



June 3, 2026

The Honorable Cottie Petrie-Norris
 Chair, Assembly Utilities & Energy Committee
 California State Senate
 Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Support for SB 868 (Wiener) – The Plug and Play Solar Act

Dear Chair Petrie-Norris,

As a coalition of leading environmental, consumer, low-income, tenants’ rights, and clean energy organizations, we write to express our collective support for [SB 868, The Plug and Play Solar Act](#).

We thank you for your outstanding leadership in addressing the dual problems of energy insecurity and air pollution by clearing the way for the growth of a new consumer-oriented solution: Balcony Solar.

Californians need greater access to affordable and reliable electricity. This is a matter of public health, especially as temperatures rise. Meanwhile, the state’s continued reliance on fossil fuels for electricity,

heating and transportation perpetuates air quality problems which, in turn, drive more extreme temperatures. These dual problems are inextricably linked and require California's immediate attention.

Fortunately, California is not without solutions to help our state move forward. One of the most effective solutions is also the most obvious and the most politically popular: reduce red tape and expand access to the sun through "Balcony Solar".

This new technology, aka "plug-in solar," involves small, portable solar panels that require nothing more than a patch of sunlight and a standard electrical outlet to immediately provide power for a home. Because the devices are small, affordable and portable they are especially promising for California renters, giving them increased access to the sun.

Through SB 868, California can bring immediate utility bill relief to millions of households while contributing to the state's clean energy goals.

Energy Insecurity

As electricity bills soar, more and more California households face energy insecurity. In 2025, the California Public Policy Institute (PPIC) reported that 1.9 million California households had overdue electricity bills, and 50,000 had their service disconnected.¹

Statistics about families falling behind in their monthly bill payments tell only part of the story. According to the Lawrence Berkeley National Labs (LBNL), the Energy Information Administration reports that millions of families facing energy insecurity resort to coping strategies such as keeping homes at uncomfortable and potentially dangerous temperatures or choosing between adequate heating or cooling and purchasing food. Researchers refer to this as the "heat or eat" dilemma.²

While California has a number of critical safety net strategies to help low-income households keep the lights on, there is a limit to these programs' effectiveness as electricity costs and temperatures rise.³ As the PPIC reports, most households receiving some form of assistance see their utility bills reduced by 45% or *less*. Tellingly, households receiving some form of assistance make up a substantial proportion of utility service disconnects.⁴

Furthermore, families earning an annual income above the cutoff for utility bill assistance still suffer when energy becomes unaffordable, as does the overall California economy as families spend a higher percentage of their income on utility bills instead of saving or making other investments.

The Dirty Energy-Increased Costs Feedback Loop

While California has made significant progress promoting clean energy, the state is falling behind its 100% clean energy goals. Meanwhile, climate researchers continue to sound the alarm that the world must accelerate carbon reductions in order to stave off the worst impacts of climate change.

Yet, as temperatures rise, Californians will consume more energy, making zero carbon goals even harder to reach. And, as utility rates rise, the ability for working- and middle-class Californians to embrace

¹ From PPIC blog, "Low-Income Households Struggle with the Cost of Electricity Bills", August 2025. <https://www.ppic.org/blog/low-income-households-struggle-with-the-cost-of-electricity-bills/#:~:text=California%20household%20electricity%20costs%20have, costs%20that%20exceed%20this%20threshold.>

² See Lawrence Berkeley National Labs, "The effect of residential solar on energy insecurity among low- to moderate-income households," March 2025, <https://emp.lbl.gov/publications/effect-residential-solar-energy>

³ Social security net programs include CARE and FERA rate discounts, one-time bill payment assistance by the utilities, LIHEAP grants, and community-based organization support.

⁴ Ibid, PPIC.

decarbonization strategies such as switching to electric cars or electric appliances in the home is jeopardized.

These negative dynamics work together in unfortunate harmony, making solving a variety of problems more and more difficult. Multi-dimensional solutions that can solve energy insecurity and climate change are urgently needed.

Customer-Sited Solar Energy: A Win-Win Solution

Putting the power of the sun in the hands of everyone helps address the problems discussed above. When consumers can plug into the sun themselves, reducing their purchases of utility-supplied electricity, they can see immediate utility bill reductions while contributing to the state's clean energy goals.

According to LBNL, customer-sited solar panels significantly reduce energy insecurity. Their research shows that solar households are "44% less likely to report being unable to pay their electricity bills, 46% less likely to receive a disconnection notice from their electricity provider, 15% less likely to reduce their energy consumption to save money on energy costs, 34% less likely to forgo necessary expenses to pay an energy bill, and 20% less likely to keep the home at an uncomfortable temperature."⁵

Meanwhile, customer-sited solar systems add together to make a sizable contribution to California's clean energy goals and climate change solutions. To date, consumers have collectively built 20 gigawatts of customer-sited solar, making up over 40% of the state's total solar energy resources. Expanding the state's market to include Balcony Solar can expand upon the state's critically important rooftop solar market. In Germany, consumers have added at least 4 gigawatts of solar energy in just four years through their emergent Balcony Solar market. California's potential for Balcony Solar is even greater.

