

July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Anthony J. Hood  
Chairman  
DC Zoning Commission  
441 4<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, Suite 200S  
Washington, DC 20001

RE: ZC Case 19-04 – Proposed Text Amendment to Subtitles B, C, H, K, and U of Title 11 DCMR, ZONING REGULATIONS OF 2016 – Defining Community Solar Facility (CSF), Locating Zones in which a CSF is a Permitted or Special Exception Use, and Establishing Development Standards for a CSF

Dear Chairman Hood:

On behalf of Groundswell, I am writing in support of the final text amendment and proposed rulemaking to the Zoning Regulations regarding community solar installations.

Groundswell is a local 501 (c)(3) organization that is dedicated to connecting solar power with economic empowerment for marginalized communities. We believe that clean energy should be equitable and affordable, not a luxury product that is available only to those who can afford it. Consistent with the goals of the District’s Solar For All (SfA) program, which seeks to provide the benefits of solar energy to 100,000 low-income DC residents by 2032, all of Groundswell’s solar projects share power with low-income community residents at no cost to them. We are grateful to serve the District by building equitable community solar projects and by providing subscriber management services so that all of our neighbors, regardless of income, have a respectful and supportive experience with solar.

We appreciate that the Zoning Commission (ZC) has acted on this issue to enable Washingtonians to share power with their neighbors. We support the definition of community solar facilities (CSFs) as described in the second zoning text amendment, which allows roof-mounted community solar systems by-right in all zones and allows ground-mount and parking garage canopy community solar systems under 1.5 acres in size by-right in most zones, with minimal restrictions. Traditional “net-metered” (or “behind the meter”) solar projects, where the solar energy produced by the system is consumed onsite, are already permissible by right. The installation components of a CSF are identical to those for net-metered solar projects—the only difference is that CREFs enable the solar energy to be shared with the community. CREFs should not face additional regulatory barriers that could complicate and lengthen permit approval processes for projects that serve low-income District residents.

While many of the amendments in the current emergency text amendment are conducive to the development of CSFs, the setback requirements are overly burdensome for small CSF projects. The specific language (*Where panels are sited no less than forty feet (40 ft.) from an adjacent property in the R, RF, or*

*RA-1 zone*) is present in the following sections: Revision to Use Permissions (Subtitle H, Chapter 11); Revision to Use Permissions (Subtitle K, Chapters 4, 6, and 9); and Revision to Use Permissions (Subtitle U, Chapters 2, 6, and 8). CSFs are already subject to the height, yard, and setback development standards of the zone in which they are located. While a setback threshold of 40 feet makes sense for larger-scale projects, it is unnecessarily restrictive for smaller projects. We believe a setback of 10 feet or less would be more appropriate for CSFs under 1.5 acres.

Thank you for your leadership in amending the District's zoning regulations. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this important issue. All District residents stand to benefit from fair and consistent zoning standards for community solar projects.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Michelle Moore', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Michelle Moore, CEO