

Dear Chair James and Respected Representatives of the Energy and Digital infrastructure committee.

Thank you all so much for your hard work and dedication to try and solve some of the problems VT faces at this time. I have attended many of your meetings this session and met most of you at this point. I have been closely watching the Affordable Heat Act legislation for years and I appreciate your efforts and conversations.

I especially appreciate the thoughtful conversation today prompted by Representative Sibilina regarding the economics of meeting the current GWSA mandates, supporting low and moderate income Vermonters and moving VT in the right direction. As this came up today during Duval's testimony, it was refreshing to hear this honest conversation that hits at the heart of the struggle.

I wanted to add a few pieces for consideration if you don't mind. I have now read all of Energy Action Network's (EAN's) reports through the years. I appreciate their work and passion, however as we all know data is malleable and often many factors, variables and realities are left out of the conclusions. This became apparent today with the helpful questions and points shared by members of your committee.

I have attached an analysis of EAN's report that I had done for 2023. All of the information shared here still stands true today. I specifically focussed on the problem with per capita emissions measurements in VT as well as the work VT had done prior to 'counting' - in that we were already way ahead of the other states which has made VT look like we are now trailing behind -when in fact we are a leader and states like Maine are scrambling to catch up and have made recent moves which launch them farther ahead when just considering the last several years.

<https://vermontdailychronicle.com/public-not-welcome-but-lawmakers-are-vermont-energy-summit/>

Jared also uses sector-based accounting versus consumption-based accounting which significantly alters his data presentation and makes Vermont look like a slacker when in fact we are anything but. The following article explains this difference in greater detail and how it is especially relevant in VT.

https://www.benningtonbanner.com/opinion/columnists/commentary-gorelick-cooking-the-climate-books/article_487f615c-a03a-11ee-a9b0-b7546bf37a4b.html

I hope you can please take these perspectives and clarifications into account as you develop your opinions and plan of action. It is also important to note that Jared represents the energy industry who are members of Energy Action Network. A significant portion of his members are in the Renewable energy industry and benefit from the GWSA and all of the legislation that is rooted in it such as the Affordable heat act. I am not sure if he is registered as a lobbyist (I do

not think he is?) and I understand that his data may be useful and helpful but he still has a vested interest that should be noted.

As I discussed with Representative Sibilio today. A key question is of course -are emissions the best metric for progress? Over the last several years - since the GWSA- emissions reductions have sucked all the air out of the room and have cost Vermont taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars in contracts, lawyers, program design, modeling, data collection, new positions, and more.

Could we consider a Vermont specific metric that looks at actual real world improvements and shifts towards goals that help Vermonters and the environment? Meaning how many homes and buildings are being weatherized, how many installs are happening that have reduced costs and energy burdens for Vermonters etc. ANR and DPS are already tracking this and the numbers continue to increase.

This approach would allow money to be shifted towards actual progress instead of more reports, studies, models, program development, contracts etc which are holding up action and eating money. I implore you to consider this option so we can continue to make progress in this realm.

Of course this would require a shift in the GWSA from requirements to goals and/or a change in benchmarks and removing the provision allowing anyone to sue VT. However it would also facilitate actual progress made versus continued potential program development and all of its associated costs.

Regarding the money - PUC Chair McNamara offered some realistic alternatives today for raising funds to help escalate this transition. Increasing the fossil fuel tax has been presented by many through the years as a reasonable and effective option.

I have written extensively over the past several years about the known and unknown issues associated with the Affordable heat act. Here is another article that addresses concerns such as biofuels.

<https://vtdigger.org/2023/04/11/alison-despathy-14-significant-reasons-s-5-would-be-destructive/>

Thank you so much for your time and work.

Gratefully and Respectfully

Alison Despathy

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