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Expanded Solar-for-All Program Approved for National Grid’s Low-Income Customers

Action Designed to Help Disadvantaged Communities Benefit from Clean Energy

160,000 National Grid Low-Income Customers to Receive Direct Financial Benefits

ALBANY — The New York State Public Service Commission (Commission) today approved the first phase of a program where low-income electric customers of National Grid currently enrolled in the company’s Energy Affordability Program (EAP) will be automatically enrolled in a new Expanded Solar-For-All program (E-SFA), which, when fully implemented, will save these customers an estimated $5 a month on their utility bills.

“The Expanded Solar-For-All program is a reasonable and appropriate mechanism for providing community solar bill credits to low-income customers in National Grid’s service territory, who have not had adequate opportunities to participate in clean energy,” said Commission Chair Rory M. Christian. “The purpose of this program is to improve the equitable distribution of solar benefits to disadvantaged communities, and that is exactly what will be accomplished with our decision.”

Enacted in 2019, the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) expanded several statewide clean energy and climate goals, including that New York State develop 6 GW of distributed solar projects by 2025, and that 70 percent of New York's electricity come from renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar, by 2030. The inclusion of low-to-moderate income (LMI) customers and disadvantaged and environmental justice communities in New York State’s clean energy programs is crucial to the programs’ success and fairness considering the CLCPA includes a requirement that disadvantaged communities receive at least 35 percent of the benefits of clean energy programs.

In furtherance of the CLCPA’s solar and clean energy mandates, in 2020, the Commission authorized $573 million in additional funding to drive distributed solar development in New York. As part of that funding, the Commission authorized $200 million of the incentives to directly benefit low-income and moderate-income customers, affordable housing, and environmental justice and disadvantaged communities and it encouraged NYSEMDA to collaborate with one or more utilities to propose a program for increasing utility enrollment of low-income customers in distributed solar.

On April 23, 2021, NYSEMDA and National Grid filed a joint petition for approval of an Expanded Solar-For-All program for providing community solar to low-income customers. The joint petition requested that the Commission approve an E-SFA program under which National Grid would
aggregate bill credits generated by participating community distributed generation (CDG) projects and distribute them evenly among EAP customers automatically enrolled into the program.

In the 2020 NY-Sun expansion order, the Commission stated that distributed solar resources are a vital component of New York’s clean energy system, and that the NY-Sun program has been an effective means of driving distributed solar deployment toward achieving the State’s clean energy goals. At the same time, NY-Sun has historically had only limited success in reaching LMI customers.

While CDG has provided the opportunity for any customer to be served by solar (including those without access to rooftop solar), LMI participation in CDG remains limited. Less than six percent of the company’s residential customers enrolled in community solar are EAP customers. Today's decision is designed to further spur LMI participation in the solar program, and it leverages some of the previously authorized funds to be used to ensure sufficient CDG project participation in the Expanded Solar-For-All program, toward providing bill credit savings for participating low-income customers.

National Grid has nearly 160,000 customers participating in its EAP, and all of them will receive benefits from this new program. Customers can opt out of the new solar program, if they so choose.

**New York State’s Nation-Leading Climate Plan**

New York State’s nation-leading climate agenda is the most aggressive climate and clean energy initiative in the nation, calling for an orderly and just transition to clean energy that creates jobs and continues fostering a green economy as New York State recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic. Enshrined into law through the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, New York is on a path to achieve its mandated goal of a zero-emission electricity sector by 2040, including 70 percent renewable energy generation by 2030, and to reach economy wide carbon neutrality. It builds on New York's unprecedented investments to ramp-up clean energy including over $33 billion in 102 large-scale renewable and transmission projects across the state, $6.8 billion to reduce buildings emissions, $1.8 billion to scale up solar, more than $1 billion for clean transportation initiatives, and over $1.6 billion in NY Green Bank commitments. Combined, these investments are supporting nearly 158,000 jobs in New York's clean energy sector in 2020, a 2,100 percent growth in the distributed solar sector since 2011 and a commitment to develop 9,000 megawatts of offshore wind by 2035. Under the Climate Act, New York will build on this progress and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 85 percent from 1990 levels by 2050, while ensuring that at least 35 percent with a goal of 40 percent of the benefits of clean energy investments are directed to disadvantaged communities, and advance progress towards the state's 2025 energy efficiency target of reducing on-site energy consumption by 185 trillion BTUs of end-use energy savings.

Today's decision may be obtained by going to the Commission Documents section of the Commission's Web site at www.dps.ny.gov and entering Case Number 19-E-0735 in the input box labeled "Search for Case/Matter Number". Many libraries offer free Internet access. Commission documents may also be obtained from the Commission’s Files Office, 14th floor, Three Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12223 (518-474-2500). If you have difficulty understanding English, please call us at 1-800-342-3377 for free language assistance services regarding this press release.