An Open Letter to Gov. Newsom and CPUC: Please increase local solar, prioritize equity & bring more local battery storage to California

(Letter follows logos)
Dear Governor Newsom (cc: Members of the California Public Utilities Commission)

California’s climate emergency accelerated in 2020. Californians again faced the unacceptable choice of living without electricity or living with increased risk of wildfires, which displaced hundreds of thousands, and endangered millions, producing some of the worst air quality in the world.

This unfolding climate crisis, compounded by the economic pain of the pandemic, has touched nearly every resident. And, as is often the case, our state’s most at-risk communities have been disproportionately impacted, with too many residents struggling to pay their electricity bills while suffering from the effects of fossil fuel pollution.

It is against this backdrop that we urge California to prioritize the following goals when it considers changes to net metering, one of the state's most important and successful clean energy and climate policies.

Net metering allows Californians to use sunshine to power their homes, apartments, schools, farms and businesses, and receive a bill credit for the excess electricity they send to the grid. Net metering is the bedrock policy that made California the nation's rooftop solar leader with more than one million solar installations and nearly 75,000 solar jobs.

Yet net metering may be jeopardized by California's investor-owned utilities, who are opposed to the growth of rooftop solar and storage because it threatens their business model, which depends on building an ever bigger and more expensive grid at the expense of ratepayers. The utilities have improperly argued for years that rooftop solar and storage does not serve the interests of at-risk communities.

We are concerned that ill-informed changes to net metering, such as slashing solar bill savings or imposing new fees on solar users, will set back California's climate change and environmental justice goals, consign the public to annual power outages, reduce customer bill savings and harm low-income access to solar energy.

To keep solar in the hands of everyday Californians, we should preserve the framework of net metering and improve it to meet the following goals:

1) Keep Rooftop Solar Growing to Fight Climate Change and Build a Safer, More Resilient Grid: Increasing the pace of rooftop solar and battery adoption is critical to meeting California's 100% clean energy goal, provides resilience in the face of power outages, empowers consumers with better choices to control their energy bills, and supports nearly 75,000 jobs in every corner of our state, with increasing investments and hiring from local job training organizations.

2) Prioritize Equity: Bring Rooftop Solar + Storage to More Low-Income Families and Communities: Equity and low-income access to the benefits of clean energy are paramount. Today, rooftop solar is growing in lower- and middle-income neighborhoods, including on affordable multifamily apartment buildings. We should accelerate this trend so that more of California’s Environmental Justice and Social Justice (ESJ) communities are included.

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1 The California Public Utilities Commission's February 2019 Environmental and Social Justice Action Plan defines Environmental Justice and Social Justice (ESJ) communities as including but not limited to 1) Disadvantaged Communities located in the top 25% of communities identified by Cal EPA's CalEnviroScreen, 2) all...
and renters benefit from the wealth, savings, reliability, resilience, health and workforce benefits of local clean energy. We must prioritize local clean energy deployment in ESJ communities so that they are not left behind by the clean energy transition, but instead are leading it and protecting themselves against the impacts of climate change.

3) Make Solar-Charged Batteries Standard with Rooftop Solar by 2030: Solar-charged batteries reduce strain on the grid and can help accelerate the retirement of polluting fossil fuel power plants. They also allow people to keep their lights on and food fresh during power outages without turning to dirty and dangerous backup generators. On the heels of California achieving one million solar rooftops last year, we should now strive for one million solar-charged batteries by 2030.

California cannot expect to decarbonize and achieve 100% clean energy without empowering the state’s 40 million residents and businesses to contribute to this effort. All Californians must continue to have viable, cost-saving options to access clean energy and protect their families from extreme weather and outages. We must ensure a future that prioritizes the continued growth of local solar and battery storage and the benefits they provide to all California families.

Sincerely,

Brightline Defense
San Diego Urban Sustainability Coalition
CA Alliance for Community Energy
Consumer Watchdog
Climate Action Campaign
SanDiego350
API Forward Movement
Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments
Climate Hawks Vote
Environment California
League of Women Voters of California
350 Conejo / San Fernando Valley
350 Humboldt
Indivisible South Bay LA
San Diego Climate Hub
Long Beach Alliance for Clean Energy
Solar Rights Alliance
Clean Coalition
350 South Bay Los Angeles
350 Marin
350 Bay Area
The Climate Center
BikeSD
Better APC
Change Begins With ME (Indivisible)
Business For Good San Diego
North County Climate Change Alliance

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Dave Rosenfeld
Craig Lewis
Sherry Lear
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Laura Neish
Woody Hastings
Kyle Heiskala
Sam Mazzeo
Tama Becker-Varano
Mikey Knab
Marian Sedio

