

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 22, 2023

The Honorable Jennifer Granholm
Secretary of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Granholm:

As the lead sponsors of the *HOPE for HOMES Act* in Congress, we urge the Department of Energy (DOE) to swiftly issue guidelines to enhance access to consumer energy data as part of the Department's implementation of the Home Energy Performance-Based, Whole-House Rebate (HOMES) Program and the Smart Grid Grant Program. Specifically, we urge DOE to:

- Issue guidelines, as required by the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), to enhance residential electric and natural gas data sharing for the **HOMES Rebate Program**; and
- Issue guidance to **Smart Grid Program** applicants making clear that grant funds must be used to build out the IT infrastructure necessary to meet DOE's requirements for data standards, interoperability, and access. The guidance should clarify that these requirements apply to the entirety of the utility applicant's service territory so all customers benefit.

Research and experience show providing consumers with access to energy use data helps save money, reduce energy usage, and promote innovation. For example:

- When consumers can easily exchange their information with energy management services online, they can save energy and reduce their bills by as much as six to 18 percent.¹
- Data portability in the electricity and natural gas sectors allows entrepreneurs to develop new technologies to help consumers manage their energy usage, reduce peak demand, and support electrification.
- Portability also supports grid flexibility and automation as well so utilities can manage electricity demand more economically.

However, insufficient access to energy data has hindered the success of efficiency programs for decades. Despite significant federal investment in smart grid technology deployment, energy remains one of the last outstanding areas of commerce where consumers consistently do not know how much a good will cost before purchasing it. Past federal investments in consumer energy data access and portability—such as investments made in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) in 2009—have fallen short of their goals. As of 2022, only three

¹ 12 studies found 6% to 18% energy savings when consumers had easy, functional access to their own energy consumption information; Mission: data, *Got Data? The Value of Energy Data Access to Consumers* (Jan. 2016) (online at: <http://www.missiondata.io/s/Got-Data-value-of-energy-data-access-to-consumers.pdf>)

percent of ARRA-funded meters with real-time data access capabilities have those tools enabled, and only 14 percent of customers can easily share their energy use data with contractors or energy management services using interfaces offered by their utilities.²

We must chart a more successful path forward on energy data access as we implement the **HOMES Rebate Program** and the **Smart Grid Grant Program**.

Energy data portability is essential for the **HOMES Rebate Program**. The IRA required DOE to “publish guidelines for States relating to residential electric and natural gas energy data sharing” for the HOMES program.³ It is our understanding DOE has not published those guidelines. Administration of HOMES will be dramatically more efficient and effective with secure, automated data access and sharing systems.

We urge DOE to work closely with data access stakeholders and experts to quickly develop the data access guidelines required by statute so the State Energy Offices—the entities charged with implementing this program—may begin developing plans best suited for their respective states. We also urge DOE to publish guidelines for State Energy Offices before those offices are required to begin operating the program. State Energy Offices will need time to design programs that meet DOE guidelines, to hire and train staff to run the program and implement data sharing provisions.

The **Smart Grid Grant Program** provides funding to improve power system flexibility, efficiency, and reliability. Consumer and certified third-party access to energy usage data would enhance this system, which uses digital communications technology to respond to changes in energy usage. We were pleased that DOE’s Funding Opportunity Announcement released in November 2022 included a requirement that Smart Grid projects support data standards, interoperability, and access “on a real-time basis.”⁴

We appreciate DOE’s previous work on energy data access issues and believe now is the time to ensure past missed opportunities are not repeated. The Smart Grid Grant program presents a historic opportunity to advance projects that will facilitate efficient and secure consumer access to energy data, enabling more successful implementation of energy efficiency programs for decades to come. The HOMES program—which will send billions of dollars across the country to advance residential energy efficiency—will only achieve full success if states develop data access and sharing plans prior to the start of program implementation.

² Mission:data Coalition, *Deactivated: How Electric Utilities Turned Off the Data-Sharing Features of 14 Million Smart Meters* (Sept. 2022) (online at: http://www.missiondata.io/s/Deactivated_white_paper.pdf).

³ Statute at Large 136 Stat. 4378 - Public Law No. 117-169 (Aug. 16, 2022) (online at: [congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/5376/text/pl?overview=closed](https://www.congress.gov/bills/117/congress/house-bill/5376/text/pl?overview=closed)).

⁴ Department of Energy, Funding Opportunity Announcement BIL – Grid Resilience and Innovation Partnerships (GRIP) (Nov. 18, 2022) (online at: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/52d5c817e4b062861277ea97/t/7ba0186c51f62ff7e8933e/1669046297839/GRIP+OA+%21>).

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to seeing progress from DOE.

Sincerely,



Peter Welch
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator