

From: [Pete Antos-Ketcham](#)
To: [PUC - Clerk](#)
Subject: Clean Heat Standard comments
Date: Tuesday, October 29, 2024 7:08:04 AM

You don't often get email from antosketchamnncp@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

EXTERNAL SENDER: Do not open attachments or click on links unless you recognize and trust the sender.

Dear members of the Vermont Public Utility Commission.

My name is Pete Antos-Ketcham. I am a resident of Starksboro and work with the non-profit New Community Project (NCP). Our mission is to work for social justice and ecological healing to promote a more peaceful world. Here in Vermont, our organization is focused on nurturing a community response to the impacts of rural poverty including: food and nutritional insecurity, energy burden, isolation, and climate change.

Our work is centered on supporting rural low-income Vermonters in Starksboro and surrounding communities. Our core programs include a weekly Food Pantry program that rescues usable food from the landfill and connects it to those in need, and a community woodbank and emergency heating assistance program.

I am writing today concerning the Clean Heat Standard. As you can see from our mission, developing responses to climate change and helping Vermonters save energy and money is central to our work. However, based on what we see and hear among those we serve, we are very concerned about the financial impact the new standard, if implemented as proposed, will have on people who are on the margins in our State and wonder if a different approach might be in order.

Like many towns in Vermont, Starksboro has very old housing stock. We also have three trailer courts in our community. One of the highest in Addison County. Many of the folks we work with live in very poorly insulated structures - both stick built and trailers - and struggle with paying a disproportionate amount of their limited income on energy costs. They are also contributing more to carbon emissions through no fault of their own - they simply do not have the financial resources to make the improvements needed to reduce them.

A great example of this issue and as it relates to this issue is a woman we are working with in one of our trailer courts. Her furnace died in the middle of the winter a year ago. She reached out to State Weatherization to see if she could get help (she had heard that the State received more Federal money for low income boiler/furnace assistance) and was told that she earned too much to qualify. Turns out it was just \$1000 too much. She is single and works at a grocery store so the idea of earning too much seemed a bit hard to believe. She reached out to NCP and we confirmed that this was true. In addition to our concerns about the regressive impacts of the clean heat standard, we feel that the income caps to help people in emergent heating situations need to be raised for qualifying for Weatherization and we have reached out to our Addison County delegation concerning this. We also thought the PUC should be aware as well.

For several months, this woman lived with an electric space heater and lived in a closed off part of her trailer with blankets to retain warmth. Her pipes froze while she waited for someone to help. NCP ended up partnering with three other local groups to help get her a new

furnace in order to deal with the emergent need - her safety and wellbeing. What remains clear though, is that whether we help her get a new LP gas furnace or put in an air source heat pump (which I learned that like any ductless heater wouldn't work well in a trailer), the condition of her housing is such that she will continue to be, to a great extent, heating the outdoors and spending more money that she doesn't have to do it. We don't see that as an improvement nor do we see it as just. The only way that electrification would be a benefit here is if her housing envelope was dramatically improved and her energy demand greatly decreased.

Before we increase costs on energy on those who can least afford it, I would encourage members of the PUC to reject the Clean Heat Standard as proposed and urge the Legislature to refocus of their efforts and resources on improving the housing stock for those who couldn't afford to do it otherwise first - this is a substantial part of Vermont's population and includes people who are technically middle class but still can't afford deep weatherization for their homes - especially with the cost of building materials these days.

A big push at deep and broad weatherization of Vermont's most inefficient housing stock will make the greatest improvement in the lives of Vermonters while creating jobs and meeting our carbon reduction targets in a much more effective and equitable way than the Clean Heat Standard would. Once energy demand and costs are lowered to the greatest extent possible, then strategic replacement of heating sources/fuels could be considered.

If at some point, our experiences and perspective could be useful to the PUC as you consider how best to address these issues please let us know - we'd be happy to provide testimony.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our input on these issues.

Sincerely,

Pete Antos-Ketcham
Director, New Community Project-Vermont

New Community Project

Starksboro, VT 05487

(802) 434-2333

(This is a landline. We cannot receive texts.)

antosketchamncp@gmail.com

(Email is generally checked on Monday and Wednesday mornings. If you need to reach us sooner, please call.)