

Good afternoon! My name is Harmony Belle Devoe, I am a member of Youth Lobby and the Vermont State Youth Council, I go to Harwood Union High School, and I live in Warren, in Washington County.

In July of 2023, I observed the violently rising Mad River, as the water made its way up the river bank and the rock barriers protecting our town from its currents. As the grass flooded, farmers lost topsoil and crops, homes' first floors were submerged, and businesses were ruined and forced to throw away thousands of dollars worth of goods. As a 14 year old, when I should have been able to enjoy my summer outside, swimming in clear Vermont waters, I instead observed my town in a climate crisis, flooded with sediment-filled water. Vermont is not a safe exception when it comes to environmental disasters and the devastating effects of climate change. When we experienced similar floods in December of 2024, I had a similar sinking feeling as the rivers rose again. As my peers and I were bussed home early from school, missing education due to an unsafe outdoor environment to return home in, I realized the impact climate change has on Vermont is not just going to be a single storm, but a growing pattern of environmental disasters, immensely worsened by the use of fossil fuels.

Big Oil companies contribute to climate change in Vermont by selling polluting and volatile fossil fuels that lead to climate impacts like the disastrous floods our state has experienced, pushing Vermont to hold these global producers financially responsible for their share of these costs. People often ask how much it will cost to combat climate change. A question that is as important to ask is: what is the cost of inaction? As a young person, living in a country ranked nationally for having the highest natural disaster declarations makes me feel that I must navigate heightened anxiety, fear, and worry for my communities, and has caused me and other youth in our community to adopt premature resilience. It makes me disappointed in my leaders that have not been able to combat the growing effects of climate change sooner, which we have been made aware of for decades now. The fact that Vermont is importing dirty and expensive fossil fuels that do not contribute to our state's environmental or economic well-being, and instead actually harm both, while renewable energy is a more affordable, clean option that supports Vermont's economy by creating jobs and re-circulating dollars in our economy shows that there is an obvious opportunity placed before us to benefit our community, environment, and economy.

Vermont ranks 4th in the country for per capita post-disaster federal assistance and the county I live in (Washington) had the highest number of disaster declarations in the state (22 disasters). As a young person growing up among these climate disasters, this is frightening and disturbing. In 2023 alone, Vermont faced over \$2 billion in climate disaster costs, while Big Oil companies like Shell and ExxonMobil reaped over \$200 billion in profits. This is a reality that spurred our first-in-the-nation Climate Superfund Act to make Big Oil pay and take responsibility for their impact on climate change in Vermont. These funds would go toward much-needed investments in environmental resilience and adaptation strategies for our state, which would provide young people like me a feeling of confidence in the safety and wellbeing of our communities going forward, and it would allow us to avoid high future cleanup costs that young people would otherwise be forced to pay for. The cost of

doing nothing is too high. If the legislature does not make Big Oil pay for the mess they have made, my generation will inherit these costs; we will be left with the bills for infrastructure that is washing away. How would you feel if as a child, especially in this economy, you knew that when you grew up you would be forced to pay for the repair of damage done by climate change caused by adults running these Big Oil companies?

The Climate Superfund Act's polluter-pays principle uses logic that we learn at a young age: if you make a mess, you clean up after yourself. You don't expect others to clean it up for you. It is unacceptable and unfair for Vermonters to be the ones paying for damages caused by companies that have known for decades about climate change and their contributions to it.

It is extremely empowering to be listened to as a member of Youth Lobby in Vermont, a state leading the nation in climate action. It was heartening to see the Attorney General and Treasurer defending the Climate Superfund Act against lawsuits from the American Petroleum Institute. Your support for this act is crucial because it's the state's primary tool to make fossil fuel companies pay for climate damages like floods and fund essential adaptation projects, easing the financial burden on Vermonters, especially after recent severe disasters, and serves as a national model for holding polluters accountable.

As a young person, I experience persistent climate anxiety. When I stood in silence with my 4th grade class for 11 minutes in 2019 representing the 11 years we had left before the effects of climate change were irreversible, I felt overwhelmed with fear for the safety and wellbeing of our environment and communities. Now, seeing the possibility of Big Oil being held accountable for the harm and disaster their fossil fuels have caused our state gives me immense hope in the possibility of a future where people and the planet are delivered the environmental justice they deserve.

I want to thank you for all the work you have done to protect our climate, and I urge you still to keep making progress for future generations of Vermonters. The Climate Action Plan outlines many top recommendations for how Vermont can keep improving our climate action and resilience. Creating a greenhouse gas reporting requirement for the transportation and heating sectors was one of those top recommendations. Right now, transportation and heating make up the largest share of Vermont's emissions, but we know the least about them and they are the least regulated. You can't manage what you don't measure. This policy would serve as a foundational baseline of information to support better local, regional and state planning – as well as potential future policy and regulatory approaches – and is essential to begin to significantly reduce climate pollution and costs in the fossil fuel-intensive transportation and thermal sectors of our state.

I want to thank the Committee for all the work you have done and continue to do to pass laws that will protect my future, and I ask you to please stand strong and continue to fund the Climate Superfund legislation passed in 2024 and the implementation of this very important law, in order to defend the safety of our land, current communities, and future generations.

Thank you for your time.