SB 868 Is Urgently Needed

While portable solar energy devices are a no-brainer solution to many problems, unnecessary utility red tape threatens prohibitive costs and delays. A single, 400-watt Balcony Solar panel can, at its peak energy production, provide enough electricity to power a standard refrigerator, a home computer and a few lights. Two or more panels strung together can provide enough electricity to power a window-unit air conditioner. Throughout the year, a Balcony Solar system could cut a household utility bill by up to 20%-25% while costing between \$500-\$3,000 depending on size and the addition of a battery. As the market grows and red tape is reduced, costs will inevitably decline.

Yet, California utilities are already threatening to require, for even the smallest portable solar devices, interconnection agreements designed for larger, hard-wired systems. Utility interconnection will make Balcony Solar more expensive and time-consuming and put it out of reach for many California consumers before the technology reaches the market.

Meanwhile, California's emergent Balcony Solar industry will also benefit modern safety standards.

Specifically, SB 868 will:

- Define a portable solar energy system as one that meets a consumer's on-site electricity needs;
- Establish mandatory safety standards these systems;
- Prohibit unnecessary utility red tape;
- Drive economies of scale for portable solar energy devices to help lower costs for all consumers.

⁵ Ibid, LBNL

Conclusion

Growing consumer access to solar energy via modernizing and reducing red tape for Balcony Solar will lower energy bills, especially for renters, diversify energy resources, reduce strain on the electric grid, and help cut air pollution. For these and many other reasons, we enthusiastically support SB 868.

Signed,

Bernadette Del Chiaro Senior Vice President-California Environmental Working Group	Daniell Howard, CEO Quantum Energy	Todd Weber, Chapter Co-Leader Elders Climate Action NorCal
Laura Deehan, State Director Environment California	Cooper Marcus, CEO QuitCarbon	Richard Burke, Founder Elders Climate Action SoCal
Caroline Torosis, Mayor City of Santa Monica	Faye Johnson, Leadership Team Indivisible Santa Cruz County	Alan Weiner, Chapter Lead 350 Conejo/San Fernando Valley
Dave Rosenfeld, Executive Director Solar Rights Alliance	Daniel Chandler Steering Committee, 350 Humboldt	Cher Gilmore, Group Leader Citizens' Climate Lobby, Santa Clarita
Jenn Engstrom, State Director CALPIRG	Bart Ziegler, President Samuel Lawrence Foundation	Heather Turpin, Co-Facilitator SCV Eco Alliance
Brad Heavner, Exec. Dir. CALSSA	Eric Lever, Vice-President Democratic Club of West Orange County	Emma Searson, Managing Policy Director GRID Alternatives
Ellie Cohen, CEO The Climate Center	Ben Schwartz, Policy Director Clean Coalition	Dave Shukla, Operations Long Beach Alliance for Clean Energy
Roger Lin, Senior Attorney Center for Biological Diversity	Elise Kalfayan, Board Member Glendale Environmental Coalition	David Diaz, Exec. Dir. Active San Gabriel Valley
Merrian Borgeson, CA Policy Director, Climate & Energy Natural Resources Defense Council	Gopal Shanker, President Recolte Energy	Kevin Chou, Exec. Dir. Bright Saver
Laura Neish, Executive Director 350 Bay Area Action	Emi Yoko-Young, Co-Director Reclaim Our Power: Utility Justice Campaign	Max Feinland, Orange County Environmental Justice
Ben Stapleton, Exec. Dir. USGBC California	Nick Peterson, Founding Member Albany Climate Action Coalition	Jorge Rivera, Exec. Co-Director Healing and Justice Center
Jessica Guadalupe Tovar, Exec Dir. Local Clean Energy Alliance	Veronica Jacobi, Founder Our Green Challenge	Sanford Krasner, Group Leader, Pasadena- Foothills Chapter of Citizens Climate Lobby
Benjamin Henderson Housing Policy Advocate Western Center on Law and Poverty	Claudine Custodio, Regulatory Dir, West Vote Solar	Lauren Weston, Exec. Dir. Acterra: Action for a Healthy Planet
Shannon Olivieri Hovis Chief Strategy Officer, California Environmental Voters	Kae Bender, Secretary SocioEnergetics Foundation	Alice Sung, Principal Greenbank Associates
Tamlyn Hunt, CEO Community Renewable Solutions	Eileen Mitro, Coordinator Climate Action Mendocino	Janice Schroeder, Core Member W. Berkeley Alliance for Clean Air and Safe Jobs
Jakob Evans Senior Policy Strategist Sierra Club California	Jose Torre-Bueno, Exec. Dir. Center for Community Energy	Mark Rutkowski, Founder Laudate Deum Prayer Network for Climate Healing
Michele Canales Western States Policy Advocate Union of Concerned Scientists	James Schoonover, Liaison Climate Crisis Workgroup of Grassroots Institute	Sven Thesen, Co-Founder Project Green Home
Ronnie Lipschutz, President Sustainable Systems Research Foundation	Glayol Sahba, Co-Facilitator Third Act Sacramento	Marilyn Price, Co-Chair Sustainable Mill Valley
	John Carrese, Facilitator/Member Neighbors for Progressive Action	Pauline Seales, Organizer Santa Cruz Climate Action Network

