

A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF EXPANDING SOLAR ENERGY THROUGH
LIFTING THE STATEWIDE DISTRIBUTED ENERGY CAP IN HOUSE BILL 4236

WASHTENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

March 17, 2021

WHEREAS, current state law caps the amount of energy produced in each utility district from distributed sources – including solar energy installations on homes and businesses not owned by a utility company – at 1% of that utility district's peak demand; and

WHEREAS, major Michigan utilities like Consumers and DTE, which service areas of Washtenaw County, are close to reaching or have reached their 1% cap; and

WHEREAS, the continued inclusion and rapid expansion of solar technologies in our state's energy portfolio is necessary to achieve the State of Michigan and Washtenaw County's aggressive economy wide net-zero emissions goals; and

WHEREAS, the Michigan Legislature is presently considering House Bill 4236 that would lift the cap on utility distributed generation programs that set prices for excess customer-generated power sent back to the grid, allowing for the expansion of utility programs for customers who generate their own solar power; and

WHEREAS, individual cities in Washtenaw County, like the City of Ann Arbor, have demonstrated interest in and commitment to expanding and creating community solar installations, which provide low cost renewable energy to a group of citizens in order to decrease group carbon emissions and increase energy efficiency; and

WHEREAS, market demand shows Washtenaw County residents want to install solar energy systems on their residential homes and businesses; Installing solar energy systems on homes and businesses decreases electric utility bills, decreases carbon emissions, increases efficiency, and increases overall grid resilience to unanticipated changes in electricity flows; This ensures the most vulnerable members of our community do not experience prolonged power outages; and

WHEREAS, hitting the 1% cap depresses solar demand by creating consumer uncertainty of the economic payback of installing solar on their homes and businesses; This decrease in demand causes irreparable harm to the solar installation and manufacturing industry which has already begun laying off part of their workforce in utility areas that have hit the 1% cap; and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 crisis has had widespread economic impacts on the nation, the state, and Washtenaw County, while the clean energy sector has demonstrated stability, growth, and promise as a means towards economic recovery; and

WHEREAS, Washtenaw County has demonstrated a strong commitment to environmental stewardship and its community members through the creation of the Environmental Council, its goal to achieve net-zero emissions for County operations by 2030, and its budgetary priorities of ensuring the most vulnerable members of our community are treated equitably as the climate crisis continues;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners endorses and supports House Bill 4236 and calls upon the Michigan Legislature to pass this important legislation and Governor Whitmer to sign it in order to lift the distributed energy cap to encourage individuals and businesses to consider installing solar energy systems and expand opportunities for the clean energy sector.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT this Resolution be sent to elected officials in the Michigan Legislature who represent Washtenaw County: Rep. Donna Lasinski, Rep. Yousef Rabhi, Rep. Ronnie Peterson, Rep. Felicia Brabec, Sen. Lana Theis, and Sen. Jeff Irwin.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT this Resolution be sent to the Michigan Association of Counties (MAC) with the request that they advocate for passage of this policy as part of their legislative priorities.