

To the House Energy & Technology Committee:

Testimony on H.688, the Vermont Global Warming Solutions Act of 2020

Submitted by K.C. Whiteley on behalf of 350VT

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January 28, 2020

Thank you to Chair Briglin and to the committee for this opportunity to give testimony on H.688, the Vermont Global Warming Solutions Act of 2020.

My name is K.C. Whiteley, and I am here today as a parent and grandparent, because I care deeply about our environment and about the precarious future in store for the next generations of Vermonters due to the climate crisis that is upon us.

I am a member of the 350VT Board of Directors, currently serve as the board's vice chair and am here representing our statewide constituency.

350VT is a grassroots organization formed in 2011 that organizes, educates and supports Vermonters to work together for climate justice. We are an affiliate of 350.org, an international environmental organization addressing the climate crisis.

We greatly appreciate that this legislation was initiated and has been co-sponsored by 87 House members. This broad support is a positive and hopeful sign that the legislature takes the climate crisis very seriously and means to act to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and to set Vermont on a course away from fossil fuel reliance and toward renewable energy sources.

Again, we are grateful for the opportunity to submit testimony today.

The breadth and scope of H.688 addresses many concerns 350Vermont shares. We are here to highlight areas we feel need to be strengthened in order to meet the challenges of the climate crisis.

With our limited time today, I would like to give an overview of our primary concerns and offer some ways the bill could be strengthened to be aligned with the urgency of this task.

- 1) We strongly recommend that you use the most recent IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) report as the guide to set the greenhouse gas emissions reduction requirements in this bill. The IPCC provides scientific assessments on climate change and is the best and most current science available.

- 2) It is essential to accelerate the timeline for action. H.688 calls for a planning period of over a year to July, 2021. Rules for implementing the plan will not be determined until July, 2022. This means seeking funding to enact plans adopted under H.688 could very well be delayed until the 2023 legislative session. While we recognize the importance of an up-to-date and comprehensive plan, we cannot afford to wait two - or even three - years to begin taking meaningful action.

Given that the vast majority of scientists around the world all agree that we have little more than a decade to implement drastic measures if we are to have a hope of preventing the worst impacts of climate change, we urge you to accelerate the timeline of this bill. We simply do not have two, possibly three, years to devote to planning.

We believe it is essential that the legislature put immediate action steps in place and there are many steps we know are essential and effective that we can make now, e.g.

- Enact a ban on all new fossil fuel infrastructure. We need to resist the pressure to use and transport fracked gas in Vermont so that we can begin to move in the direction of renewables.
- Weatherization of inefficient buildings. Begin with all municipal buildings and the homes of people at the bottom of the income scale.
- Strengthen our focus on building local, renewable energy generation and storage of electricity.
- Empower citizen input and local decision making. The bill's current structure is top down, and we believe that the impetus for change most often comes from the bottom up. We need to listen to Vermonters most affected by climate change and empower all Vermonters to act in their own communities now.
- We would like to offer an expert witness to the committee to address what we see as the severe inadequacies of the right of citizen action section of the bill.

We look forward to providing additional testimony to help ensure H.688 is strong and effective legislation.

Thank you again for your time and your commitment to addressing this critical issue.

I am happy, along with my fellow 350VT Board members who are here today, to answer any questions the committee might have.