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To:	SMART, DOER (ENE)
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Subject:	400 MW Review Public Comments
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Greetings from Western Mass!

Recently I had the opportunity to attend a DOER's stakeholder meeting about the the SMART program and to share my experience with the program including the barriers I encountered as a homeowner. My comments can be found at the end of this email. To make a long story short, I have an interconnection problem that makes solar and the SMART program inaccessible. As you revise the current program and consider new ones, please find ways to coordinate with the Department of Public Utilities to address barriers to access for homeowners. I have very little power to challenge the demands of the utility company and I know that I am not alone. Please consider modifying the program to push grid modernization costs back onto the utility companies so homeowners are not forced to pay for upgrades to equipment owned by companies like National Grid. Building a nimble and sustainable grid is important to everyone and homeowners have an important role to play in this work. How might we better coordinate programs and policies so everyone has a chance to participate?

Thanks for your consideration!

Sarah Barr
Northampton, MA

September 5, 2019
Comments at SMART stakeholder meeting
UMass, Amherst, MA

Good afternoon! My name is Sarah Barr and I live in as sweet little 1950's ranch house in Northampton. Earlier this year, I decided to pursue solar and was thrilled to learn that none of the normal barriers, like an old roof or big trees, were going to be a problem. I was approved for the SMART program and everything was a go but then I discovered an unusual, but non uncommon, problem that has created a barrier for me and might make solar financially inaccessible. It seems like a structural barrier and I'm curious if a change in the program might make solar accessible.

To make a long story short, National Grid is concerned about transformer capacity in my neighborhood and to move forward with this process, I need to pay them $1,000 so an engineer can review the system.

If the transformer is ok, the project can move forward but it not, I need to pay an additional $5,000 to replace National Grid's transformer, which would solve the capacity problem for the neighborhood but it would be a cost that I need to shoulder as an individual homeowner. Several other homes in my neighborhood have solar already, which is why there is potentially a problem with the transformer. So here is my question:

Is there a way to require utility companies to cover upgrades to their equipment to make solar accessible to homeowners?

At the moment, solar installation has come to a halt in my neighborhood until someone is willing to personally shoulder the costs.