

Testimony of
Zoe Ketola
Department of Social Sciences Student
Michigan Technological University

Before the
Michigan House Energy Committee
on
HB4715 and HB4716

SUPPORT

October 27, 2021

Chairperson Bellino and Michigan House Energy Committee Members —

Thank you for allowing this opportunity to speak in support of House Bills 4715 and 4716. I am a life-long resident of the Upper Peninsula and know that the community solar enabling policies outlined in the introduced legislation can afford Michigan residents improved energy resilience and an increased freedom of choice regarding their energy options. Community solar can also help to ease the financial burden that energy costs place on so many Michigan households every year.

In Michigan, low-income families (those making <\$30,000 annually) spend an average 15% of their income on energy. Households are considered energy burdened when they spend more than 6% of their income on energy costs according to *Elevate Energy*. Community solar projects can help reduce this burden through bill credits and through low-income accessibility programs to community solar.

Community solar can act as a stepping-stone towards solving some of Michigan's energy issues, and I know community solar could have helped my family when I was growing up. Every winter brought the fear that we wouldn't be able to keep the lights on and buy groceries. I know that accessible community solar could have helped alleviate the stress my mother felt each month when the bills came in, no matter how many lights we turned off or how cold we kept the house in an attempt to lower our electricity bill by even a few dollars.

In particular, HB 4715 Sec. 235 (1)(c) calls out the need to ensure that mechanisms are included to ensure community solar subscription accessibility for low-income households and low-income service organizations. The development of these mechanisms is critical to working toward the end of energy poverty in Michigan. The very existence of a community solar project is not enough. The commission must work with low-income parties in conjunction with electric providers to ensure equitable access is at the forefront of future community solar projects in Michigan, for the sake of families like mine.

I don't think any person should ever live with the worry that they won't be able to feed their children because they have to pay their electricity bill. I urge you to pass House Bills 4715 & 4716 out of

committee today in the name of providing expanded energy choice and to help ease the electricity cost burden that so many Michigan residents face. Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Zoë L. Ketola". The signature is written in a cursive style with a distinct loop for the letter 'Z'.

Zoe Ketola
2013E Woodmar Dr
Houghton, MI 49931
zoelketola@gmail.com