

March 26, 2024

Department of Energy & Environmental Protection  
79 Elm Street  
Hartford, CT 06106

To Whom It May Concern,

I am submitting this letter of commitment for the coalition application to the EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant Phase II Implementation Grant (EPA-R-OAR-CPRGI-23-07) for the proposed five-year *New England Heat Pump Accelerator*. The *Accelerator* will create mid-stream incentives at the distributor level to encourage the full replacement of HVAC and water heating systems across Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island. The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP) is the lead applicant for the coalition.

As Executive Director of the North Hartford Partnership/Swift, we are 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. The promotion of heat pumps as a pathway for Justice40 residents to reduce energy burden and improve air quality, are essential to achieving energy equity and mitigating climate change

I served as 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 State of Connecticut Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP), which included the priority measure of expanding the deployment of heat pumps statewide. I am committed to partnering with CT DEEP and other partner organizations to implement the *New England Heat Pump Accelerator*.

Efficient cold-climate heat pumps can reduce energy costs and offer substantial emissions and health improvements for New England residents. Because of this fact, many states have prioritized the installation of heat pumps through state policy and energy efficiency rebates. At the same time, there is a gap between current overall workforce capabilities and the prospective need for additional installers to meet anticipated heat pump market growth. Leveraging the distributor network to engage in training contractors on new technological capabilities and proper system design will increase contractor adoption of technology and flow these benefits to customers.

I am aware that strong community partnerships and networks are needed to design and manage the proposed heat pump accelerator program to advance environmental and public health issues in the region. I am committed to supporting the prioritization of all disadvantaged and underserved communities within urban, rural, and tribal communities in this program.

As a member of the LIDAC Advisory Group to CT DEEP on the PCAP and implementation grant, I agree to work in our regions to support heat pump deployment and community engagement through the following actions:

- I commit to attend one or more public meetings per year, which may include regular 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 of the *New England Heat Pump Accelerator*. This participation may include:
  - providing input on the design, performance measures, and resources required for the coalition to implement the *Accelerator*; and
  - providing feedback to CT DEEP and the coalition with ideas, contacts, and engagement to help meet Justice 40 and other environmental justice goals for the *Accelerator*.

My support for this project will allow CT DEEP to more effectively implement the *New England Heat Pump Accelerator* because of my skills, knowledge, and lived experience. 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 deployment of heat pumps can best address those energy burdens.

Should this funding request be successful, I look forward to working with you on this valuable project beginning in mid-2024. 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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