



March 26, 2024

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

Dear Commissioner Dykes,

It is my pleasure to submit this letter of commitment for your agency's application for the EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Implementation Grant, which seeks funding and incentives to implement climate action measures in the transportation, buildings, and waste sectors.

As you know, I have held many positions in environmental justice and environmental health in Connecticut and nationally. I am sometimes referred to as the "Dean of Environmental Justice" in Connecticut because I introduced EJ to our state in the 1990's, when I started and ran the Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice, and have been heavily involved since then. I am currently the co-chair of the Connecticut Equity and Environmental Justice Advisory Council (CEEJAC) and am an Emeritus Professor of Climate Change, Energy, and Environmental Health Equity at George Mason University

I have also been a member of the Low-Income and Disadvantaged Communities (LIDACs) Advisory Group formed to advise CT DEEP on the development of the PCAP and the implementation grant application. Our group met several times since November and participated in other public forums about these plans and grant applications. I believe that DEEP took our advice seriously and incorporated much of it into the final PCAP and CPRG application.

The most important of our recommendations in the CPRG proposal is the inclusion of support for environmental justice groups in LIDACs to advise DEEP for the duration of the CPRG implementation project. This serves a three-fold purpose:

1. It funds the provision of badly needed advice from geographically diverse urban areas of the state most impacted by climate change, which DEEP and other state agencies, to their credit, have been requesting,
2. It builds the capacity of groups interested in EJ and climate change that have been badly damaged by the lack of investment over the last decade, and

3. It provides consistent investment over five years to enable grassroots EJ groups to develop the deep expertise needed to provide advice that is more substantial.

I was previously the Director of the Hartford Health Department. In that capacity I grew to understand the value of having input from those most affected by governmental policy on how to improve that policy and make it more effective. In my "retirement" from Mason, I now focus on identifying potential EJ leaders and helping them to build new EJ groups.

Therefore, it is in my interest to commit to

1. Help CT DEEP in its outreach to groups interested in grassroots environmental justice to advise this project and provide meaningful input into clean transportation and waste policy
2. Help community groups that are engaged in environmental justice, climate and/or health from various locations across the state to apply for this funding
3. Provide time on the CEEJAC quarterly meeting agenda for periodic updates on the implementation of this proposal and the ability to seek input from CEEJAC meeting attendees (which includes about 75 participants interested in EJ).
4. Continue to provide information to CT DEEP on my own lived experience as an environmental health physician, and a leader in a low-wealth community of color, about the health benefits of clean energy and the obstacles to achieving that in my community
5. Provide feedback to CT DEEP with ideas, contacts, and engagement to help meet Justice 40 and other environmental justice goals for measure implementation.

In summary, I strongly support CT DEEP's application for funding and incentives under this proposal. I am confident that DEEP's plan and implementation strategy will achieve the goals outlined, including the reduction of hazardous and criteria air pollutants to improve health, as well as to reduce greenhouse gases.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at mmitch3@gmu.edu.

Sincerely,



Mark A. Mitchell MD, MPH
President