



**Sue Minter, Executive Director  
Capstone Community Action**

**Testimony Re Global Warming Solutions Act  
January 24th, 2020  
House Committee on Energy and Technology**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment upon the Global Warming Solutions Act, H 688.

For the record, I am Sue Minter, Executive Director of Capstone Community Action Agency, an anti-poverty organization that, since 1965, has been working to lift Vermonters out of poverty. We are one of five Community Action Agencies that work as a network of support for vulnerable Vermonters across the state. As regionally-based non-profits, the Community Action Agencies work collectively and through an array of services to help Vermonters make ends meet, build stronger families and communities, create warm and healthy homes, and open doors of economic opportunity. Capstone Community Action serves Washington, Lamoille and Orange Counties along with several towns in Windsor County.

While commenting as a Community Action Agency Director, I am also offering the perspective of my past experiences in the Legislative and Executive Branches. Specifically, I was a member of the General Assembly when some of the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) reduction goals were developed. I was also the Deputy Secretary of The Agency of Transportation when Tropical Storm Irene ravaged Vermont in August 2011. In December 2011, following the 4-month long Emergency Response phase of the disaster, I was appointed to be the Irene Recovery Officer for Vermont, in charge of immediate and long term recovery and resilience planning for the entire state. I was subsequently redeployed to the Transportation Agency where I was appointed to be the Secretary in 2015. I also led an Emergency Response team to Colorado in 2013 following their extreme flooding, and represented Vermont on the Obama White House Task Force on Climate Preparedness and Resilience, where I co-chaired the subcommittee on Disaster Recovery and Resilience.

My comments below reference my suggested changes to the text that I reviewed in *Draft 8 [dr. req. 20-0442 – draft 8.]*

1. I applaud the inclusion of investments for rural, marginalized, disenfranchised and disinvested communities. [Sec 2 (5)]. The IPPC report references the disproportionate impact that our changing climate has on these communities. I see this daily in my work with Community Action, and witnessed this first hand post- Irene. Rural and lower income Vermonters were both the hardest hit by the disaster, and had the most difficult recovery from its effects. It is critical that we consider these impacts as we approach climate mitigation strategies and also as we better prepare for the climate effects of the severe weather that our changing climate will inevitably bring.

2. I support the incorporation of clear and enforceable Greenhouse Gas (GHG) reduction requirements into statute. [Sec. 3] I am not in a position to testify as to whether the targets presented in the bill are the “right” or “best” targets, but having observed the impact that legal reduction requirements have had in other States, most notably California, I believe the force of law is critical to move action across the many jurisdictions. It is disappointing to learn that Vermont is not making adequate progress toward reaching the goals that were established in the law I voted for in 2005. Knowing that, as a state, we have committed to the Paris Climate Agreement, it is fitting to incorporate an accountability framework into meeting this commitment.
3. I appreciate the creation of a Climate Council in order to engage the public and representatives of multiple sectors into the mission. My recommendations regarding the composition and role of the Council include:
  - a. I would suggest the Chair of the Council should be the Secretary of Administration [Sec 4. #591(a) (1)]. The Secretary of Administration is the only real Secretary that has oversight, jurisdiction and authority over all other Secretaries and Departments. The Secretary of ANR is responsible for only one area of Climate Mitigation and Adaptation, and cannot easily or effectively oversee implementation of other Agencies and Departments. Following Irene, the Irene Recovery Officer was located within the office of the AOA and I believe that this was a critical element to our successful recovery.
  - b. Council representatives: I would suggest you specifically identify Emergency Management as a member of the Council (and not only a representative of DPS.) This is because EM is the office currently responsible for recovery, mitigation and adaptation planning. I also suggest you include a representative of VAPDA (regional planning) on the Council as this work is part of their current mission and all recovery will include their active participation.
4. I recommend you add social equity into the phrasing of evaluating strategies:
  - a. “... which strategies and programs will result in the largest greenhouse gas emissions reductions in the most cost-effective **and socially equitable** manner...” [#591(b)(1)(B)] & [#591(c)(1)]. Note that there are other places where this phrasing would be appropriate in the text.
5. I recommend you include a specific reference in the Climate Action Plan to the effects of climate change on the state’s climate, wildlife, natural resources, public health and housing stock [#591(b)(3)(c)]
6. I applaud the inclusion of a “Just Transition Subcommittee”, knowing that this concept is not well understood and has not historically been considered. This will require engagement from the diverse range of communities we are interested in protecting.

7. I suggest inclusion of the concept of Risk Reduction into subcommittee structure/title.
  - a. [#591(c)(3)] Rural Resilience, **Risk Reduction** and Adaptation Subcommittee
  - b. Include in that subsection “...**identify areas of vulnerability and risk and assess strategies to reduce risk...**”
  - c. Add Vulnerability index for the transportation network [#591(c)(3)(A)]
  - d. Specify levels/tiers of preparedness “... recommend tools...to assess their climate emergency preparedness **at the individual, municipal and regional level...**” [#591(c)(3)(D)]
8. Jurisdiction: I suggest adding the Agency of Human Services to [#591 (e)] or just make it the Agency of Administration (which should cover all Agencies)
9. Add reference to the municipal requirement to develop Disaster Mitigation Plans [#591(f)]
10. My recommendations to the Plan development and update process include:
  - a. I recommend a 5 year planning horizon so that the Council and state agencies can focus on implementation of the plan, and not always be stuck in the cycle of developing the plan. I recommend supplementing the 5-year planning cycle with a requirement that the Secretary of Administration track and report on measurable targets as set in statute.
  - b. Add: #592 (b) **(8) Prioritize investments needed to reduce risk of harm to individuals and communities**
  - c. **Add** Agency of Human Services and Department of Public Safety in (#592(c)(2)
  - d. Add #592(d)(1)... and **socially** equitable GHG reductions...
  - e. Add the concept of “invest in programs that...” [#592(d)(1)....]
  - f. Encourage emergency planning, training and drills to improve preparedness, and emergency response systems. [#592(d)(9)]