

June 11, 2025

Dear Illinois Power Authority (IPA)

Thank you for the opportunity to add our thoughts and comments on the 2026 Long-Term Renewable Resources Procurement Plan (LTRRPP).

The Garfield Park Community Council (GPCC) is a community-building organization comprised of dedicated residents and allies working together to develop leaders and create opportunities and programs that foster a vital Garfield Park and greater Chicago-metro area community. Since 2012, GPCC has developed and implemented over 60 local projects in partnership with at least 50 organizations throughout Cook County, facilitating more than \$50 million in community investment. This initiative is an outgrowth of the original comprehensive approach to improving the quality of life for neighborhood residents. GPCC has become a leader in community development initiatives, engaging various public and private institutions, including private developers, business leaders, city officials, and funders, to ensure that community residents are involved in new projects and policies.

Since 2022, we have been involved in the Community-Driven Community Solar (CDCS) category within the Illinois Shines program, serving as a key pillar of our Sustainable Housing program.

CDCS speaks to the original promise of Illinois community solar because it requires developers to serve entire communities, both with the discounts they offer and programs that serve the residents. Developers engage directly with schools, nonprofits, and local stakeholders to tailor benefits for the neighborhoods their projects serve, like our Garfield Park community. While CDCS is the most community-focused category, it continues to receive the smallest MW allocation.

CDCS projects also do not serve single off-takers, unlike other programs, which allow residents, businesses, and local organizations, such as GPCC, to enroll in local community solar projects. Additionally, many developers commit to subscriptions at the local level (county-wide). This further distinguishes the program as community-focused and beneficial, especially since traditional community solar has longer waitlists, meaning residents do not receive immediate benefits, which our community members have experienced firsthand and shared frustration about. CDCS projects offer equal access to the benefits of solar energy and meaningfully contribute to workforce development, educational programming, and long-term economic

opportunities. Moreover, residents are benefiting from *local projects* built in and around their community here in Cook County.

We understand that some procurements in other Illinois Shines categories have gone unfilled. At the same time, CDCS projects are placed on wait lists despite offering greater capacity and more substantial alignment with CEJA objectives. Prioritizing CDCS would accelerate these high-impact projects and ensure that historically underserved communities, such as Garfield Park, benefit quickly from our state's transition to clean energy.

We are engaged with solar developers through CDCS. We are beginning to see its benefits through community solar enrollments, donations towards programs and events like our Nature Play Space event, and more. We respectfully request that when considering the LTRRPP, the IPA prioritize CDCS projects to ensure these benefits and the promise of CEJA and FEJA are fulfilled. We believe the IPA should work to ensure that waitlisted projects continue their commitment to Illinois, rather than moving to other states that do not have the same barriers to entry. Moreover, the IPA should consider streamlining the process for approving and constructing these projects whenever possible.

We thank you for all your work and for allowing us to offer our thoughts about a program that we believe deserves to be prioritized in the IPA's future planning.

Sincerely,

  
Mike Tomas

Executive Director



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Sustainable Housing Associate