

February 27, 2023

Dear Chair Lanpher and members of the House Committee on Appropriations,

The last two years have seen large and appropriate investment of federal dollars into efforts to address the climate crisis, including critical moves to reduce carbon pollution and increase Vermont's resilience to and adaptation from the climate crisis. In our view, your work is increasingly essential as we strive to balance multiple goals and support Vermonters' ability to adapt and thrive in a warming world. That requires ongoing, sufficient and sustained support for critical programs.

As previous years' investments move through our state agencies and out to Vermonters, we must continue to provide funding in places that can have the greatest impact. To that end, we want to express our support for the following items in the Governor's FY24 Budget – and we hope you agree. We respectfully urge the following FY 24 investments:

- \$5M one-time for Efficiency Vermont, Clean Heat Program - Sec. B.1100 (21)(C)/Sec. E.700
- \$300K for Environmental Justice positions - Sec. B.1100 (21)(D). While we absolutely support funding for these positions, we also want to be very clear that in our view these positions should be included in base funding, not funded with one-time monies. The work these staff do is both essential and legally required under federal civil rights law and under Vermont Act 154 of 2022, the Environmental Justice law passed with overwhelming majorities last year. This work is ongoing, and the funding for it should be as well.
- \$900K for one-time Climate office technical analyses, tools, and training - Sec. B.1100 (21)(B). 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.
- Full statutory funding for the regional planning commissions, \$10.5M – Sec. D.100
- \$700K one-time for Refrigerant Management - Sec. B.1100 (21)(A)
- \$1M one-time for Emissions Repair Program - Sec. B.1100 (24)(H)
- \$750K for OEO replacement and repair of heating equipment – Sec E.326/B.326

We believe these items are in line with the Climate Action Plan as adopted by Climate Council and work to ensure that we are improving equitable outcomes and enabling all Vermonters to be part of this climate transition.

We also want to note that there are other clear needs not included here, including investments to build Vermont's climate workforce and further support Vermonters accessing the state's existing and upcoming climate programs. We look forward to supporting work in those areas and others as the session progresses.

Sincerely,

Ben Edgerly Walsh, Vermont Public Interest Research Group

Johanna Miller, Vermont Natural Resources Council

Lauren Hierl, Vermont Conservation Voters

Chase Whiting, Conservation Law Foundation