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Joseph Solomon / Chair
House Committee on Corporations
Via Email HouseCorporations@rilegislature.gov

RE: H-6085 AN ACT RELATING TO PUBLIC UTILITIES AND CARRIERS -- NET METERING

Dear Chairman Solomon,

As Business Manager of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local Union 99, I represent over 1000 Men and Women who provide their skills for our Signatory Contractors in the Electrical Industry in the State of Rhode Island and nearby Massachusetts. I also am one of, if not the only voice for the men and women who are not yet fortunate enough to be represented by an electrical labor union in the state of Rhode Island.

I wish to express our strong support for **H-6085** for the following reasons:

The men and women of Local 99 have been in the renewable energy business for many decades. We started to further engage in 2008 when we installed the largest solar installation in the State of Rhode Island, at that time, on our own facility. A whopping 50 KW system. As we know, the industry has grown to where systems 1000 times that size are becoming routine.

After collaborating for several years with our environmental, elected officials and development partners, we were successful in passing groundbreaking legislation that assisted in hitting our renewable energy targets while preserving our critical ecosystems with Solar Siting Legislation.

There is no question from any side as to what the purpose of that legislation was. Move solar development to more environmentally desirable areas and continue towards our goal of a 100% renewable energy State. This move, which my union supported then and supports now, was predicted to negatively impact employment in this sector as we committed to this important transition. As anticipated, it did. We can accept that as we transition to projects such as canopy, rooftops and brownfields.

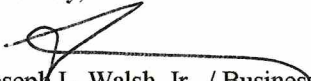
There is no doubt at all that solar canopies were then, and are now, considered environmentally desirable locations. Solar canopies not only create a platform for renewable installations that allows the vast majority of the land below to still be utilized for its existing purpose. They also greatly reduce the *urban heat island* which is known to elevate temperature due to the absorption and radiating of the heat from the rays of our sun when placed above asphalt.

If the definition of ground mount systems means to imply "mounted to the ground", then many ground mount systems in brown fields and other desirable sites would not meet the definition. This is due to many of these systems being ballasted systems, which do not require nor allow ground penetrations and are essentially tri-pod installations that are held to the ground by nothing more than a counter weight such as a concrete block. I would find it unlikely that those systems would then be considered something else.

The goal of the Solar Siting legislation was to create projects such as the NORAD project. I do not believe it is a stretch in any way to refer to solar canopies as rooftop, particularly when they will land in the same height as many of the roofs in the State of RI and leave nearly all the acreage below available for its intended use. Without that reasonable interpretation, it become necessary to clarify the statute to solidify what the well-understood intent always was.

In conclusion, if we wish to actually make a meaningful difference in the future for the people this planet, we must remove the roadblocks that stymie meaningful change. **I urge passage of H-6085** whereas it will codify the original intent of the Solar Siting legislation that so many worked for so long on and remove any chance of varying definitions over time that could make a project economically impractical.

Sincerely,


Joseph L. Walsh, Jr. / Business Manager
Cc: Committee Members