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John B. Rhodes, Chair

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PSC Expands Opportunities for Low-Income Households to Participate in Community Distributed Generation

— Increasing Access and Affordability of Renewable Energy Benefits Low-Income Communities and Yields Environmental Benefits —

ALBANY — The New York State Public Service Commission (Commission) today made it easier for low-income electricity customers to participate in Community Distributed Generation (Community DG) programs. Community DG expands consumer access to clean, reliable, and low-cost electricity generated from renewable energy facilities, and can provide great benefits for individuals living in multi-family housing across the state. Today's action will create new opportunities for low-income families who have not had access to electricity generated from renewable resources.

"Expanding access to Community Distributed Generation is not only good for the environment, it supports the reliability of the grid, and also benefits consumers motivated to reduce their electric costs with clean energy," said **Commission Chair John B. Rhodes**. "Today's Commission action is a next step in ensuring that all New Yorkers can reap the benefits of our transition to a clean energy economy."

Community DG is designed to open opportunities for participation in solar and other forms of clean distributed generation to utility customers that would not otherwise be able to reap the benefits of clean energy. Community DG has unique potential to benefit low-income communities for a variety of reasons. First, both renters and homeowners in stand-alone housing or multi-family dwellings can participate, and subscription terms can be customized to individual customers or market segments, including the length of participation. Second, Community DG can be purchased in discrete amounts that are smaller than most rooftop solar systems, making the cost to entry more accessible.

Furthermore, because Community DG projects are typically much larger than most rooftop units, they can achieve certain economies of scale. Finally, Community DG can be installed on land that is otherwise unusable or has low property value. This can reduce the property costs necessary for initial investment and support community redevelopment by increasing the productivity of unused land.

The recommendations adopted by the Commission include a new bill discount pledge program. Under this program low-income customers will be able to use a share of their monthly affordability program bill discount towards the purchase of Community DG subscriptions. Monthly electric discounts range across the state from \$4 to \$76.

While foregoing the benefits of bill discounts through the traditional bill discount program previously established by the Commission through its energy affordability order, participating customers would

instead offset a portion of their monthly bills through Community DG bill credits. Among other things, Community DG projects may be developed to serve a particular geographic area, e.g., within a disadvantaged community. For this reason, the program also includes a strategy to extend enrollment beyond each utility's existing energy affordability program participants. To facilitate the extension of the discount program to serve additional low-income customers, the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority will extend its income verification service to Community DG developers seeking to verify eligibility of low-income subscribers. Importantly, consumer protection measures are built in to the discount program to protect the financially vulnerable customers it will serve.

Today's decision builds upon the State's commitment to expand access to clean energy for all New Yorkers and to support a robust, cost-effective and sustainable market for distributed energy resources. In March 2017, based on recommendations from an extensive stakeholder process, the Commission adopted the Value of Distributed Energy Resources (VDER) as a new compensation structure to more accurately and efficiently value distributed energy resources installed in New York. To date, there are 18 Community DG solar projects installed statewide and more than 600 megawatts currently under development. In conjunction with the Commission decision to adopt new programs as a next step in supporting low-income participation in these clean energy projects, the Commission will continue to monitor the needs of consumers, market participants and other stakeholders as this industry grows in the state and contributes to Governor Cuomo's mandate to achieve 50 percent of the state's electricity from renewable energy by 2030.

About Reforming the Energy Vision:

Reforming the Energy Vision is Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's strategy to lead on climate change and grow New York's economy. REV is building a cleaner, more resilient and affordable energy system for all New Yorkers by stimulating investment in clean technologies like solar, wind, and energy efficiency and requiring 50 percent of the state's electricity needs from renewable energy by 2030. Already, REV has driven growth of more than 1,000 percent in the statewide solar market, improved energy affordability for 1.65 million low-income customers, and created thousands of jobs in manufacturing, engineering, and other clean tech sectors. REV is ensuring New York reduces statewide greenhouse gas emissions 40 percent by 2030 and achieves the internationally recognized target of reducing emissions 80 percent by 2050. To learn more about REV, including the Governor's \$5 billion investment in clean energy technology and innovation, visit rev.ny.gov, follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

Today's decisions may be obtained by going to the Commission Documents section of the Commission's Web site at www.dps.ny.gov and entering Case Numbers 15-E-0082 in the input box labeled "Search for Case/Matter Number". Many libraries offer free Internet access.

Commission documents may also be obtained from the Commission's Files Office, 14th floor, Three Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12223 (518-474-2500). If you have difficulty understanding English, please call us at 1-800-342-3377 for free language assistance services regarding this press release.