18 January 2023

Mr. Chairman and members of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources:

My name is James Kambeitz. I am the Co-founder of Lightspring Solar in Bismarck, and I'm here to testify in support of SB 2137, which will help protect North Dakota residents and businesses in this quickly growing energy economy, and will also help the State achieve its economic objectives.

Lightspring Solar has installed some of the largest solar systems in the state, which can be seen on colleges, businesses, farms, shops and homes. Examples of our installations are found here in Bismarck and Mandan, at the Wahpeton State College of Science, United Tribes Technical College, NHS College in New Town, on the large PRx Manufacturing Factory in Fargo, on NC Builders in Rugby, on an elder's land in Standing Rock, on oil company owners' properties in MHA Nation, and all the way from Burke County near the Canadian Border to Coal Country in Hazen-Beulah. In the past 5 years we have seen that solar is coming to ND - and not just coming, it is already here. Solar is the fastest growing job sector on the planet, increasing again "by 700,000 new jobs in 2021, to nearly 13 million jobs," according to the United Nations reports (22 Sept. 2022). Now we need to be proactive and keep up by getting someone on the energy policy commission in our state.

It has been forecast that North Dakota will need an addition 5,000-6,000MW of additional generation within the next decade. Dozens of out-of-state solar companies are currently buying up land leases across North Dakota and hoping to take their profits out of state. But, as a 4th generation North Dakotan, I started a solar company so that we North Dakotans could install solar and keep our money in the state.

North Dakotans have told us they don't trust many out of state salespeople and want the security of working with local companies they can meet face to face and trust. Some county officials don't trust these out-of-state solar farm developers and so in some cases they have passed ordinances to ban solar development all together. This is not the answer. Solar is a mature industry, that has been tried and tested to be safe for decades, following National Electric Code, State Electric Code, Fire Code, Local Building Codes and extensive safety measures. There is nothing scary about solar, except its newness and local unfamiliarity in our state. There is a clear need for government communication, coordination, and solar education/ training. Our local professionals should be consulted like other industries are. Solar energy needs a seat at the policy-making table for the sake of our citizens, the state, and our local economy. I believe this bill can lead us toward a more informed state in regards to solar energy.

Solar Policy - If done wrong (the way many of the large out of state solar farms are currently planning it) could be counterproductive to ND's energy development efforts - and existing sources of generation - clogging up the already overloaded transmission lines. If done the right way, as we have learned through 5 years of conversations with industry and the public here in North Dakota, solar can strengthen the grid, and offer much resiliency.

I believe solar needs to be done by North Dakotans who understand the idiosyncrasies and nuances of North Dakota and our infrastructure.This bill would provide a voice for solar, which is critical for our state to gain the informed perspective we need to set ND energy policy that serves the state's objectives of: increasing industrial development, advancing high paying jobs, and generating tax revenue. In other words, passing SB 2137 is another path to thriving as an all-of-the-above energy state.

Thank you,

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