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PRESS RELEASE

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Legislature Passes Solar Energy Bill, Lifts Net Metering Cap

BOSTON – **Senator Anne M. Gobi (D-Spencer)** and **Representative Donald R. Berthiaume, Jr. (R-Spencer)** have announced that the Massachusetts Legislature has passed legislation that raises the solar net-metering cap and creates a long-term roadmap for the continued growth of solar power in the Commonwealth. These updates will provide a stable framework that will better protect the Commonwealth's ratepayers while supporting the growth of the solar industry in a cost-effective manner.

The legislation raises the net metering cap by a total of 6 percent - 3 percent for private facilities and 3 percent for public facilities – which will allow solar projects currently in the development pipeline to move forward.

"I have been a strong proponent of raising the cap and encouraging solar projects," said Senator Gobi. "This bill is a solid first step in a sustainable renewable energy policy for the state."

"I would like to thank the conference committee for all of their extensive work on this solar legislation," said Representative Berthiaume. "The passage of this bill will ensure that the many solar projects in waiting can be completed while supporting solar based jobs throughout the commonwealth".

"Our climate is changing and we must work towards an energy future that reduces our reliance on fossil fuels while promoting the use of clean energy alternatives," said **Senate President Stan Rosenberg (D-Amherst)**. "I am pleased we have found a path forward which ensures we will remain a leader in green energy and continue building a sustainable future for our Commonwealth."

"This compromise will keep solar growing as part of our overall efforts to combat climate change," said **Senator Benjamin Downing (D-Pittsfield), Senate Chairman of the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities, and Energy.**

"The Senate's action today is a significance step towards stability for solar energy generation for our state and region. The strong linkage to our environment and economy is indisputable," said **Senate Minority Leader Bruce Tarr (R – Gloucester).** "Ultimately, this bill will promote more solar energy generating projects in Massachusetts which will support thousands of jobs, lower the cost of incentive programs, and preserve full credits for municipalities and residents."

This legislation ensures that Massachusetts will reach its goal of 1600 megawatts of solar installed in the Commonwealth. Upon reaching that goal, reforms to the net metering program will go into effect. As the solar industry matures and the cost of projects continues to decrease, the reformed program will guarantee that incentives also decrease to reduce the cost for ratepayers. Future projects will receive credits equal to 60% of the retail rate for electricity instead of the full retail amount.

Under this law, residential and municipally-owned systems are exempt from changes to the net metering program, and will continue to receive credits equal to the full retail rate. Additionally, projects installed prior to reaching 1600MW will continue to receive current net metering rates for 25 years from the date of installation.

Finally, the bill directs the Department of Energy Resources to develop a new, long term solar incentive program to support the expanded use of solar beyond the Commonwealth's 1600 megawatt goal. This program will prioritize low income, community-shared and municipal projects, and provides a foundation for the stable and continued growth of the solar industry.

The bill now goes to the Governor for his signature.

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