

August 1, 2023

Dear Recipient:

I am writing to you to take full advantage of newly available federal grants to lower energy bills for consumers through investing in distributed renewable energy.¹

Solar energy adoption for residential use is rising rapidly. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, residential solar power installations jumped 34% from 2.9 gigawatts in 2020 to 3.9 gigawatts in 2021, despite obstacles such as COVID-19 related supply chain problems,² and nearly 4 million American households currently generate their own power with solar energy.³ Homeowners are installing solar panels because of their interest in cutting their electricity bills while protecting the environment and their own health.⁴

The *Inflation Reduction Act* (IRA), signed into law by President Biden in August 2022, contains multiple programs to support residential solar, including expanding the existing Residential Clean Energy Credit to allow consumers to claim a tax credit of up to 30 percent of the costs of residential energy efficient property, such as the installation of solar.⁵ With this expanded tax credit, “7.5 million more families will be able to install solar on their roofs ... saving families \$9,000 over the life of the system or at least \$300 per year.”⁶ And distributed, residential solar can also make households “less vulnerable to the volatility and price shocks” of fossil fuels.⁷

¹ Massachusetts Municipal Association, “Home,” <https://www.mma.org/>.

² Pew Research Center, “Home solar panel adoption continues to rise in the U.S.,” Rebecca Leppert and Brian Kennedy, October 14, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/10/14/home-solar-panel-adoption-continues-to-rise-in-the-u-s/>.

³ U.S. Department of Energy, “5 Benefits of Residential Solar,” February 13, 2023, <https://www.energy.gov/energysaver/articles/5-benefits-residential-solar>.

⁴ Pew Research Center, “Home solar panel adoption continues to rise in the U.S.,” Rebecca Leppert and Brian Kennedy, October 14, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/10/14/home-solar-panel-adoption-continues-to-rise-in-the-u-s/>.

⁵ U.S. Department of Energy, “Homeowner’s Guide to the Federal Tax Credit for Solar Photovoltaics,” March 2023, <https://www.energy.gov/eere/solar/homeowners-guide-federal-tax-credit-solar-photovoltaics>; Internal Revenue Services, “Residential Clean Energy Credit,” <https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/residential-clean-energy-credit>; The White House, “BY THE NUMBERS: The Inflation Reduction Act,” August 15, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/08/15/by-the-numbers-the-inflation-reduction-act/>.

⁶ The White House, “BY THE NUMBERS: The Inflation Reduction Act,” August 15, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/08/15/by-the-numbers-the-inflation-reduction-act/>.

⁷ U.S. Department of Energy, “President Biden’s Agenda for Building a Better America Will Lower Energy Costs for Working Families,” April 1, 2022, <https://www.energy.gov/policy/articles/president-bidens-agenda-building-better-america-will-lower-energy-costs-working>.

These benefits are especially crucial for low-income families. According to the Department of Energy’s Low-Income Energy Affordability Data (LEAD) Tool, “the national average energy burden—the percentage of income spent on energy costs—is three times higher for low-income households than for other households.”⁸ This also intersects with racial disparities — households of color face an energy burden that is 25% to 50% higher than for white households.⁹ It is therefore particularly important that lower-income families have access to the savings available through the use of clean and efficient technologies supported by the Inflation Reduction Act.¹⁰ However, even with the expanded tax credit incentives, the cost of solar installation can be out of reach to these families.¹¹

But a new Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) program created by the IRA’s Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund could dramatically expand the ability of families throughout the Commonwealth to install solar energy. The EPA recently announced that applications are now open for their Solar for All program, which will “increase access to affordable, resilient, and clean solar energy for millions of low-income households” and “lower energy costs for families, create good-quality jobs in communities that have been left behind, advance environmental justice, and tackle the climate crisis.”¹² The program will “expand the number of low-income and disadvantaged communities primed for residential solar investment by awarding up to 60 grants to states, territories, Tribal governments, municipalities, and eligible nonprofits to create and expand low-income solar programs that provide financing and technical assistance, such as workforce development, to enable low-income and disadvantaged communities to deploy and benefit from residential solar.”¹³ In addition, Solar for All’s workforce development programs will “invest in training workers from low-income and disadvantaged communities ... creating opportunities in high-quality, long-term careers in the clean energy industry.”¹⁴ And the program will also invest in project development services and consumer education and outreach, in order to overcome non-financial residential deployment barriers.¹⁵

The Solar for All Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) is currently soliciting applications nationwide, with a deadline of Monday, August 14, 2023 for municipalities and eligible nonprofits to submit a Notice of Intent (NOI) to apply; and a deadline of Monday, August

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ Pew Research Center, “Home solar panel adoption continues to rise in the U.S.,” Rebecca Leppert and Brian Kennedy, October 14, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/10/14/home-solar-panel-adoption-continues-to-rise-in-the-u-s/>.

