

Chair James:

ANR, in consultation with PSD and VTrans, offer the following comments on Draft 3.1 of H.125. We share the HEDI Committee's interest in tracking the economic and social impacts of climate action across the state and the belief that this is important work. However, given this is a wholly new task for the state, **we urge you to modify the bill to initially require a one-time study, due in December 2025**, which would provide your committee data and recommendations that can then inform future legislation to require ongoing, annual reporting. This approach is consistent with my previous discussion with the Committee and my keen interest, given the incredible work load this agency carries, in endeavoring to accommodate HEDI's interest in having a report available for discussion during the second half of the biennium while acknowledging we (the designated agencies) don't fully understand what it will take to produce all of the datasets envisioned by the bill and whether the effort will commensurate with the value of the data produced.

I feel strongly there are several benefits to this phased approach. Chiefly:

- This will allow the Agency to complete Phase 1 of the development of a Measuring and Assessing Progress Tool as required by the Global Warming Solutions Act which is intended to spatially-track and make publicly accessible much of the data requested by H.125. Establishing the requirements of an annual report, without an initial assessment of data sources and relevant indicators, will not yield the best results for Vermonters and may create an unfunded annual obligation on state agency staff that is not commensurate with the desired benefits. Our recommendations in the initial report will attempt to align initiatives where possible and provide an outline for future reports should the Committee wish to continue the effort.
- We appreciate and agree with the committee's focus on equity and just transition Act 154 of 2022, Vermont's Environmental Justice Law, sets forth in great detail a process by which state agencies must track and report on environmental benefits and burdens on environmental justice population communities. That work is well underway and it's important not to create duplicative requirements in H.125. Creating a one-time study due in December 2025, will provide ANR time over the next year to compare Act 154 with the stated objectives of H.125 so we can offer recommendations on how best to track and report on this critical piece of our climate transition.

More specifically:

- Subsection (b)(4) of H.125 requires the reporting of weatherization data by income quintile. This is not consistent with how weatherization is currently reported and not likely to be possible. For example, low-income

weatherization programs in Vermont provide benefits up to 80% AMI, which is right in the middle of a census quintile. Moreover, Efficiency Vermont, who delivers most of the market rate weatherization programs, has income verified to different buckets –(below 80%, 80-120%, above 120%) and do not get specific income verification reports that match census quintile. If some specificity is desired, then income standards we use regularly in Vermont for weatherization should be used. Again, this is an important detail we can work through and resolve in a one-time report next December, which can then be used to build a viable ongoing reporting framework.

- Subsection (c)(1) requires maps and graphic displays of the data compiled. For much of the data listed in H.125, this will require new work and additional staff and IT resources. It may be possible to indicate which data are regionally specific and which are graphically specific, but not all data is currently available in those forms. Providing that analysis in a one-time report for the Committee to consider next year, prior to establishing annual reporting requirements, would provide the Committee the information you need to determine which data can best be displayed locationally and graphically and what gaps exist that may warrant additional investment to fill.
- Subsection (b)(2) requires reporting on any active Certificate of Public Good applications. While this data exists in the PUC’s database, it is not currently regularly reported and would require new work to report. This data, while possibly a useful leading indicator, is also often flawed with repeat entries due to re-filed petitions, amendments, or simply incorrect information provided. While it’s likely that some reporting metric for pending energy generation projects is possible, providing the Agency time to work with partners before prescribing this as a specific annual reporting requirement will yield better results.

Thank you for your attention to this important topic and for your consideration of the Agency’s request to modify the bill to initially require a one-time study, due in December 2025 before obligating us to an annual reporting requirement. Please don’t hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Kind regards,
Julie



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