

S.219 Testimony and Notes - April 2, 2026

Steve Maier, Jean Terwilliger, Mike Roy

Energy Navigators, a program of the Climate Economy Action Center of Addison County

What is Energy Navigators?

- Energy Navigators is a locally rooted program based in Addison County that supports Vermonters in cutting energy bills, boosting home comfort, and reducing the greenhouse gas emissions from their homes. This program is completely free and open to individuals at any income level - renters or homeowners.
- Our approach aims to remove 'information overload' by providing clear information and simplified answers to help Vermonters feel empowered. Our Navigators meet residents **in their home** - we outline options based on building science and tailored to **their** situation, and connect them with applicable incentives, rebates, and resources. We stay available to clients over time as a knowledgeable consultant - no sales, just support.
- By providing personalized, on-the-ground support, Navigators serve as the missing link between statewide programs and ambition and household-level action.
- We work in collaboration with partners, often referring clients to rebates, incentives, and services provided by Efficiency Vermont, Green Mountain Power, CVOEO (our community action organization), and others. We help make connections and provide the "last mile" assistance that many Vermonters need.
- These Vermont programs have a long history of success on energy efficiency and weatherization, but significant gaps still remain. Energy Navigators are helping to fill those gaps by helping residents figure out how to make cleaner and more efficient home energy improvements.

- Energy Navigators assessments and recommendations also focus on home electrification, which is a huge impact opportunity that can help Vermont achieve its climate goals.
- Importantly, Energy Navigators is building local capacity by training and supporting a network of community-based volunteer Navigators. This model extends the reach of paid staff, strengthens community trust, and helps build a program that can grow sustainably across Vermont.

A Statewide Community-Based Energy Coaching - Why and How?

Here are five things to know when considering the idea of creating a statewide energy coaching service:

- **ENERGY COACHING IS PART OF THE STATE CLIMATE PLAN**
Energy Coaching is identified as an important component of a broader strategy to quickly and justly electrify and decarbonize the residential thermal sector. Community-based Coaching Programs in other states show greater impact and penetration across populations, and **especially among low-moderate income households** which speaks to issue of equity and a just transition to a decarbonized future.
- **THERE IS BROAD INTEREST IN COMMUNITY-BASED ENERGY COACHING FROM ACROSS VERMONT**
We have been approached by energy committees from across the state about how they might launch their own energy coaching services, based on the belief that local, trusted guides are critical in helping individuals navigate a complicated and ever-changing world of possible home clean energy improvements and related funding and contracting challenges.
- **EAN HAS FORMED A NETWORK ACTION TEAM TO EXPLORE ENERGY COACHING IN VERMONT**
We are in the early stages of an effort facilitated by the Energy Action Network to explore the idea of a state-wide energy coaching network. Working closely with Efficiency Vermont and other key stakeholders, we are inventorying the various energy coaching services available throughout the state in order to identify gaps and opportunities, and our preliminary work suggests that there is interest and enthusiasm from many of the key service providers. This work will be a useful

input to the design of a program that this legislation calls for.

- **THERE ARE USEFUL MODELS OF STATE-WIDE ENERGY COACHING PROGRAMS IN OTHER STATES**

Community-level volunteer-based energy coaching programs have been successfully implemented across the US, including by our neighbors in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New York:

- In Massachusetts, the statewide energy efficiency program (MassSave) offers the [Community First Partnership](#) program, which provides funding and technical support to communities and local organizations. They currently provide annual funding of up to \$85,500 to 58 MA municipalities and community-based organizations.
- In Connecticut, Energize Connecticut runs a [Community Partners](#) program similar in scope and model to that in Massachusetts in that it is focused on working with local municipalities, community groups, non-profits and outreach organizations especially in Environmental Justice communities to raise awareness and participation in key energy-efficiency programs.
- In New York State, a government (not efficiency utility) led program through NYSERDA called the [Clean Energy Communities Program](#) has been running a program similar to what we are proposing for over ten years.

The results from these states indicate that they have good outcomes, particularly in reaching communities that state-wide programs were not reaching effectively.

- **THERE IS A NATIONAL CONVERSATION ABOUT COMMUNITY BASED ENERGY COACHING SERVICES**

CEAC is part of a newly formed group that brings together community-based local energy coaching programs to explore how we can share resources and infrastructure in order to reduce the effort involved in starting and running a local energy coaching service. States involved include: Oregon, Colorado, Virginia, Ohio, Maine, and Massachusetts.

As we all know, Vermont is not on track to meet our emissions goals. And to meet those goals, we need to do many things all at once. While a statewide energy coaching program is not a silver bullet, it would be an important piece of an overall strategy, especially if we want to be true to our commitments to a just transition to clean energy.

Who is CEAC and Why Support Them?

- Energy Navigators is a program of the Climate Economy Action Center of Addison County (CEAC), a small nonprofit organization providing services currently in Addison County and Brandon.
- CEAC has developed the Energy Navigators pilot program from the ground up and with an eye on the need to scale up to reach more people. We have developed marketing materials, relationships for local outreach, a foundational website (<https://www.energynavigators.org>), a finance guide, a case management system for managing our client relationships, and a training program for volunteer coaching.
- CEAC has secured funding to date from local donors, small private foundations, and State and federal grants. Federal grant funds currently support about half of our program budget, but will not extend beyond the current calendar year.
- CEAC anticipates reduced funding availability beginning in January 2027. As such, we supported a significant appropriation as part of the original bill, as introduced. The version of S.219 that passed the Senate Natural Resources Committee contained two small appropriations, which were removed by the Senate Appropriations Committee before the bill was passed. We ask that you consider a small appropriation, but we also support the bill in its current form.
- The Energy Navigators program is well-positioned to continue to be an important pilot program for community-based energy coaching in Vermont.
- We ask for your support for this bill, S.219. The statewide program design study it proposes is important to the future of community-based energy coaching in Vermont, including its recommendations for how the program would provide ongoing funding to support the operations of community-based energy coaching programs.
- One change we request is to change the date the design study report is to be submitted to the Legislature to January 1, 2027. This will allow time for legislative action during the next session.
- THANK YOU!

Background slides and presentations:

VECAN Presentation

- <https://drive.google.com/file/d/187ZOkBsx9Rd2Y6Fema-oNTvJ7HaVJcW-/view?usp=sharing>

EAN Presentation on Statewide Energy Coaching Network

- https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1tUVMBVFBUocgwAtiybUYs2bGA083TwBYhAu8_aDEv_E/edit?usp=sharing
- <https://eanvt.org/network-action-teams/energy-coaching-network/>