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Solar Holler to Save Wayne County Schools Nearly \$6.5 Million Through State's Largest Power Purchase Agreement to Date

Wayne, WV — November 29, 2023 — Today, West Virginian solar installer and developer, Solar Holler, announced in conjunction with Wayne County Schools, plans to implement a record-breaking county-wide Power Purchase Agreement (PPA). The project, set to be fully completed by the end of 2025, will include solarizing every available building in the county under the umbrella of a single PPA. In total, up to 10,000 solar panels are expected to deliver as much as 5.33 Megawatts of power to Wayne County Schools each year. Along with that comes an estimated 25 year savings of nearly \$6.5 million in energy costs.

The agreement represents the largest Power Purchase Agreement signed in West Virginia to date and the largest single demonstration of solar on public schools anywhere in Appalachia. It builds on historic investments prioritized for coal communities in the Inflation Reduction Act and recent changes to state law that facilitate solar deployment. The anticipated financial impact is enough to fund the salaries of 3 additional teachers for the duration of their careers.

Dan Conant, Solar Holler Founder and CEO, shared his enthusiasm for the project saying, "Working with the school system of Wayne County is a dream come true for Solar Holler. Some of our staff graduated from Wayne County Schools or have kids who are students there now. It's the heart of coal country, where our state's proud history of energy production is rooted. It's literally the community that's helped build our business, so we're really grateful for the opportunity to shine a light on what solar can do for public institutions and education systems right here in Southern West Virginia."

Power Purchase Agreements were legalized in West Virginia by the 2021 legislature. The structure allows for a business or nonprofit organization, such as Wayne County Schools, to realize the benefits of solar without the upfront capital investment. Basically, Solar Holler (in this case) owns the system and assumes the responsibility of designing, developing,



permitting, operating, and maintaining it for the 25 year lifetime of the PPA. In return, Wayne County Schools agrees to purchase the energy generated by the solar panels at a predetermined rate (10 - 20% lower than the rate they pay their utility), providing them with a predictable and affordable source of clean energy.

In addition to the state legislation that made PPAs possible, the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) passed in 2022 has been instrumental in making these types of projects economically viable. Through changes to the tax code, the bill included additional incentives for projects placed in coal communities like Wayne County, new financing options to increase investment in energy infrastructure, and funding to boost domestic manufacturing of energy technologies here in the U.S.

"I am excited to see this innovative project in Wayne County. Let's be clear – this investment in Wayne County is a direct result of the *Inflation Reduction Act*. This type of investment in rural America to create jobs, make our country more energy secure and lower electric costs is exactly what the IRA was designed to do," **said Senator Joe Manchin, Chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.**

This isn't the first collaboration between Solar Holler and Wayne County Schools. Last winter the two organizations announced an Apprenticeship Program for qualifying seniors aimed at preparing them for future careers in the growing renewable energy sector. Through this program, under the supervision of Solar Holler's unionized installation crews, students gain hands-on experience and practical skills in solar technology, electrical work, and project management. Now, as Solar Holler begins installing panels throughout the county, some students will have the opportunity to put solar on the roof of their own high school.

Todd Alexander, Superintendent of Wayne County Schools, alluded to the myriad ways this project will have positive impacts on students saying, "Transitioning to solar power resonates beyond economics—it's a commitment to nurturing our students and community. By redirecting savings towards our schools, we're investing in educational excellence and a brighter tomorrow for our children and West Virginia as a whole."

Conant agreed and went on to say he hopes other West Virginia school systems will follow Wayne County's lead.



“What’s happening in Wayne County is innovative and exciting - and not just because it’s exposing students to the next phase of West Virginia’s energy economy or the importance of sustainability. It’s also injecting precious dollars into meaningful tools for educators. We’ve developed a successful model that other schools and nonprofits across the state can follow to build a 21st Century workforce, and give reasons for native West Virginians to stay close to home.”

Solar Holler estimates the first schools to be solarized in early 2024 with the others coming online on a rolling basis for the following 12 - 18 months.

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Solar Holler is bringing the next generation of energy production to our ancient mountains, and strengthening our communities with union employment. Solar Holler relentlessly pursues innovative approaches that bring solar within reach of all Appalachians, starting with low-interest financing options with no upfront cost. Solar Holler has helped dozens of businesses, nonprofits, and churches, and thousands of homes go solar across West Virginia, southern Ohio, western Virginia, western Maryland and eastern Kentucky.