Tribal lands, 3) households with incomes below 80 percent of the area median income, and 4) census tracts with household incomes below 80 percent of the area or state median income.
350 Sacramento
Sacramento Climate Coalition
350 Ventura County Climate Hub
Pacific Environment
Hammond Climate Solutions
Center for Biological Diversity
350 Santa Barbara
Elders Climate Action, NorCal chapter
Elders Climate Action, SoCal chapter
350 Butte County
The Center for Community Energy
Climate First: Replacing Oil & Gas (CFROG)
Mothers Out Front
Defenders of Wildlife
Vote Solar
Menlo Spark
San Francisco Bay Physicians for Social Responsibility
350 Silicon Valley
SLO Climate Coalition
Western Watersheds Project
Basin and Range Watch
Hey Social Good
Green Love, Associated Students SDSU
5th Dot Studio
National Parks Conservation Association
San Diego Green Building Council
National Skill Pool
I Am Green
Active San Gabriel Valley
The Climate Reality Project
Morongo Basin Conservation Association
Citizens' Climate Lobby of San Diego
San Francisco League of Conservation Voters
Sustainable Claremont
Del Paso Heights Growers Alliance
Samuel Lawrence Foundation
San Diego Energy District Foundation
Mojave Desert Land Trust
The Surfrider Foundation San Diego County Chapter
The Wilderness Society
California Wilderness Coalition
Glendale Environmental Coalition
Robert Carr Consultants
South Bay Sustainable Communities Network
Environmental Center of San Diego
Corona Enterprises, LLC
American Federation of Teachers Local 1931
CA Interfaith Power & Light
California Native Plant Society
United Women of East Africa
S.U.N Sustainable Urban Network

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UNITEHERE! 30
SD Green New Deal Alliance
Vet Voice Foundation
Local Clean Energy Alliance
Citizens' Climate Lobby, Pasadena-Foothills Chapter
The Amargosa Conservancy
CleanEarth4Kids
Protect Our Communities Foundation
Project Green Home
Green Sanctuary
Greenbank Associates
Pacific Energy Policy Center
Park Day School
Citizens' Climate Lobby - San Mateo County Chapter
CADEM Renters Council
Berkeley Tenants Union
Climate Reality Project Orange County
Tuleyome
Klype LLC
Let's Green CA!, an initiative of the Romero Institute
SEIU-UHW
LA County Democratic Central Committeemember
LA County Democratic Central Committeemember
East Bay Clean Power Alliance
ResistanceSF
Rise Up To Action
Californians for Disability Rights (CDR)
Climate Health Now
Futures Unbound
Lake County Democratic Party
Coalition for the San Francisco Neighborhoods
Northcoast Environmental Center
Safe Alternatives for our Forest Environment
Electric Auto Assn CA Central Coast Chapter
Planning Association for the Richmond
Ban SUP
Environmental Working Group
Center for Sustainable Energy
Fossil Free California
Stand.earth
NorCal Resilience Network
SPUR
Irish American Caucus, CDP
East Bay for Everyone
Oil and Gas Action Network
UNITE HERE Local 11
Indivisible East Bay
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Los Gatos
Ecology Center
AFSCME Council 57
Our Revolution East Bay

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Ada Briceno
Lawrence Baskett
Laurie West Roberts
Pheng Lor
Kim Carter-Martinez
Jake Varghese
Dean Democratic Club of Silicon Valley
RootsAction
Marin Audubon Society
Los Angeles Audubon Society
Silicon Valley Youth Climate Action
Democrats of the Desert
California Public Interest Research Group (CALPIRG)
CALPIRG Students
Long Beach Community Table
350 Bay Area Action
Long Beach Gray Panthers
Siegel & Strain Architects
International Longshore and Warehouse Union
McDargh Enterprises
Food & Water Watch
Sustainable Mill Valley
West County Democratic Club
Wellstone Democratic Renewal Club
South Berkeley NOW!
NorCal Broads
Extinction Rebellion San Francisco Bay Area
Sunrise Bay Area
Watershed Alliance of Marin
Sunnyvale Democratic Club
R&N Strategies
Bay Area Community Services
DSA San Diego
San Diego County Democrats for Environmental Action
Alameda County Democratic Party
Yuba County Democratic Party
Berkeley Mayor Jesse Arreguin
El Cerrito Mayor Pro Tem Gabriel Quinto
Taisha Brown, Chair, California Democratic Party Black Caucus
Carolyn Fowler, Chair, California Democratic Party Women's Caucus
Joy Sterling, Chair, California Democratic Party Rural Caucus
Brigette Hunley, DNC Delegate; Chair, California Democratic Party
Computer and Internet Caucus
Igor Tregub, Chair, California Democratic Party Environmental Caucus
Ann Crosbie, Chair, California Democratic Party Children's Caucus
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Ron Cohen, Chair, California Democratic Party Veterans Caucus
Ruth Carter, Chair, California Democratic Party Seniors Caucus
Tiffany Woods, NorCal Co-Chair, California Democratic Party
LGBT Caucus

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Norman Solomon
Roger Harris
Travis Longcore
Abhimanyu Jayaraman
Stephen Jaffe
Jenn Engstrom
Ria Coen Gilbert
Kristen Cox
Nora Privitera
Karen Reside
Henry Siegel, FAIA LEED AP
Christopher Christensen
Elizabeth McDargh
Alexandra Nagy
Max Perrey
Cesar Zepeida
Pamela Drake
Ariella Granett
Maureen Forney
Leah Redwood
Elliott Wong
Laura Chatron
Linda Sell
Rodney Nickens
Rena Rickles
Kyle Knoebel
Courtney Ransom
Deepa Sharma, Chair, Asian Pacific Islander Caucus
Ruscal Cayangyang, Assembly District 14 Delegate and Fmr.Vallejo School Board President
Crystal Araujo, AD20 Delegate
Democratic Party of Contra Costa County
Berkeley Democratic Caucus
DNC Youth Council Chair Michael Kapp
J Z Design & Build Inc
DNC Delegate Keith K Umemoto
DNC Delegate Sean Dugar
DNC Delegate Garry Shay
DNC Delegate Christine Pelosi
DNC Delegate David Atkins
Hayward Councilmember J Francisco Zermeno C
DNC Delegate Otto Lee
DNC Delegate Susie Shannon