

March 26, 2024

Commissioner Katie S. Dykes  
Department of Energy & Environmental Protection  
79 Elm Street  
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Commissioner Dykes,

I am submitting this letter of commitment for the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's (CT DEEP) individual application requesting federal funding from the EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant Phase II Implementation Grant (EPA-R-OAR-CPRGI-23-07). This application seeks additional funding and incentives to implement critical implementation-ready climate action measures in the transportation, buildings, and waste sectors that Connecticut identified in its Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP).

The PCAP measures included in the implementation grant application are: (1) funding a medium- and heavy-duty zero emission electric vehicles incentive program; (2) replacing diesel-powered idling truck mounted attenuators used in state transportation construction work with solar and battery-powered ZeroRPM® systems; (3) expanding the state's program to remove health and safety barriers for energy efficiency improvements in residential homes and the energy efficiency program; and (4) enforcing compliance with Connecticut's Commercial Organics Recycling Law and funding food waste diversion programs and composting infrastructure for municipalities in the state.

As Executive Director of the North Hartford Partnership we own and manage the Swift Factory, an 82,000 sq ft commercial space. We offer an incubator space for BIPOC and women owned businesses that range from chefs, caterers for profit and nonprofits. We are working on developing a "closed loop" effort for the kitchen incubator tenants and our goal is to extend that to residents in the community. We are also supporting efforts to improve the energy efficiency needs of the 24,000 individual residents who struggle with high energy burdens and poor air quality indoors and outdoors.

I am also a member of the Low-Income and Disadvantaged Communities (LIDACs) Advisory Group formed by CT DEEP to advise the agency on the development of the PCAP and the implementation grant application. Our group has been following the directives provided in EPA's guidance on LIDACs, including:

- Ensuring the proposed measures were equitable, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of LIDACs.
- Providing evaluation and feedback of the potential direct and indirect benefits to LIDACs and the effectiveness, feasibility, and relevance for LIDACs.
- Providing expert knowledge and/or lived experience insights related to the unique challenges faced by LIDACs.
- Providing review and feedback on the expected outcomes for LIDACs of implementation.
- Providing feedback on the strategy for meaningful engagement with LIDACs on the development and implementation of the climate action measures throughout the life of the implementation grant.

*Commitment to participate in community engagement.* In my capacity in the LIDAC Advisory Group, I advised DEEP on their participant support cost strategy to ensure meaningful engagement following EPA's guidance with LIDACs on the development and implementation of the climate action measures throughout the life of the implementation grant. I understand DEEP intends to make funding available to support the cost of participation of individuals in community engagement activities for the actions in this grant application, should funding be awarded, including for low income and disadvantaged and environmental justice communities. However, due to the state of Connecticut's procurement rules, I understand that CT DEEP is required to adhere to Connecticut's procurement standards and, in many cases, conduct a competitive Request for Proposals to select an implementer for that participant support costs program and cannot include non-governmental subrecipient partners in this application.

Regardless of whether I or my organization receives funding under the competitive participant support costs program, I commit to be involved with CT DEEP to help implementation in the following ways:

- Respond to a CT DEEP Request for Information to inform the community engagement strategy and Request for Proposals for the CPRG participant support costs program for community engagement.
- Attend one or more CT DEEP-led public meetings per year, which may include meetings of the Connecticut Equity and Environmental Justice Advisory Council (CEEJAC) and its sector-specific working groups and/or the Governor's Council on Climate Change Equity and Environmental Justice Working Group as related to the implementation-ready climate action measures in the application. This participation may include:
  - providing input on the design, performance measures, and resources required for CT DEEP and partners to implement the measures; and
  - providing feedback to CT DEEP with ideas, contacts, and engagement to help meet Justice 40 and other environmental justice goals for measure implementation.

My support for this project will allow CT DEEP to more effectively implement these greenhouse gas reduction measures because of my skills, knowledge, and lived experience. For example, as the former Executive Director of Operation Fuel, which provides emergency assistance to Connecticut residents struggling to pay energy and utility bills, and advocates for energy affordability, I have unique insights into how the additional CPRG funding for addressing health and safety barriers and energy efficiency programs can best address those energy burdens.

I strongly support CT DEEP's application for additional funding and incentives. I am confident that DEEP's plan and implementation strategy will achieve the goals of this grant related to LIDACs of "achieving substantial community benefits, including the reduction of criteria air pollutants and hazardous air pollutants" and "complementing other funding sources to maximize these community benefits" in addition to the goal of "achieving significant cumulative greenhouse gas reductions by 2030 and beyond" and "pursuing innovative policies and programs that are replicable and can be "scaled up" across multiple jurisdictions."

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me via [Bwatson@northhartfordpartnership.org](mailto:Bwatson@northhartfordpartnership.org), 860.967.3751.

Sincerely,

**Brenda Watson**

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