



email: [info@communityempowerment.org](mailto:info@communityempowerment.org)  
website: [www.communityempowerment.org](http://www.communityempowerment.org)

September 29, 2015

Thomas A. Golden, Jr. - Representative  
House Chair – Joint Committee on Telecommunications Utilities & Energy  
Room 473B  
State House  
Boston, MA 02133

Benjamin B. Downing. - Senator  
Senate Chair – Joint Committee on Telecommunications Utilities & Energy  
Room 413-F  
State House  
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chairman Golden & Chairman Downing,

Our organizations will be separately providing testimony regarding bills being heard by your committee, but we are writing now to call your attention to another important clean energy policy opportunity for the Commonwealth– a new concept called “**Community Empowerment**”.

For the reasons described below, we respectfully request that any comprehensive energy bill that your committee reports out include **Community Empowerment** among its provisions.

Benefits of **Community Empowerment** include:

- Opportunity for local communities to stabilize energy costs, over the long-term, for their residents and businesses;
- Empowering local communities, through a democratic and transparent process, to establish and implement their own energy strategies and future;
- Giving local communities the ability to support and enhance the Commonwealth’s climate change prevention policies by using more renewable energy than called for by the RPS;
- Expanding business and financing opportunities for renewable energy companies by creating a new type of credit-worthy customer, that being an aggregation of all the residents and businesses of a community;
- Providing communities with another tool for local economic development and enhancing their own energy security and reliability;

Importantly, all of these benefits of **Community Empowerment** can be achieved without changing current energy markets and utility structures, and without denying anyone the ability to choose their preferred energy supplier. The **Community Empowerment** legislation is enabling only, leaving the decision whether to utilize this policy tool to each local community, using their existing democratic decision making process.

Furthermore, **Community Empowerment** builds off of and enhances existing energy programs and policies of the Commonwealth, including the Green Communities Act and the Electricity Restructuring Act, and consumer choice and community aggregation. **Community Empowerment** would be effective and useful regardless of whatever decisions are made pertaining to net-metering policy going forward.

*Please support and include the **Community Empowerment** in any comprehensive energy bill reported by your committee in order to empower communities in setting their energy strategy. This bill will facilitate the development of more renewable energy projects in Massachusetts, keeping the benefits, including jobs and infrastructure investments local, while stabilizing prices for consumers, enhancing energy security and reliability, fostering economic development and reducing carbon emissions.*

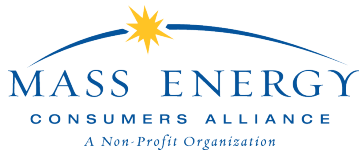
Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Richard Andre, President, Vineyard Power Cooperative Inc.



Larry Chretien, Executive Director, Mass Energy Consumers Alliance



Ben Hellerstein, State Director, Environment Massachusetts



Michael Green, Executive Director, Climate Action Business Association



Tobias Glidden, Board of Selectman, Town of Nantucket



Spencer Booker, Chairman of the Board of Selectmen, Town of Aquinnah  
Jim Newman, Board of Selectmen, Town of Aquinnah  
Juli Vanderhoop, Board of Selectmen, Town of Aquinnah



Cindy Luppi, New England Director, Clean Water Action



Veronica Eady, Vice President and Massachusetts Director, Conservation Law Foundation



Megan Amsler, Executive Director, Cape & Islands Self Reliance



John Rogers, Senior Energy Analyst, Union of Concerned Scientists

