

09/28/21

Governor Charlie Baker
Lt. Governor Karyn Polito

Massachusetts State House
24 Beacon St., Office of the Governor
Room 280, Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Baker and Lt. Governor Polito:

We, the undersigned, urge you to increase access and remove barriers to the Mass Save program for underserved communities across the state including renters. We represent thousands of ratepayers, workers, and voters who prioritize comprehensive steps to address the climate crisis as well as equity measures to ensure access for populations most in need of the program.

We ask you to ensure the next Three-Year Energy Efficiency Plan will give underserved communities access to weatherization and efficiency programs as we recover from the impacts of the pandemic. In particular, communities underserved by the state's energy efficiency programs include language-isolated communities (with little to no English language proficiency), renters, working-class people, communities of color, immigrants, and [Environmental Justice](#) communities. Please reject any energy efficiency plan that does not center the needs of these communities, and fails to clearly outline direct actions and budget commitments that will address the disparities in access to energy efficiency programs.

We need to prioritize equity as we strive for an energy efficiency future and design pathways to meet Massachusetts's emission reduction goals. [Underserved communities currently struggle with high electricity bills](#) while wealthier suburbs access the state's energy efficiency services [6–7 times](#) more. It is a top priority to reach low-income populations, immigrants, people with English isolation, and renters.

In light of the current planning year, we would like to reiterate the actions the Energy Efficiency Advisory Council (EEAC) and the Program Administrators can take to increase access for underserved communities:

- **Target communities currently underserved by Mass Save:**
 - Increase the income eligibility threshold from 60% to 80% of state median income
 - Direct additional resources to cities underutilizing Mass Save (such as Worcester, Springfield, and Lynn), low-income communities, communities impacted by COVID, and language-isolated communities
 - Fund and partner with trusted community organizations to increase participation in hard-to-reach communities
 - Identify each stage of the process requiring multilingual interaction and provide resources for translation, interpretation, and referral to contractors with relevant language competency
 - Develop a multilingual workforce: Provide workforce development and create career ladders for high-road jobs to multilingual and English learners who are experts in their communities and can help to improve access in language-isolated communities
 - Provide funding for common pre-weatherization requirements facing low-income households, including roof repair, asbestos removal, knob and tube wiring removal, etc.
 - Customize outreach and incentives to landlords in order to serve more renters

- **Expand Mass Save to include more forms of efficiency and resilience:**
 - Include housing retrofits, affordable heat pumps, more efficient appliance standards, etc.
 - Include the installation of [electricity storage capacity](#) to increase the resilience of underserved communities in the face of extreme weather events
- **Ensure transparency on energy efficiency equity goals, budgets, and spending:** Officials should only support this plan if there is full transparency regarding the changes made from the last three-year plan (2019-2021), and specificity in its equity goals, budget allocation, and policies and practices to reach underserved communities.
- **Expand program targets to match the scope of the Baker Administration's Climate mandates:**

Your administration's Clean Energy and Climate Plan calls for a million homes to receive energy efficiency retrofits by 2030. The scope of the draft Three-Year Plan falls far short of the 100,000+ homes per year that must receive these retrofits to reach this goal. To center equity in this approach, EEAC and the Mass Save program must prioritize residences in underserved communities as the program expands to meet this mandate.

To increase participation for underserved communities, the Three-Year Plan needs transparent budget commitments and measurable targets. We call upon your administration as well as the EEAC to target investment to Environmental Justice communities, to increase the amount from previous plan levels, to monitor utilities' compliance in meeting these targets, and to ensure greater transparency.

Since [nonparticipants who rent are likely to be low-income](#), we also urge you to consider the impacts that this investment in energy efficiency in underserved communities will have on property values, and to ensure there are robust protections for vulnerable tenants from this form of "green gentrification," so that the people we mean to serve are not gentrified out of their homes and neighborhoods as a consequence of these improvements. We recommend rent stabilization and facilitating the formation of tenants unions as some key approaches. In addition we suggest implementing performance incentives to ensure both landlords and renters are participating in the program.

Thank you for your dedication and commitment to an equitable and energy efficient future. Everyone, including our most vulnerable residents, should have access to weatherization and its benefits. Addressing these gaps will also help meet the state's ambitious climate emissions reduction targets outlined in the most recent climate justice bill and in your Clean Energy and Climate Plan. We look forward to working together to ensure that the needs of underserved, language-isolated, immigrant, renter, working-class, low-income, communities of color are prioritized in the next Three-Year energy efficiency plan.

Sincerely,

Fidel Maltez, Chelsea
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CC; Maggie McCarey, Energy Efficiency Director, MA Department of Energy Resources
Secretary Kathleen Theoharides, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs