

Chairman Jerry Klein & members of the committee, my name is Scott Skokos and I am testifying on behalf of Dakota Resource Council and our members. Thank you for allowing me to testify today. I stand here today in support of SB 2295.

Dakota Resource Council (DRC) is a non-partisan grassroots group of landowners, ranchers, farmers, and other citizens. We have members involved in all types of energy production. SB 2295 creates a pathway for landowners to engage in energy generation on their properties. SB 2295 provides a mechanism for those that install wind or solar on their land to have their energy bills reduced excess energy they produce that goes back into the grid.

Utilities are often scared of net-metering because they think it will allow too many customers to sell back into the grid. SB 2295 is not like that because it only allows for customers to produce enough energy to reduce their own energy bills. Anything additional is not profit for the customer but will carry over to the next month for their bill. Anything produced in excess of what is used in a twelve-month period will not carry over. On page 5, lines 6-10 it outlines this caveat. "At the end of each twelve - month rolling period, any accumulated unused kilowatt-hour credit must be eliminated and may not be applied against any future kilowatt-hour usage. The customer will not receive any compensation for unused kilowatt-hour credit created and unused more than twelve months prior." This removes the fear that utilities need protection from net-metering, but also allows for landowners to reduce their electric bills by producing their own energy. Individuals will not be able to become their own utility.

We have several members who are farmers and ranchers, who were not able to make it today, who have expressed to DRC that they would like to utilize solar or wind energy to lower their farm/ranch operation costs. We all know that farming/ranching can be an expensive, and sometimes financially unforgiving, pursuit. North Dakota should give landowners (farmers and ranchers) the opportunity to cut costs by passing SB 2295. Our members have been frustrated that their friends and landowners in other states have been able to utilize net-metering to cut costs, but they can't here in North Dakota. We get a lot of questions asking why that is, which is why we are supporting SB 2295. We want our farmers/ranchers to be able to compete financially with producers in other states. It is unfair to hold them back as many states around the country allow for this practice. We want our producers to have every chance to succeed and cutting costs through net-metering is one way to help. Solar and wind on individual properties, does have the adding renewable energy generation which will help to mitigate the effects of climate change. Climate change is already having a negative impact on ND farmers and ranchers.

Net-metering will also increase the speed of return-on-investment for those families who have elected to put solar on their homes. SB 2295 would support their freedom and right to choose to put solar on their homes, with a fair and efficient billing mechanism for their contribution to the grid. These people want freedom and the opportunity to be more self-sufficient by reducing the cost of their energy bills. Many families in ND are dealing with high energy bills, more now since the COVID-19 pandemic. Adopting a net-metering program, as proposed in SB 2295, in North Dakota would help those who have already installed solar, but it would also help those who may have wanted to install, but have not been in a financial circumstance to be able to afford solar that has a 20+ year, return on investment in ND. We want citizens of North Dakota to not be limited in their options because of where they live. There should be equal opportunities for self-sufficiency provided by policies like net-metering in North Dakota.

Net-metering, as proposed in SB 2295, is not necessarily something all utilities are opposed to either, as some companies have already opted to offer some type of net-metering or net-billing. Montana-Dakota Utilities Co. (MDU), which serves parts of ND, has already begun offering net-metering in Montana and Wyoming.<sup>1</sup> MDU would likely offer it to customers in ND if we had the policies in place for them to do so and according to some of our members who have solar in ND, MDU is already offering a similar billing process to net-metering.

There is a lot of talk this year about how ND needs to move towards a cleaner and more sustainable energy future as evidenced by other proposed bills. Net-metering is one way to do that and net-metering will actually benefit individuals in North Dakota. SB 2295 provides an incentive to help landowners and families that want to produce their own energy to be more self-reliant.

I urge the committee to support SB 2295 and recommend a DO PASS on SB 2295.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.montana-dakota.com/energy-efficiency/renewable-solar-energy/>