

ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
2125 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

Majority (202) 225-2927
Minority (202) 225-3641

July 1, 2021

Mr. Subin DeVar
Director
Initiative for Energy Justice, Northeastern University
360 Huntington Avenue
Boston, MA 02115

Dear Mr. DeVar:

Thank you for appearing before the Subcommittee on Energy on Tuesday, April 20, 2021, at 10:30 a.m. (EDT), at the hearing entitled “Generating Equity: Deploying a Just and Clean Energy Future.” I appreciate the time and effort you gave as a witness before the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

Pursuant to Rule 3 of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, members are permitted to submit additional questions to the witnesses for their responses, which will be included in the hearing record. Attached is a question directed to you from a member of the Committee. In preparing your answers to these questions, please address your response to the member who has submitted the question in the space provided.

To facilitate the printing of the hearing record, please submit your responses to these questions no later than the close of business on Friday, July 16, 2021. As previously noted, this transmittal letter and your response, as well as the responses from the other witnesses appearing at the hearing, will all be included in the hearing record. Your written responses should be transmitted by e-mail in the Word document provided to Lino Pena-Martinez, Policy Analyst, at lino.pena-martinez@mail.house.gov. To help in maintaining the proper format for hearing records, please use the document provided to complete your responses.

Mr. Subin DeVar

Page 2

Thank you for your prompt attention to this request. If you need additional information or have other questions, please contact Lino Pena-Martinez with the Committee staff at (202) 225-2927.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Frank Pallone, Jr." in a cursive style.

Frank Pallone, Jr.
Chairman

Attachment

cc: The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce

The Honorable Bobby L. Rush
Chairman
Subcommittee on Energy

The Honorable Fred Upton
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy

Attachment—Additional Questions for the Record

**Subcommittee on Energy
Hearing on
“Generating Equity: Deploying a Just and Clean Energy Future”
Tuesday, April 20, 2021**

Subin DeVar, Director, Initiative for Energy Justice, Northeastern University

The Honorable Kathy Castor (D-FL)

1. Mr. DeVar, what role do you see for community solar in advancing energy equity?

RESPONSE:

Dear Representative Castor:

Thank you for your important question. Through intentional design, *equitable* community solar must play a fundamental part in advancing energy equity.

I define equitable community solar as follows:

“Equitable community solar (1) allocates energy and benefits from one solar system to multiple customers, (2) intentionally focuses on benefitting marginalized communities, and (3) prioritizes local community governance and ownership.”

—Subin G. DeVar, *Equitable Community Solar: California and Beyond*, Page 1020, Ecology Law Quarterly, Aug 21, 2020, Vol. 46:4.

Like any clean energy project, community solar projects can result in either an equitable or an inequitable distribution of benefits and burdens. Not all community solar projects are created equal, and without proper policy design and incentives, such projects run the risk of further exacerbating inequalities. For this reason, community solar projects shouldn’t just be considering equity on the side, but *centering* equity from the start. When we focus on equity first, we’re able to take a more holistic view of an energy project and assess whether it truly is equitable, beyond simply generating clean electricity.

A key reason why equitable community solar must play a central role in advancing equity is that there are infrastructural and systemic gaps in access to rooftop solar for certain households due to issues such as roof quality, solar exposure, lack of state policy/incentives, or being a renter. Since not every household can access rooftop solar, not every household can access the potential holistic benefits of clean energy. This includes—but goes beyond—the central benefit of electric bill savings, which is especially important for reducing costs for households with high energy burdens (those that spend more than 6% of income on energy costs). The potential for health,

wealth, jobs, resilience, and other benefits from local solar are similarly out of reach if a home does not have the option to own a solar array on their rooftop. As energy equity calls for all populations to share in these energy and non-energy benefits associated with local solar, community solar is core to realizing that vision.

However, as mentioned above, without intentional policy mechanisms, community solar in its basic design does not necessarily ensure that low income, vulnerable, and other marginalized populations will benefit from these programs. Therefore, it is crucial that the deployment of community solar be focused instead on the deployment of *equitable* community solar, through clear goals, metrics, and utility accountability mechanisms to drive equitable outcomes.

For more information on how equitable community solar can advance energy equity, see:

1. **30 Million Solar Homes**, <https://www.30millionsolarhomes.org>. Equitable community solar is a component of this initiative's vision for how to advance energy equity by bringing solar access to 30 million American households. 30 Million Solar Homes is an initiative led by the Initiative for Energy Justice, Institute for Local Self Reliance, and Solar United Neighbors.
2. **"Equitable Community Solar: California and Beyond"** (Ecology Law Quarterly, Aug 21, 2020, Vol. 46:4) <https://www.ecologylawquarterly.org/print/equitable-community-solar-california-beyond>. By Subin G. DeVar.
3. **"Equitable Community Solar: Policy and Program Guidance for Community Solar Programs that Promote Racial and Economic Equity"** (Institute for Local Self-Reliance) <https://ilsr.org/report-designing-community-solar-programs-that-promote-racial-and-economic-equity>. By Timothy DenHerder-Thomas and Jonathan Welle. Contributing authors: John Farrell and Maria McCoy.