



MONTANA RENEWABLE ENERGY ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 673

Missoula, MT 59806

(406) 214-9405

www.montanarenewables.org

February 7, 2019

To: Senate Energy and Telecommunications Committee

Regarding: Senate Bill 188, Revise electricity supply resource planning and acquisition

Chairman Ankney and Members of the Senate Energy and Telecommunications Committee,

I am writing to express the Montana Renewable Energy Association's (MREA) support for Senate Bill 188. MREA represents solar, small wind, micro-hydro, and other renewable energy technology installers, as well as consumers and supports of these technologies.

Senate Bill 188 will increase transparency and oversight of the planning process, and provide an opportunity for consumers to save money through lower-cost supply resources. The current planning process lacks transparency. By opening up the advisory committee meetings to public observation and comment, and by allowing public comment on requests for proposals for new resources, this bill would improve communication and understanding between the public and the utility. It will ensure that stakeholders who do not have representation on the advisory committee, but who are affected by their decisions, have an opportunity to provide their perspective and comments for consideration.

The additional oversight of the resource solicitation process will ensure that the acquisition of resources is overseen by an impartial body. Further, the competitive solicitation process will create more opportunities for lower-cost resources to be included in the utility's portfolio, thus saving consumers money. The cost of solar and wind development continues to drop, as does the costs of storage technologies. This bill ensures that these resources, which nationally are demonstrating competitive and often times lower prices than natural gas, coal, and other "conventional" fuel types, will be fairly considered.

I urge you to support Senate Bill 188.

Thank you,

Andrew J. Valainis
Executive Director