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Abstract:

The unequal deployment of solar photovoltaic technology has led to high-income households receiving greater energy savings. Community solar (CS) can help bridge the gap between energy savings and low-to-moderate (LMI) communities. Previous research has presented the barriers to CS deployment and policy tools that can be used to encourage development. However, this research did not examine how public records represent and frame the LMI community. By analyzing LMI representation, we can see how much agency the community holds in the shaping of their political identity and how public interaction with the policy reinforces the identity. Through the New York State CS records from the legislative assembly, Department of Public Service, and New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, it can be concluded that New York state positively represents LMI communities. The state's reported emphasis on LMI inclusion translates to policy and programs that increase the visibility of the LMI target group. Public comments from constituents and industry stakeholders further voice support for the programs and reiterate the importance of LMI inclusion. Findings indicate that positive construction and visibility of the LMI community, as well as their public support, grants them power and advantage through the positive feedback loop of public records.