



August 24, 2020

The Honorable Michael Barrett  
Senate Chair, Joint Committee on  
Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy  
State House, Room 109 D  
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Thomas Golden  
House Chair, Joint Committee on  
Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy  
State House, Room 473 B  
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Conferees,

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts is deeply grateful for the progress of major climate bills from the House and Senate this session, H4933 and S2500, assigned for reconciliation by this conference committee. It is gratifying and reassuring to find the House, Senate and Administration focusing on the urgent need to address climate change, while also addressing the social disruption of the pandemic, racial justice and other issues of major concern.

Changing the status quo is difficult on one front, let alone several. Regarding climate change, H4933 and S2500 embody the “politics of the possible” and provide a path forward for a livable future. Both bills take on the mandated requirement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as quickly as possible, with a goal of net-zero emissions by 2050. Both bills share key, structural elements of important interim reduction targets and robust reporting requirements to ensure that we stay on the path to net-zero emissions. Both bills open the door to implementing existing and emerging approaches and technologies to meet the complex challenge of climate change. Together, these bills provide a foundation for crafting a final bill that will take us to a clean energy future and a thriving green economy that provides for all of us and keeps people at the center.

Both the urgency of climate change and the current political context factor into setting operational timelines. A backcast analysis, central to the Roadmap Bill, is nearing completion by the Administration, adding extra impetus to establish a plan for achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. With the Administration’s work already underway, it is important to align timelines in the two bills so that legislative and executive efforts mesh and work in concert as follows: adoption of 2030 and 2040 emissions limits and report of the backcast analysis by 12/31/2020; release of the Roadmap Plan by 6/30/2021; and promulgation of regulations by 6/30/2022.

Additional requests, as categorized below, include:

### **Impact on people**

**Environmental Justice:** To ensure that people are central to planning and final policy outcomes, the League also urges this committee to maintain the Environmental Justice (EJ) provision included in H4933 (Section 15NN – Section 15RR) to codify the definition of environmental justice populations.

The well-documented, long and tragic history of the devastating and disproportionate health impacts of environmental pollution on communities of color and low income must and can end through careful, thorough and unbiased review of impacts on communities, coupled with meaningful inclusion of community voices and public transparency in the siting process.

**Gas Safety:** The memory of the gas explosions that rocked the Merrimac Valley is still fresh in the minds of residents living in communities devastated by the destruction of property and disruption to their lives. The provisions in Sections 20H-20I (lines 1094-1113), Sections 15DD-15MM (lines 628--672), and Sections 17E-17I (lines 871-923) (Amendment #40, Field safety in gas infrastructure-Moran) and in Sections 17A (lines 850-859) (Amendment #28, Gas Gate Amendment-Ryan) will protect residents, homeowners, businesses and workers from the risks of gas that endanger all cities and towns with gas service.

## **Mitigation**

**Market-based compliance mechanisms:** To meet our emissions reduction targets, we must reduce emissions across all sectors of our economy – electricity, transportation, and building. To ensure the flexibility needed to meet our goals, we urge that language in S2500, related to timelines for market-based compliance mechanisms to achieve the steep reductions needed in each sector, consistent with interim targets, be included in the final bill.

**Buildings:** The building sector comprises the next highest level of emissions after transportation. Updating the stretch code (2009) to reflect progress in energy efficiency and setting a net-zero emissions goal, as specified in Section 30 of S2500, will create the “stretch” intended by stretch codes and can go a long way in boosting reductions from this sector. Additionally, retaining the amended bill language regarding the composition and terms of service for members of the Board of Building Regulations and Standards (Section 15 in H4933) will match member expertise to current expectations and needs related to building efficiency regulations and standards.

## **Boost clean, local, renewable energy sources and supply and the green economy**

**Wind:** The League urges inclusion of increased off-shore wind procurement (passed by both chambers this session: Section 17B – Section 17C in H4933; S2974 Section 101) along with shortened time requirements between procurements.

**Geothermal:** Retain authorization of pilot projects for the development of utility-scale, renewable thermal energy, or geothermal micro-district projects, as provisions in both H4933 and S2500.

**Solar:** Increase cap-exempt net metering solar project capacity to 25 kW AC as proposed in Section 2 of Amendment #16 to H4912 (Representative Haddad), and adopt Section 17 of H.4933 (lines 840-849), addressing the cap for certain net metering facilities and any credits accrued in excess of annual electricity consumption by those facilities.

Finally, to reach the aggressive emissions reduction targets dictated by the climate emergency we face, every public agency needs to factor in reduction of carbon emissions as part of its responsibility, starting

with the Department of Public Utilities, the agency charged with regulating our power supply (Section 15-29 in S2500).

We face simultaneous and daunting challenges. While many issues need to be addressed, the existential threat of climate change poses the greatest threat to our health and well-being. We are in an “all hands on deck” moment. This conference committee has both the challenge and the opportunity to forge legislation that addresses this unprecedented crisis head-on with ground-breaking legislation that exemplifies the “politics of the possible” to build a safe, equitable and thriving future for all of us.

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cc:

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