

## Written testimony to Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy—3/19/25

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**The Importance of Funding Energy and Climate Education:** The Climate Action Plan identifies an investment in energy and climate education as a core strategy within its cross-cutting pathways (pg. 227): energy and climate education offers "many benefits and huge cost of inaction" and that an "investment in education, especially climate education is a no regrets policy". While this is an area where it is inherently hard to measure impact over time, we know from our 4 decades of experience in Vermont and from research<sup>1</sup> that high-quality energy and climate education moves the needle toward sustainability by empowering young people to be conscious consumers and engaged advocates. Our mission statement is: **"to build a deep understanding of energy through education, encouraging choices that result in sustainability in our communities, economy and environment."**

### About VEEP

VEEP has a staff that now includes 6 educators across Vermont, delivering exemplary energy and climate change educational resources to teachers and schools. We have been in existence almost 40 years, starting with a single founder, then a second for about 10 years, then gradually building our offerings and staff and reach to all of Vermont. We also have another two staff in New Hampshire, but funds requested here are for Vermont work only. We offer programs for modest fees, but we always let schools know that we will offer services regardless of schools' ability to pay. VEEP does not promote any point of view about energy sources – we provide data and understanding of the underlying science so that students may build informed viewpoints. We always offer ways for students to explore what they can do, as a way to counteract the gloom youth feel about climate change. See more at [www.veep.org](http://www.veep.org)

VEEP offers a robust portfolio of programs that are:

- Next Generation Science Standards-aligned
- Tried and tested with a large network of engaged educators and students
- Tailored to meet educators needs
- Built to reach a wide range of audiences from elementary, middle, and high school to CTEs (Career and Technical Education centers)
- Vermont-relevant, including topics including climate and energy science, renewables, transportation, home heat, electricity, youth climate and energy action.
- Based on 40 years of mission-driven experience in building a deep understanding of energy and climate.

We also now offer workshops to the public at libraries and other venues around the state on weatherization and electrification, with a focus on homes with high energy burdens, with "action partners" – vendors and organizations to whom participants can turn to see about taking action in their home.

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<sup>1</sup> (Cordero, E. C., Centeno, D., Todd, A. M., & Pausata, F. S. R. (2020). *The role of climate change education on individual lifetime carbon emissions*. *PLoS ONE*, 15(2) doi:10.1371/journal.pone.020626) and [https://www.academia.edu/28216292/Energy\\_literacy\\_of\\_secondary\\_students\\_in\\_New\\_York\\_State\\_USA\\_A\\_measure\\_of\\_knowledge\\_affect\\_and\\_behavior](https://www.academia.edu/28216292/Energy_literacy_of_secondary_students_in_New_York_State_USA_A_measure_of_knowledge_affect_and_behavior)

**Why Support VEEP?** In the last decade, we have worked with hundreds of teachers and thousands of students in more than 80% of Vermont's schools and have delivered Efficiency Vermont's Energy Literacy Program (ELP) for the state of Vermont. Our total budget is about \$500,000 with 1/5<sup>th</sup> of that coming from and spent in New Hampshire. While our Vermont ELP funding has gradually reduced from roughly \$230,000 in 2015 to \$100,000 in 2024, our Vermont programs have steadily grown in scope, reach, and impact with support from foundations and other organizations. Foundation funding is becoming much more difficult to obtain and Federal funds are disappearing. We find ourselves with a hole of about \$200,000 to meet the demand for our services

**What exactly would we do with those dollars?**

This funding will go toward furthering our mission of moving communities to sustainability through impactful and high quality climate and energy education. We will offer our range of high quality, Next Generation Science Standards-aligned, "hands-on/minds on" energy and climate education programs to grade levels K-12 as well as to the public. We will offer workshops, curricula, and equipment kits and empower teachers through our personalized teaching partnership approach. We will bring more educators to our professional development programs that help meet teacher's needs and will continue to support student led action projects to reduce carbon emissions in their communities.

Below is a representation of VEEP's existing curriculum units. Blue circles indicate appropriate grade levels. Each unit has a complete kit of materials, customized for the number of students, so all students have hands-on time and a complete teacher manual using Next Generations Science Standards. VEEP teacher training, teaching partnerships with our staff and ongoing support are also available.

