

## **Earl Hatley, Abenaki Nation, testimony before the House Committee on Energy and Digital Infrastructure, Wednesday February 4<sup>th</sup> at 1:00PM.**

I am Earl Hatley, I am a citizen of Abenaki Nation of Missisquoi (Shawnee/Cherokee heritage), I live in West Hartford, VT. Though originally from Oklahoma, I have lived in the Quechee- West Hartford area for 8 years. I have been an Environmental Justice organizer all my adult life. I served for 18 years as the Grand Riverkeeper for the Grand River watershed in Oklahoma. I also have been a consultant to Indigenous Tribes across Turtle Island (North America) on environmental issues. I am founder and President of Ottauquechee Water Protectors Assoc., and serve on the boards of Rural Vermont, Building a Local Economy (BALE), White River Land Collaborative and VT Healthy Soils Coalition. I also serve on the VT Environmental Justice Network Steering Committee. I currently serve on the Hartford 250th Commemoration Council and am a former member of the Resilience Hartford Commission. I have a BA Degree in Human Development through Goddard College, VT, an MA Degree in Political Science, OK State University and ABD- Environmental Science, OK State University.

### **Just Transition:**

My work is currently focused on Climate Change and especially centered on a Just Transition to wind, solar and battery storage as we move away from fossil fuels for our heating, cooling and transportation needs. I have worked for 30 years on issues of mining for critical minerals needed for wind, solar and battery technology, because, depending on the mineral, 70-97% of these minerals, according to the mining industry, are located on or next to Native American Reservations! A Just Transition, therefore, would be to minimize the need for mining through 1) energy use reduction, 2) conservation of natural resources, 3) recycling (circular economy), requiring manufacturers to recycle their products to reduce need for fresh source materials. In Vermont, a Just Transition could include recycling of products to recover the minerals for re-use.

### **Ratepayer Protection:**

H-753 provides another opportunity for a just transition in Vermont. I would like to thank the Vermont Legislature for its efforts to provide a Just Transition for Vermont's low-income citizens. A Just Transition for the low-income Indigenous and BIPOC communities in our state would be to ensure that they will not have to pay more than 6% of their income on energy needs for their homes. H-753 is a good beginning for this effort. The bill also attempts to reduce significantly the amounts of homeowner disconnections by the various energy companies and cooperatives. The BIPOC communities I work with support this effort.

### **Personal Testimony:**

I am a service-connected disabled veteran. My only source of income is Veterans and Social Security disability. I have been disabled for 17 years now. I bought a home in West Hartford two years ago. I was very lucky to find a fixer upper I could afford, however, it has a lot of

expensive problems to fix before I can transition to total electric power. First, upgrading the fuse box to 200 amp so that I can get electric appliances and heat pumps. Weatherization, new windows and siding, as well as a new roof. It will cost 50-60K for this upgrade. I applied to the state's program for assistance with all this and was turned down. Efficiency Vermont found that I make \$5,000 per year more than their cut-off for assistance. I will now have to pay all this on my own. An interesting situation since I have other source of income, except for the VA and SS.

I am telling you this story because so many of my friends and colleagues in the Abenaki and BIPOC communities are in a much a worse position than myself. This story illustrates the point that if we can't bring the low to middle income folks along in this transition, then only the rich will be able to help prevent climate change and the rest will be stuck with increasingly expensive fossil fuels, while solar and wind lower energy prices, exacerbating this effort. We need to stop the use of fossil fuels and nuclear (mining and processing has caused health and environmental issues for Native Americans) for our energy needs if we are going to limit the climate changes that are coming, as result of fossil fuels use.

I want to thank the committee for listening and considering my testimony, and for considering this bill. Ktsi wlini (great thanks),

Earl