

United States Senate

June 10, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Leader McConnell and Leader Schumer,

As you continue to consider legislation to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, we urge you to include help for the clean energy industry, which has been hit particularly hard by a business downturn and job loss. The clean energy sector helps states such as Massachusetts reduce greenhouse gas emissions, achieve important public health goals, and employ workers who contribute to economic growth. The industry and its workers need our help and support, which could take the form of clean energy tax benefits, energy efficiency programs, grid infrastructure funding, or other workforce support.

The COVID-19 pandemic has dealt a devastating blow to businesses and workers in the clean energy sector. In March and April, the clean energy sector lost nearly 600,000 jobs, erasing more than twice as many jobs than it had created in the past three years.¹ As a global clean energy hub, Massachusetts was hit particularly hard over those two months, losing nearly 19,000 clean energy jobs, according to an analysis of unemployment claims.²

This includes more than half of all Massachusetts' solar energy workforce, with the state likely to lose two-thirds of its planned solar projects for 2020.³ These job-loss figures likely underestimate the full extent of the pandemic's impact, as they do not count furloughed

¹ Philip Jordan, *Memorandum: Clean Energy Employment Initial Impacts from the COVID-19 Economic Crisis, April 2020*, BW Research (May 13, 2020), <https://e2.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Clean-Energy-Jobs-April-COVID-19-Memo-FINAL.pdf>.

² *Id.*

³ David Abel, *Renewable Energy Industry Hammered by Job Losses*, Boston Globe, (May 25, 2020), <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2020/05/25/metro/renewable-energy-industry-hammered-by-job-losses/>.

employees or those whose hours have been cut, and who do not qualify for unemployment benefits.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, clean energy sector jobs were among some of the fastest-growing occupations in the country.⁴ But the ongoing economic and health crisis has slowed or halted clean energy projects across the country.⁵ Plants that manufacture clean energy components have been temporarily shuttered, residential construction has slowed, and direct sales activity has become more challenging as a result of social distancing restrictions.⁶

In Massachusetts, electric distribution companies said that, due to the effects of the pandemic, they will likely have to slow down or halt efforts to connect solar and other distributed generation to the electric grid.⁷ If Congress does not help the clean energy industry, it could lose around a quarter of its work force — 850,000 jobs — or more by the end of June.⁸

Massachusetts relies on a strong clean energy sector to help promote economic development, with more than 117,000 residents working in clean energy in 2019.⁹ The clean energy sector also plays a critical role in state efforts to improve public health and achieve greenhouse gas emission reduction goals, as the state remains on track to meet its 2020 target of a 25 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.¹⁰ Significant emissions reductions from the electric sector and the state's nation-leading energy efficiency programs are largely responsible for this success.¹¹

As Congress continues to work on future COVID-19 relief legislation, we urge you to include provisions that support the workers of the clean energy sector. By doing so, Congress can save

⁴ Occupational Outlook Handbook, *Fastest Growing Occupations*, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, (Sept. 4, 2019), <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/fastest-growing.htm>.

⁵ SEIA Communications Team, *American Solar Workers Speak Up about the Harm the Coronavirus Is Causing*, Solar Energy Industries Association, (Apr. 28, 2020), <https://www.seia.org/blog/american-solar-workers-speak-about-harm-coronavirus-causing>; American Wind Energy Association, *American Wind Energy Association Releases COVID-19 Outlook*, (Mar. 19, 2020), <https://www.awea.org/resources/news/2020/american-wind-energy-association-releases-covid-19>.

⁶ Heymi Bahar, *The coronavirus pandemic could derail renewable energy's progress. Governments can help*, International Energy Agency, (Apr. 4, 2020), <https://www.iea.org/commentaries/the-coronavirus-pandemic-could-derail-renewable-energy-s-progress-governments-can-help>.

⁷ Distribution Companies, *Message from the Massachusetts Electric Distribution Companies Re: Distributed Generation-Related Business Continuity and Invocation of Force Majeure*, Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, (Mar. 23, 2020), <https://fileservice.eea.comacloud.net/FileService.Api/file/FileRoom/11981834>.

⁸ Philip Jordan, *Memorandum: Clean Energy Employment Initial Impacts from the COVID-19 Economic Crisis, April 2020*, BW Research (May 13, 2020), <https://e2.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Clean-Energy-Jobs-April-COVID-19-Memo-FINAL.pdf>.

⁹ E2, *Clean Jobs Massachusetts 2019*, (Apr. 24, 2019), <https://e2.org/reports/clean-jobs-massachusetts-2019/> (last visited, May 15, 2020).

¹⁰ Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, *GHG Emissions and Mitigation Policies*, <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/ghg-emissions-and-mitigation-policies>.

¹¹ *Id.*

Leader McConnell and Leader Schumer

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jobs, preserve local economies, protect public health, and support important energy policy goals.
Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator