

April 18, 2023

Senate Committee on Appropriations
115 State Street
Montpelier, Vermont 05602

Dear Chair Kitchel and Members of the Senate Committee on Appropriations,

The Vermont Legislature, and particularly the leadership of the Senate Committee on Appropriations, has played a vital role helping *all* Vermonters adapt and build resiliency during the increasingly difficult challenges caused by climate change while ensuring that the state meets its legal obligations to reduce carbon pollution.

To that end, we hope your committee can support these climate investments in the FY24 budget bill:

B.700, Environmental Justice Positions, \$321K

The House version of the budget supports \$321K for three FTE Environmental Justice Positions as recommended by the Governor but moves them from one-time funding to base funding. **We hope SAC can support this move.**

The Environmental Justice Bill, signed into law in 2022, included three FTEs. The FY23 Budget Bill, Act 185, used one-time funds to cover those three FTEs. The work described in Act 154 is ongoing and comprehensive. Additionally, these positions are also assigned to work on compliance with federal civil rights laws and regulations, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964, work that is also ongoing.

B.1100(21)(B) CLIMATE OFFICE, \$900K

The House version of the budget included \$900K for one time climate office work, which was also reflective in the Governor's recommend budget. We also recommend, to ensure the greatest synergy, transparency and opportunity for public and stakeholder input, that the Legislature makes clear this investment is in support of implementing the Vermont Climate Action Plan. Specifically, **we urge legislative direction alongside this allocation, requiring the Climate Office team to regularly communicate and specifically collaborate with the Vermont Climate Council**, its steering committee, and relevant subcommittees.

We hope SAC can support this appropriation alongside that additional direction.

B.1101(d)(1) ADVANCE VERMONT, CLIMATE WORKFORCE, \$100K

The House added language and funds to support a climate workforce initiative that was in the workforce bill. In fiscal year 2024, the amount of \$100,000 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation for a subgrant to Advance Vermont to support the creation of climate workforce-focused public-facing digital resources. These resources, which will reside on MyFutureVT.org and be developed in concert with industry and education/training providers, will increase awareness of the career and education opportunities for in-demand climate careers.

This directs Advance Vermont to create a climate workforce-focused digital public resource that engages current and prospective employees, Vermont youth, adults interested in changing careers, and individuals yet to earn a postsecondary credential, or those who are looking to upskill, including: (1) centralized information about career and education opportunities in Vermont that build awareness of needed climate careers; and (2) video series and other media featuring opportunities with employers and employee success stories.

B.1101(d)(2) VT SUSTAINABLE JOBS FUND, \$180K

We also hope SAC can support the House position on VSJF. This was also in the House workforce bill. For FY24, they appropriated \$180,000 to ACCD to subgrant to the VT Sustainable Jobs Fund to expand its Business Coaching program, specifically to assist “existing energy services businesses interested in adopting a climate centered mission and working with trades persons looking to start their own climate-centered business.” This assistance to help local businesses increase their role in the transition to a lower-carbon energy sector is important as we accelerate that work and try to take maximum advantage of federal funds under the Inflation Reduction Act.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Ben Edgerly Walsh, Vermont Public Interest Research Group
Johanna Miller, Vermont Natural Resources Council
Lauren Hierl, Vermont Conservation Voters
Dan Fingas, Rights and Democracy
Peter Sterling, Renewable Energy Vermont
Roxanne Vought, Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility
Robb Kidd, Vermont Chapter of the Sierra Club
Elena Mihaly, Conservation Law Foundation
David Mears, Audubon Vermont