Sonoma County Climate Activist Network	Dan Silver, Exec. Dir. Endangered Habitats League	Deborah Silvey, Co-Founder Fossil Free California
Demian Hardman, Board Chair Local Government Sustainable Energy Coalition	Larry Glass, Exec. Dir. Safe Alternatives for our Forest Environment	Terrie Green, Exec. Dir. Marin City Climate Resilience
Amy Moas, Ph.D., Climate Director Greenpeace USA	Micah Perlin, Director California Climate Voters PAC	Pamela Squyres, Leadership Climate Future California
Helene Rouvier, Chair Humboldt Progressive Democrats	Susan Hartje, Owner Saddles That Fit	Jill ZamEk, Board Member San Luis Obispo Mothers for Peace
Nancy Tierney, Co-chair Pacifica Climate Committee	Susan St. Louis, Climate Chair Courageous Resistance of the Desert/Indivisible	Stacey Hunt, CEO Central Coast Bioneers
Suzanne Moore, Co-chair Pacifica Housing For All (PH4A)	Susan Stephenson, Exec. Dir. California Interfaith Power & Light	Karina Gonzalez, Deputy Director Hammond Climate Solutions Foundation
Wendy Caesar & Rachael Biale Third Act Kate Harrison, Member 350 Berkeley Hub	Manuel Jose Espinosa, Principal The Phoenix Group	Don Gaede, Group Leader Citizens' Climate Education of SLO County
David Kaskowitz Third Act San Francisco Bay Area	Kristel Rietesel, Administrator Bay Area Clean Air Coalition	Eric Brooks, Coordinator Californians for Energy Choice and Our City SF
Sarah Hubbard, Exec. Dir. Sustainable San Mateo County	Pete Marsh, Chapter Leader Citizens' Climate Lobby Long Beach	Rocky Fernandez, Senior Director, Policy Center for Sustainable Energy
Craig Perkins, Exec. Dir. The Energy Coalition	Ayn Craciun, Policy Director Climate Action Campaign	Xochitl Cortez, Exec. Director Frontline Catalysts
Ashley McClure, Exec. Dir. Climate Health Now Action Fund	Anthony Dang, Policy and Community Outreach Manager, Climate Action Campaign	Madison Vander Klay, Sr. Manager Govt Affairs, Building Decarbonization Coalition Action Fund
Phil Glosserman, Lead Facilitator Third Act SoCal	Sue Bock, Board Director San Ramon Valley Climate Coalition	Jeanna Harris, Club President Culver City Democratic Club
Tekira Briscoe, Alliance Coordinator CA Alliance for Community Energy	Janet Cox, CEO Climate Action California	Robert M; Gould, MD, President SF Bay Physicians for Social Responsibility
Debbie Mytels, Chair Peninsula Interfaith Climate Action	Josh Hart, Director Feather River Action!	Ada Waelder, Senior State Leg Representative Earthjustice
Rachel Mandelbaum, Deputy Dir. of Campaigns and Organizing Dayenu: A Jewish Call to Climate Action	Steve Bardwell, President Morongo Basin Conservation Assoc.	Noel Graham, Director of Engagement Urban Environmentalists Los Angeles
Bill Magavern, Policy Director Coalition for Clean Air	Sharon Broberg, Steering Committee Member, 350 Santa Barbara	Maureen Hatfield, Member, Indivisible East Contra Costa
Carleen Cullen, Exec. Dir. Cool the Earth	John Smigelski, Program Lead United the Central Coast for Action/SLO Climate Coalition	Celine Grenier, Member, Third Act
Jon Rainwater, Exec. Dir. Peace Action	David Prina, Group Leader Citizens' Climate Lobby Monterey Bay	Laurene von Klan, Co-Chair, Climate Action Santa Monica
Katharine Harrison, Co-Lead SanDiego350	Thomas A. Edmunds, Ph.D., Co-Chair Tri Valley Air Quality Climate Alliance	Kent Strumpell, Co-Chair, Climate Action Santa Monica
Martin Bourque, Exec. Dir. Ecology Center	Philip Petrie, Co-Chairperson Interfaith Coalition for Earth Justice	Mary Williams, Leadership, Indivisible Monterey
Sigrid Wright, CEO/Exec. Dir. Community Environmental Council	Lisa Swanson, Policy Chair Climate Reality Project Orange County	Eric Lerner, Climate Justice Director, Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE)
		Isabel Storey, Steering Committee Member, Indivisible Westside Los Angeles

Igor Tregub, Chair, Alameda County
Democratic Party

Olivia Millard, Co-Lead, Indivisible
Pajaro Valley

Heather Seggel, self

Finn Alden, self

Caroline Hicks, self