



March 21, 2024

The Honorable Representative Joseph J. Solomon, Jr.
Chairman House Corporations Committee
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith St
Providence RI, 02903

RE: Bill Number: 7426 Relating to PUBLIC UTILITIES AND CARRIERS -- SOLAR DECOMMISSIONING PLANS

Dear Chairman Solomon and Honorable Members of the House Corporations Committee:

I am writing to express our strong support for your House Bill 7426, which proposes important measures to ensure the responsible decommissioning of ground-mounted solar systems in our state. This act would require developers to submit decommissioning plans to municipalities at the time they apply for permits, thus promoting transparency and accountability throughout the project lifecycle.

The requirement for developers to submit decommissioning plans to municipalities is a crucial step towards effective planning and management of ground-mounted solar systems. By having these plans on file, municipalities can proactively address potential environmental and safety concerns associated with decommissioning, ensuring that the process is conducted in a responsible manner.

Furthermore, the provision for the Department of Environmental Management, in consultation with the Office of Energy Resources, to make model decommissioning plans publicly available and offer technical assistance to municipalities and developers is commendable. This support will facilitate consistent and informed decision-making, empowering municipalities to implement best practices in solar system decommissioning.

Importantly, House Bill 7426 respects the autonomy of municipalities by not overriding or modifying existing local ordinances related to decommissioning. Instead, it establishes a statewide minimum requirement, providing a framework for municipalities to build upon based on their unique needs and circumstances. This approach strikes a balance between standardization and local flexibility, ensuring that municipalities can tailor decommissioning regulations to suit their specific contexts.

One potential amended suggestion, the idea of requiring decommissioning plans at the Preliminary Plan phase. This would ensure that these critical documents receive thorough review by Planning Boards, rather than being left solely to Administrative Officers at the Final Plan stage. Such a requirement would further enhance the robustness and effectiveness of the decommissioning planning process. By establishing clear guidelines for solar system decommissioning, House Bill 7426 enhances regulatory clarity and streamlines administrative processes, ultimately benefiting both developers and local communities.

In conclusion, I urge you to support House Bill 7426 and its efforts to promote responsible decommissioning of ground-mounted solar systems. This legislation represents a significant step forward in advancing sustainable energy development in our state while safeguarding the interests of local communities.

On behalf of the League of Cities and Towns thank you for allowing me the opportunity to express our views.

Sincerely,

David M. Bodah
Associate Director

Cc: House Corporations Committee
Ernie Almonte, Executive Director, RILCT