



10/12/21

Governor Charlie Baker
Lt. Governor Karyn Polito
Secretary Kathleen Theoharides, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs

Dear Governor Baker, Lt. Governor Polito, and Secretary Theoharides:

We, the undersigned, urge you to increase access and remove barriers to the Mass Save program for underserved communities across the state, including renters. Our organizations represent and support thousands of ratepayers, workers, and EJ community members who need comprehensive steps to address the climate crisis and equity measures to ensure everyone can access the program benefits.

We ask you to ensure the next Three-Year Energy Efficiency Plan will give underserved communities access to weatherization and efficiency programs as we recover from the impacts of the pandemic. In particular, communities underserved by the state's energy efficiency programs include language-isolated communities (with little to no English language proficiency), renters, working-class people, communities of color, immigrants, and [Environmental Justice](#) communities. Please reject any energy efficiency plan that does not center the needs of these communities and fails to clearly outline direct actions and budget commitments that will address the disparities in access to energy efficiency programs.

We need to prioritize equity as we strive for an energy-efficient future and design pathways to meet Massachusetts's emission reduction goals. [Underserved communities struggle with high electricity bills](#) while wealthier suburbs access the state's energy efficiency services [6-7 times](#) more. It is a top priority to reach low-income populations, immigrants, people with English isolation, and renters.

In light of the current planning year, we would like to reiterate the actions the Energy Efficiency Advisory Council (EEAC) and the Program Administrators can take to increase access for underserved communities:

- **Target communities currently underserved by Mass Save:**
 - Increase the income eligibility threshold from 60% to 80% of state median income
 - Direct additional resources to cities underutilizing Mass Save (such as Worcester, Springfield, and Lynn), low-income communities, communities impacted by COVID, and language-isolated communities
 - Fund and partner with trusted community organizations to increase participation in hard-to-reach communities
 - Identify each stage of the process requiring multilingual interaction and provide translation,

- interpretation, and referral resources to contractors with relevant language competency.
 - Develop a multilingual workforce: Provide workforce development and create career ladders for high-road jobs to multilingual and English learners who are experts in their communities and can help to improve access in language-isolated communities.
 - Provide funding for standard pre-weatherization requirements facing low-income households, including roof repair, asbestos removal, knob and tube wiring removal, etc.
 - Customize outreach and incentives to landlords to serve more renters
- **Expand Mass Save to include more forms of efficiency and resilience:**
 - Include housing retrofits, affordable heat pumps, more efficient appliance standards, etc.
 - Include the installation of electricity storage capacity to increase the resilience of underserved communities in the face of extreme weather events
- **Ensure transparency on energy efficiency equity goals, budgets, and spending:** Officials should only support this plan if there is complete transparency regarding the changes made from the last three-year plan (2019-2021) and specific equity goals, budget allocation, and policies and practices to reach underserved communities.
- **Expand program targets to match the scope of the Baker Administration’s Climate mandates:** Your administration’s Clean Energy and Climate Plan call for a million homes to receive energy efficiency retrofits by 2030. Unfortunately, the scope of the draft Three-Year Plan falls far short of the 100,000+ homes per year that must receive these retrofits to reach this goal. The EEAC and the Mass Save program must prioritize residences in underserved communities as the program expands to meet this mandate to center equity in this approach.

To increase participation for underserved communities, the Three-Year Plan needs transparent budget commitments and measurable targets. Therefore, we call upon your administration and the EEAC to target investment to Environmental Justice communities, increase the amount from previous plan levels, monitor utilities’ compliance in meeting these targets, and ensure greater transparency.

Since [nonparticipants who rent are likely to be low-income](#), we also urge you to consider the impacts this investment in energy efficiency in underserved communities will have on property values. To ensure that the people we serve are not gentrified out of their homes and neighborhoods due to these energy efficiency improvements, regulatory agencies must provide robust protections for vulnerable tenants from this kind of “green gentrification.” We recommend rent stabilization and facilitating the formation of tenants unions as some critical approaches. In addition, we suggest implementing performance incentives to ensure both landlords and renters are participating in the program.

Thank you for your dedication and commitment to an equitable and energy-efficient future. Everyone, including our most vulnerable residents, should have access to weatherization and its benefits. Addressing these gaps will also help meet the state’s ambitious climate emissions reduction targets outlined in the most recent climate justice bill and your Clean Energy and Climate Plan.

We look forward to working together to ensure that the needs of underserved, language-isolated, immigrant, renter, working-class, low-income communities of color are prioritized in the next Three-Year energy efficiency plan.

Sincerely,
Green Justice Coalition and allies:

Paulina Casasola, Clean Water Action

Lee Matsueda, Community Labor United

Maria Belen Power, GreenRoots

Mark Liu, Chinese Progressive Association

Andy Wells-Bean, Boston Climate Action Network

John Ratliff, Massachusetts Senior Action Council

Sylvia Broude, Community Action Works

Megan Amsler, Self-Reliance Corporation

Rouwenna Altemose & Gabe Shapiro, All In Energy

Claire B.W. Müller, Unitarian Universalist Mass Action

Fran Ludwig, Boston Catholic Climate Movement

Fred Small, Massachusetts Interfaith Power and Light

Timothy Cronin, Climate XChange Massachusetts

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Sarah Dooling, Massachusetts Climate Action Network

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Laura Gardner, Climate Reality Project Massachusetts Southcoast

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Stephan Roundtree, Jr., Vote Solar