¹² U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, “Biden-Harris Administration Launches \$7 Billion Solar for All Grant Competition to Fund Residential Solar Programs that Lower Energy Costs for Families and Advance Environmental Justice Through Investing in America Agenda,” press release, June 28, 2023, <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/biden-harris-administration-launches-7-billion-solar-all-grant-competition-fund>.

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, “Frequent Questions about Solar for All,” <https://www.epa.gov/greenhouse-gas-reduction-fund/frequent-questions-about-solar-all>.

28, 2023 for Tribal governments and Intertribal Consortia to submit a NOI.¹⁶ Final application packages must all then be submitted by Tuesday, September 26, 2023.¹⁷ Any municipality, tribe, and eligible nonprofit is eligible to apply, and I highly encourage you to submit an application for this funding opportunity.¹⁸

I fought hard to ensure this historic investment was included in the IRA. Massachusetts communities are already benefiting from millions of dollars of federal investments to help them make their residential and commercial systems cleaner and more efficient,¹⁹ and I believe they will also be competitive for the newly announced funds. Recent analysis has shown that Massachusetts has “ample room to dramatically expand solar energy” — from “homes and apartment buildings, commercial buildings and shopping plazas, over outdoor parking lots and in fields ... without negatively impacting agriculture, forests, or wetlands.”²⁰ Massachusetts currently has “3 gigawatts of solar installed and operating, ... much of it rooftop panels installed by homeowners and businesses.”²¹ There are immense benefits of expanding this distributed residential solar. Residential solar power helps families save on home energy bills and provides them with “resilient and secure power.”²² Combined with battery storage, it can enable families to keep the lights on even during times of grid disruption, such as during the extreme weather that is increasingly common due to the climate crisis.²³ In fact, the regional grid operator ISO-New England announced that “the region’s risk of winter electricity shortages in the coming years has been reduced thanks in part to the growth of rooftop solar.”²⁴ In addition to the cost savings and resiliency benefits, residential solar will “reduce the pollution produced from powering our homes

¹⁶ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, “Solar for All,” <https://www.epa.gov/greenhouse-gas-reduction-fund/solar-all>.

¹⁷ Grants.gov, “EPA-R-HQ-SFA-23-01 | SOLAR FOR ALL | Environmental Protection Agency,” <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=348957>

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, “Biden-Harris Administration Announces Nearly \$1 Billion from EPA’s Clean School Bus Program for 389 School Districts,” press release, October 26, 2022, <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/biden-harris-administration-announces-nearly-1-billion-epas-clean-school-bus-program>.

²⁰ Boston Globe, “Massachusetts has vast solar potential, according to new state report,” Sabrina Shankman, July 6, 2023, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2023/07/06/science/solar-energy/>.

²¹ *Id.*

²² U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, “Biden-Harris Administration Launches \$7 Billion Solar for All Grant Competition to Fund Residential Solar Programs that Lower Energy Costs for Families and Advance Environmental Justice Through Investing in America Agenda,” press release, June 28, 2023, <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/biden-harris-administration-launches-7-billion-solar-all-grant-competition-fund>.

²³ U.S. Department of Energy, “5 Benefits of Residential Solar,” February 13, 2023, <https://www.energy.gov/energysaver/articles/5-benefits-residential-solar>.

²⁴ Boston Globe, “Massachusetts has vast solar potential, according to new state report,” Sabrina Shankman, July 6, 2023, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2023/07/06/science/solar-energy/>.

to improve air quality and public health outcomes, all while creating good-paying, clean energy jobs.”²⁵ Moreover, installing a solar energy system is likely to increase the value of a home.²⁶

It is essential that we ensure all households can access these benefits and be part of the clean energy future. Solar for All will fund long-lasting programs that will transform markets and the status quo, “putting billions of dollars of solar panels on the homes of low-income families and closing the equity gap in access to solar energy.”²⁷ I highly encourage you to make the most of the opportunities provided through the Solar for All program, and I look forward to working with you to bring this funding home to your community.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

²⁵ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, “Biden-Harris Administration Launches \$7 Billion Solar for All Grant Competition to Fund Residential Solar Programs that Lower Energy Costs for Families and Advance Environmental Justice Through Investing in America Agenda,” press release, June 28, 2023, <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/biden-harris-administration-launches-7-billion-solar-all-grant-competition-fund>.

²⁶ U.S. Department of Energy, “5 Benefits of Residential Solar,” February 13, 2023, <https://www.energy.gov/energysaver/articles/5-benefits-residential-solar>; U.S. Department of Energy, “Benefits of Residential Solar Energy,” <https://www.energy.gov/energysaver/benefits-residential-solar-electricity>.

²⁷ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, “Solar for All,” <https://www.epa.gov/greenhouse-gas-reduction-fund/solar-all>; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, “Frequent Questions about Solar for All,” <https://www.epa.gov/greenhouse-gas-reduction-fund/frequent-questions-about-solar-all>.