



**Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy (JTU)
H. 3694 – An Act relative to the Clean Heat Standard
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I am sure that all on this Committee have felt the heat – literally – over the past week or so. It may be dawning on some in the general public that this summer may well be the coolest summer we’ll experience in our lifetimes given the continuing rise in mean global temperatures. A [recent article in the New York Times](#)¹ details other aspects of this extraordinary warming: Antarctic Sea ice levels are at record lows and the North Atlantic is “off the charts hot.” The reasons for this latest heating? “The spike comes as forecasters warn that the Earth could be entering [a multiyear period of exceptional warmth](#)² driven by two main factors: continued emissions of heat-trapping gases, mainly caused by humans burning oil, gas and coal; and the return of El Niño, a cyclical weather pattern.” The article notes: “The sharp jump in temperatures has unsettled even those scientists who have been tracking climate change.” We should all feel “unsettled” by these changes and what they portend.

We talk about addressing climate change, but climate change is a symptom, not a cause. In order to “address” climate change, we need to focus on the cause: the emissions coming from the extraction, refining, transporting and (mostly) combustion of fossil fuels that release heat-trapping greenhouse gases into our atmosphere. We need to stop this fossil fuel syndrome as rapidly as possible while we work double time to also increase our supplies of clean, non-combusting, renewable energy alongside development of the transmission system needed to deliver clean energy to our vehicles, homes and businesses.

Luckily, we are not in Texas, Mexico or India experiencing even greater levels of heat. But even more fortunate is that the Massachusetts Legislature has passed ground-breaking legislation mandating the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions as key to our transition to a clean energy economy. This session, there are multiple complementary bills geared to reducing emissions. We don’t have time to waste and we need to tackle the largest sources of those emissions – transportation and buildings – as soon as possible. While we still have a way to go, there already is tremendous momentum behind electrification of vehicles. Buildings – large and small, residential and commercial – are a tougher nut to crack, but there are building decarbonization approaches that can crack it. The League views one of the most significant as H.3694, An Act relative to a clean heat standard (CHS).

Establishing a CHS for the state was a primary recommendation of the Clean Heat Commission in its final report <https://www.mass.gov/doc/massachusetts-commission-on-clean-heat-final-report-november-30-2022/download> (2022).

H.3694 provides a proven means to get this critical job done, using the familiar and successful framework

¹ Brad Plumer and Elena Shao; Heat Records Are Broken Around the Globe as Earth Warms, Fast, July 6, 2023; <https://tinyurl.com/mvttt4b4>.

² Brad Plummer; Heat Will Likely Soar to Record Levels in Next 5 Years, New Analysis Says, May 17, 2023; <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/17/climate/record-heat-forecast.html>.

of credits as incentives found in the state's Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) in place since 2002 to increase the state's supply of zero-emissions energy flowing through the grid to our homes and buildings. H.3694 would require suppliers to increase the share of heating energy from zero emission sources over time. Individuals, organizations and companies that deploy/install systems to reduce building emissions would receive clean energy credits. As with H.3203/S.2105 – An Act relative to the future of clean heat in the Commonwealth, also strongly supported by the League, H.3694 provides a transition pathway for gas utilities allowing them to earn credits by providing networked geothermal heating to communities or installing heat pumps in individually owned properties. An important feature of this bill is that projects that use “renewable natural gas” or hydrogen will not be awarded credits since both approaches continue to rely on the production and use of fossil fuels, perpetuating the system that has gotten us to this crisis point.

Equity is a major component in H.3694. Provisions include a mandate that a minimum of 40% of clean heat credits retired by fuel sellers come from these households. H.3694 also establishes an Equity Advisory Group to ensure that low- and moderate-income households have a say in the implementation process, long overdue.

The League views passage of H.3694 as supportive of the recommendations of the Clean Heat Commission and the recently stated intention of the Administration to set a state-wide CHS, in the belief that a collaborative partnership provides the best opportunity to fashion a strong and equitable policy for the benefit of all and help get us where we need to go further, faster.

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts and our 44 local Leagues serving over 100 communities from Cape Cod to the Berkshires urge you to report H.3694 favorably.