

Testimony to the
Senate Natural Resources & Energy Committee

April 17, 2025

My name is Spencer Putnam. I'm a resident of Weybridge, chair of my local town energy committee, and a recently retired founding board member of Climate Economy Action Center of Addison County, also known as CEAC.

For more than a decade the Weybridge Energy Committee has helped local residents reduce their energy bills through home weatherization, installing high efficiency appliances, replacing polluting lawn and garden equipment with modern electric versions, and adopting locally generated renewable power, both on individual homes and in community solar projects.

The Climate Economy Action Center has as its mission inspiring and supporting local climate solutions by reducing carbon emissions. The notable achievements of CEAC in its 6 years of existence include developing a Climate Action Plan for Addison County, conducting a Greenhouse Gas Inventory of the county at two year intervals since 2020, and developing an Energy Navigator program, providing free guidance and services to homeowners and renters to save money spent on heating and transportation while reducing their carbon footprints.

Despite our efforts and those of others, our periodic greenhouse gas inventories have shown that we are not succeeding in reducing our county's carbon emissions. Greenhouse gas levels have remained essentially flat during the past six years. We are falling short of the reductions needed to meet the climate goals of our area and the state as a whole. We know that we still have much work to do.

Volunteers like me need no convincing that the harmful effects of climate change are real. They are affecting us now. We have local experience with floods, shortened ski and sugaring seasons, unpredictable weather for farming and recreation, smoke from distant wildfires, and more. And many of us have personal experience with the savings that can be realized by tightening up our homes, transitioning to heat pumps and heat pump water heaters, installing solar panels or subscribing to community solar power arrays, and driving electric cars.

There are citizens all over Vermont with this kind of awareness and willingness to work toward reducing carbon emissions and energy costs both for themselves and for their neighbors. What we need from the Legislature is support for these efforts, the kind of support that has been forthcoming from climate legislation enacted over the past four years.

We are very well aware that low income Vermonters need special attention and support if they are to share in these benefits. They especially need assistance in meeting the investment costs required before they can enjoy the advantages of a modern, fossil free economy. This is an area I hope legislators will especially emphasize. Rolling these efforts back at this time is the wrong direction to take. If you were doctors we would be telling you “First, do no harm!”

Attempts to repeal legislation like the Global Warming Solutions Act and Vermont’s Renewable Energy Standard, and abandoning California’s Clean Air Act waiver to set motor vehicle emission standards—these rollbacks are shortsighted. In the long run they will increase our costs.

Vermont’s climate legislation has encouraged the development of local power generation, building an industry with high paid jobs and keeping the money that we spend on energy circulating in our economy. Weatherization of homes and commercial buildings, the installation of highly efficient appliances and equipment, and the move to electric vehicles, both personal and commercial—these measures are already saving Vermonters money and helping us to reduce harmful emissions. These efforts must be intensified, not slowed down.

I represent a community of volunteers who are active throughout Vermont working toward the goals of reducing our reliance on out-of-state sources to meet our energy needs, cutting energy costs while increasing the comfort of Vermonters in their homes, and helping move Vermont towards a cleaner environment. I urge the legislature to harness the energies of these volunteers, and not to throw barriers in the way of the additional progress we all know needs to be made.