



Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy

In support of

S.1876 and H.2700 An Act to increase the renewable portfolio standard and ensure compliance with the Global Warming Solutions Act

S.1849 and H.3395 An Act transitioning Massachusetts to 100 percent renewable energy

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The passage of the 2016 Act to Promote Energy Diversity, a long-awaited and welcome omnibus energy bill, was a major step in putting “Massachusetts back in the top tier of states driving clean energy development.”¹ Unfortunately, language related to increasing the State’s Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS), supported by the Senate, was not included in that bill.

Making a transition to clean energy is essential to decreasing the carbon emissions that fuel climate change and to redirecting the catastrophic trajectory we are on. Many pieces need to be in place if we are serious about addressing climate change in any meaningful way, and there are multiple bills pending for action this session that are important to this effort, including: pricing carbon to deal with the greatest source of emissions in the Commonwealth – transportation; removing the net metering cap on solar development to keep the solarizing boom going; and modernizing our grid in keeping with a new era of energy sourcing and distribution.

Today’s hearing is focused on two major bills critical to this mission: increasing the Renewable Portfolio Standard, the linchpin of a shift to clean energy, and transitioning Massachusetts to 100% renewable energy. These bills will signal a firm commitment and pathway to transition to 100% renewable energy by 2050.

Why is increasing the Renewable Portfolio Standard so important? The RPS is a regulatory mandate to increase production of energy from renewable sources such as wind, solar, biomass and other alternatives to fossil fuel generation. It is the lever on demand for renewable energy in a state. Current RPS targets are clearly too low given recent policies to increase the supply of renewable energy. Increases in clean energy already on the books will quickly fill the requirements of current RPS targets and stop new clean energy efforts in their tracks. A recent analysis² by the Northeast Clean Energy Council (NECEC) in partnership with Mass Energy shows that increasing the RPS from its current low target of 1% increase/year, to 2%/year alongside Connecticut’s 1.5% annual increase, will align supply and demand. An increase to 3%/year, with Connecticut’s 1.5% annual increase, will drive the

¹ Ken Kimmel, President Union of Concerned Scientists. August 1, 2016. Accessed 9/10/17

² An Analysis of the Massachusetts Renewable Portfolio Standard, May 2017:

<http://www.necec.org/files/necec/PDFS/An%20Analysis%20of%20the%20Massachusetts%20Renewable%20Portfolio%20Standard.pdf>. Accessed 9/10/17.

development of new renewable capacity needed to meet Massachusetts' energy and climate goals beyond 2020. This bill also includes municipal lighting plants, currently exempt from the mandates of the Global Warming Solutions Act, to ensure that all energy agencies responsible for the transmission and supply of electricity within the state share in the responsibility to support the transition to clean energy.

Increasing our renewable energy capacity in Massachusetts is essential to helping us meet emissions reduction targets mandated by the Global Warming Solutions Act. But clean energy is also the future of energy and makes sense in its own right because of the many economic and health benefits derived.

Making a solid commitment to 100% renewable energy that is economy-wide with specific timelines and ambitious and robust targets is also an imperative. Existing and emerging technologies in energy storage, energy efficiency and renewable energy technology are key to achieving 100% renewable energy. Massachusetts is uniquely positioned in terms of its research capabilities to push these efforts ever further, demonstrating leadership and providing a model to the rest of the nation. S.1849/H.3395 provides a viable plan and path for moving forward into the 21st century.

All the arrows are pointing in the same direction. Society must make a switch away from emissions-emitting energy sources if we are to have a livable future. Studies³ have shown that making this transition will save lives and improve the health of thousands, stimulate growth in the renewable energy industry and related jobs⁴, boost the overall economy of the Commonwealth, and protect us from rising gas prices and volatility in the energy market, all of this with minimal impact on cost to consumers.

The options outlined within these bills are possible; what is needed is the political will to make them happen. This is the time for bold action. We know what needs to be done. We can seize the opportunity presented by enacting these bills and showing the rest of the country how it can be done, or we can choose to move in an incremental fashion that fails to meet the daunting challenge of climate change. The League of Women Voters has long championed a forward-looking approach to energy. LWVMA urges your support of both these important bills so that Massachusetts can help shape the future and continue to show what leadership looks like.

Thank you for your consideration.

³ <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/press-releases/power-plant-carbon-standard/>;
<http://newscenter.lbl.gov/2014/11/18/new-research-quantifies-health-benefits-of-reducing-greenhouse-gas-emissions/>;
<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/hsph-in-the-news/massachusetts-carbon-bill-health-benefits/>

⁴ Estimated at 37,000 new jobs between 2018-2030 - An Analysis of the Massachusetts Renewable Portfolio Standard, May 2017:
<http://www.necec.org/files/necec/PDFS/An%20Analysis%20of%20the%20Massachusetts%20Renewable%20Portfolio%20Standard.pdf>. Accessed 9/10/17.