

Dear Chair Sheldon and Members of the Vermont House Committee on the Environment and Energy,

The Vermont Sierra Club appreciates your diligence and review of the Affordable Heat Act and encourages the passage of this important policy proposal. Below and attached is the Sierra Club's written testimony in support of the work that has transpired.

If you have any questions please call me at 802-505-1540.

**Vermont Sierra Club
S.5, The Affordable Heat Act
April 12, 2023**

The Sierra Club is an environmental advocacy organization, with over a million members nationwide. Our Vermont chapter, chartered thirty years ago, has nearly 10,000 members and supporters. We've been engaged in Vermont issues ranging from wilderness preservation to water resource protection, waste and toxics issues, air pollution, environmental justice, transportation, and the climate crisis.

The Vermont Sierra Club supports the passage of S.5, the Affordable Heat Act (AHA). We believe that regulating heating fuels, the second largest source of carbon emissions, is a critical step forward in reducing carbon emissions and meeting Vermont's climate goals. We support prioritizing heat pumps and weatherization, as well as changes to reduce or eliminate the use of bioenergy fuels. We applaud the equity mandates in the law and will continue to advocate for an equitable clean energy transition as the program is implemented. Most importantly we support the AHA because:

- **Regulating heating fuels, the second largest source of carbon emissions, is a critical step forward in reducing carbon emissions and meeting our state climate goals.** The AHA sets in place a performance-based standard that requires regulated entities to take actions to reduce emissions. Requiring real actions to earn credits means there must be concrete, delivered solutions to meet the mandates of the program and provide a pathway for the evolution of the fossil fuel industry in Vermont.

- **The AHA enshrines in law a high standard for lifecycle accounting of greenhouse gas emissions to ensure that investments in heat pumps and weatherization are prioritized.** Studies have shown that prioritizing electrification leads to a [faster and quicker reduction in emissions](#). The use of bioenergy fuels can delay emissions reductions and pull emphasis away from efficiency and electrification measures that have proven results. Through its implementation it is important to prioritize weatherization and electrification, two proven ways to lower emissions and increase the comfort and health of homes.

- **The AHA includes initiatives to address inequities in the energy system with the working group and mandates.** History has shown that market-based programs result in disproportionate impacts to underserved communities. The AHA helps alleviate these barriers through the equity-working group and mandates that deliver measures to middle- and low-income communities. We strongly encourage the state to look at how to prioritize efficiency and electrification measures in these communities in the AHA as well, as studies show that switching a home from [propane heat to a cold-climate heat pump](#) saves the average Vermont homeowner \$900 per year.

Now is our chance to enact and design a clean-heat standard to reduce emissions and save Vermonters money by switching out of costly and volatile fossil fuels. The Vermont Sierra Club supports S.5, the Affordable Heat Act, and encourages its passage.

Please include the attached testimony as our written testimony. Thank you for your consideration of this important measure.

On behalf of the Vermont Sierra Club,
Robb Kidd
Vermont Sierra Club
Conservation Program Manager