floridians should be able to access this renewable resource to help them save money on their electric bills, avoid vulnerability to volatile fossil fuel prices, and catalyze the continued growth of an industry that creates good-paying jobs and strengthens local economies. We write to express our concerns with SB 1024 and HB 741, legislation that would effectively end net metering for rooftop solar in Florida and jeopardize over 40,000 jobs in Sunshine State.

Solar power is a true cost-saver for Floridians and helps reduce harmful air pollution and increase energy resilience. During extreme weather events, rooftop solar and energy storage can provide essential back-up electricity. Resilient, distributed electricity generation is increasingly critical as Florida experiences more severe extreme weather and threats to the electric grid as a

¹ U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, "[Billion-Dollar Weather and Climate Disasters](#)".

² Ibid.

³ David Feldman et al., [U.S. Solar Photovoltaic System and Energy Storage Cost Benchmark: Q1 2020 \(National Renewable Energy Laboratory, Jan. 2021\)](#).

result of climate change. Conventional alternatives like diesel generators only harm public health and exacerbate the climate crisis.⁴ Florida's elected leaders should incentivize rapid deployment of resilient distributed solar energy generation paired with back-up energy storage. Congress encouraged states to consider adopting net metering to expand fuel diversity and promote renewable energy.⁵ Under existing law, Floridians may receive credits for the excess electricity they send back to the electric grid at retail rates. Recent polling shows that 93% of Florida voters support net metering.⁶ Net metering programs have very little impact on total electricity costs.⁷ SB 1024 and HB 741 would harm consumers and the growing solar energy industry in Florida.

Economic Benefits of Rooftop Solar

In the State of Florida, rooftop solar:

- Provides more than 40,000 jobs
- Generates almost \$3.2 billion in household income
- Provides nearly \$3.3 billion in Federal, state, and local tax revenues
- Adds \$10.6 billion to the Gross Domestic Product.⁸

In addition to construction jobs, rooftop solar creates jobs in the high-tech manufacturing, information technology, and professional business services industries.⁹ Expanding rooftop solar in Florida through net metering helps diversify the economy and helps draw investment into Florida. There are more than 400 solar energy businesses in Florida.¹⁰ Maintaining the economic engine net metering provides is essential to the stability and growth of Florida's economy.

Rooftop Solar and Equity

Distributed solar energy provides unique resilience benefits in the event of extreme weather, like Hurricane Michael in 2018 which left 182,000 customers without access to electricity from the grid for more than a week.¹¹ Medically vulnerable and older residents are especially dependent on electricity and Florida has the highest percentage of senior citizens in the country.¹² More than 175,000 Floridians are electricity-dependent (based on medical conditions) Medicare recipients; this is the third-highest number in the United States.¹³

In addition to resilience benefits, incentivizing rooftop solar deployment through net metering benefits all Floridians because it reduces air pollution which can exacerbate health problems. Exposure to air pollution increases the likelihood of severe impacts, including death,

⁴ Vote Solar, [Resilient Clean Energy for California: Protecting Vulnerable Communities, Critical Facilities, and the California Economy with Solar + Storage](#) (Feb. 2020).

⁵ Energy Policy Act of 2005, Pub. L. No. 109-58, § 1251 (2005), 16 U.S.C. § 2621(d).

⁶ Florida Solar Energy Industries Association (FlaSEIA), [Preserve Florida's Rooftop Solar Industry](#) (2021).

⁷ Andrew Satchwell et al, [Financing Impacts of Net-Metered PV on Utilities and Ratepayers: A Scoping Study of Two Prototypical U.S. Utilities](#) (Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, Sep. 2014).

⁸ Florida Solar Energy Industries Association (FlaSEIA), [Preserve Florida's Rooftop Solar Industry](#) (2021).

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Audra D.S. Burch and Patricia Mazzei, "[Thousands in Florida May Not Get Electricity Back for Weeks.](#)" (The New York Times. Oct. 14, 2018).

¹² Solar United Neighbors and Vote Solar, [The State of Rooftop Solar in Florida](#) (Aug. 2020).

¹³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, [HHS emPOWER Map](#) (Dec. 2021).

from COVID-19. Rooftop solar deployment also reduces costs associated with developing new electricity generating facilities and transmission lines. In fact, recent studies conclude that rooftop solar provides net benefits to society, even with net metering compensation factored in.¹⁴

We support strategies to increase access to rooftop solar energy for all Floridians, including those who rent their homes and/or live in multi-family apartment buildings. For this reason, Chair Castor introduced the Community Solar Consumer Choice Act of 2021 (H.R. 2764) to expand access to solar energy, including expanding net metering for community solar subscribers. Florida should be a national leader and grow the rooftop solar industry.

SB 1024 and HB 741

We agree with the Florida Public Service Commission when it concluded that net metering “is an effective means of encouraging the development of demand-side renewable energy systems that allow participants to offset their energy usage.”¹⁵ We are concerned that SB 1024 and HB 741 would harm consumers by limiting access to resilient rooftop solar and harm local jobs and economic growth by crashing the solar energy industry in Florida. We are the “Sunshine State” and should harness low-cost solar energy to benefit Floridians! If enacted, the legislation could increase unemployment and lead to more spending on out-of-state fossil fuels like fracked gas that has harmful impacts.¹⁶ As it is, more than \$5 billion leaves Florida’s economy each year to pay for out-of-state fracked gas.¹⁷ Florida is among the most-dependent U.S. states on fracked gas, leaving Floridians exposed to volatile swings in gas prices.¹⁸

A brighter future is possible – one that charts a future for lower electric bills and less pollution for Floridians. We respectfully urge you to defeat this legislation and support efforts to grow the solar energy industry, attract more investment to Florida, expand economic diversification, create more local jobs, reduce exposure to volatile fossil fuel prices, and protect public health.

Sincerely,

_____/s/_____

Kathy Castor
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

_____/s/_____

Charlie Crist
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

_____/s/_____

Val Demings
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

_____/s/_____

Ted Deutch
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

¹⁴ Environment America, [The True Value of Solar: Measuring the Benefits of Rooftop Solar Power](#) (Jul. 2019).

¹⁵ Florida Public Service Commission, [Order No. PSC-2019-0509-FOF-EG](#) (Nov. 26, 2019).

¹⁶ Solar United Neighbors and Vote Solar, [The State of Rooftop Solar in Florida](#) (Aug. 2020).

¹⁷ Vote Solar, [The Costs and Risks of Florida’s Dependence on Natural Gas](#) (Jul. 2020).

¹⁸ Ibid.

_____/s/_____

Al Lawson
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

_____/s/_____

Darren Soto
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

CC: The Honorable Ron DeSantis, Governor, State of Florida
The Honorable Andrew Giles Fay, Chairman, Florida Public Service Commission
The Honorable Art Graham, Commissioner, Florida Public Service Commission
The Honorable Gary F. Clark, Commissioner, Florida Public Service Commission
The Honorable Mike La Rosa, Commissioner, Florida Public Service Commission
The Honorable Gabriella Passidomo, Commissioner, Florida Public Service Commission
The Honorable members of the Florida State House Subcommittee on Tourism,
Infrastructure & Energy