

Thank you Chair Bray and members of Senate Natural Resources and Energy Committee for having me here today to testify about S5 the Affordable Heat Act. My name is Dan Fingas and I am the Movement Politics Director for Rights and Democracy which we call RAD.

RAD is a member-led organization started in 2016 that organizes in communities across Vermont and New Hampshire. Our mission is to bring people together to take action to build healthy communities and make the values of our communities guide the policies of our government. We are building a popular movement to advance rights and build a real democracy. We work in partnership with community groups, progressive unions, faith communities, organizations fighting for human and civil rights, and environmental and climate action groups.

RAD believes that Vermont must do its part to ensure a just transition to a clean energy future that mandates renewable energy and ends our reliance on dirty, polluting fossil fuels. And we must guarantee that everyone benefits - especially Vermonters who have been most impacted by past and current harms.

We need a full transition to renewables, with a focus on locally and community owned in-state sources, and a clean heat standard that centers equity and incentivizes energy use mitigation over transition fuels.

With this context we feel that S5 the Affordable Heat Act is a better bill than last year's Clean Heat Act and should be passed by the legislature this year. It's no secret that RAD was not in favor of passage of the Clean Heat Standard bill last year, so we appreciate the hard work that many have done to create a better bill that is more affordable and more equitable for all Vermonters.

I first want to highlight what RAD sees as some of the key improvements in S5.

Firstly we were excited to see that equity and affordability are a main focus of this bill. This includes setting specific targets for transition and mitigation for low and moderate income Vermont households.

We also appreciate the following improvements to the bill:

- a transition that is based on declining carbon intensity in a clear and measurable manner moving to a carbon intensity score of 20 or below by 2050. (Section E)
- an improved accounting system of Lifecycle emissions that is fit to Vermont specifically and how it (Section F-G)
 - expressly looks at the full fuel pathway from cradle to grave
 - focus on accounting for fugitive emissions,

- creates baseline emissions for methane that is based on methane capture regulations.
- and requires a Review of Consequences by the PUC to ensure that the standard is working as designed.

-Explicit listing of better solutions including weatherization, heat pumps, solar, and geothermal (8125 section c)

While RAD truly believes that this bill is better and should be passed, we also feel that there are ways that we can improve this bill and hope that the committee looks closely at these issues as they continue their committee debate and bill writing.

First is to ensure that affordability for low income Vermont households is the real outcome of this bill. We need to ensure that we are protecting the most needy Vermont households and ensure a just transition and that means we are ensuring that zero dollar out of pocket options are available to all low income Vermonters and that they are prioritized first to get that mitigation work done quickly to see the cost benefits of the work. This needs to include a strong focus on renters. We believe that programs like WRAP and other tariffed on bill financing measures are effective ways to meet this need if all renters are included. With these elements we echo the testimony provided by Maura Collins from the Vermont Housing Finance Agency.

We also think that a clarification in 8124 subpoint D number 2 to ensure that 50% of both low and moderate income credits are through mitigation. Current language is vague and seems to only require 50% of low and moderate as a whole.

Our other substantive improvement is in the Clean Heat Equity Advisory Group. As it currently stands S5 explicitly calls for representatives of certain entities including the Vermont Fuel Dealers Association, but is more vague with who other members can be. One example is “renters and rental property owners” listed together. This doesn't do enough to ensure that Vermonters most affected by the bill are at the table and doesn't ensure that renters will be represented.

Thank you again for your time and I am available for any questions you may have.