

Testimony on 8/18/21 – for EEAC meeting, from Susan Olshuff, Cooler Communities

My name is Susan Olshuff and I am grateful to submit this testimony on behalf of ener-G-save and CC, a school program from the HGCF connecting classroom learning to climate solutions. We understand much of the efforts here are looking directly at ways to reduce carbon. And you are also recognizing the need for education in your planning and programming. Youth are quite overwhelmed (especially at this covid time) and giving them education and skills to address climate issues that will impact the rest of their lives is critical.

Pages 64 and 102 in the April 2021 original draft plan speak to 'integrating K-12 educational programming with workforce development, and also to today's students being tomorrow's energy consumers, innovators, and participants in the efficiency workforce.'

References in that draft document are also made to career tracks and to teaching K-12 students to be efficient energy consumers, with age-appropriate curriculum and materials offered, as well as training for teachers. We have been including some of these offerings in our curriculum guide and have collaborated with Scott Halstead and Gamal Sherif from EcoRise. I am happy to see this language (which is not so different from that in the last MassSave plan) focused on EJ communities.

We would like to learn more about what was accomplished along these lines for the past 3 years, and how much funding was available for this. Given worldwide heat waves, fires, flooding and the recent IPCC report, our students need to be empowered with education and solutions, and the new 3-year plan should reflect this urgency.

We are interested in learning how or if the future educational programs will be informed by this urgency, how they will be funded, and who will be in charge. We'd like to share briefly our program, Cooler Communities, that aims at education and advocacy, and that leads to measurable energy saving results in the communities.

Cooler Communities has grown out of ener-G-save, which some of you may remember from prior testimonies. It engages K-12 students in curriculum-based learning related to climate change, efficiency, and renewable energy across all subjects. The classroom work serves as the centerpiece of a public event where students exhibit their work and teach the public about options for living in climate-friendly ways. Visitors to the event, at the students' urging, pledge and take measurable actions (like signing up for energy audits) to reduce their own and their community's carbon footprint. In collaboration with nonprofits, vendors, and community organizations, students see the relevance of their learning in "real life" and the impact they can have in their community.

We, the staff of Cooler Communities, would like to learn more about what EEAC and the new 3-year plan have in store for education particularly with EJ communities. We'd be more than willing to share more about our program with those responsible for this part of the 3-year plan, and potentially collaborate. We'd be grateful to be introduced to the right people working on

the educational section of the 2022-24 plan. You can find more information and links to our program below.

Thank you.

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Cooler Communities (CC) is an educational program that connects classroom learning to climate action in MA communities. This [3 min video explains the program](#) for schools.

K-12 curriculum learning on energy and climate related topics becomes the centerpiece of a [virtual](#) or [in-person community event](#) at which students share their knowledge with families and the larger community. Vendors, service providers and knowledgeable neighbors offer advice on actions households can take to reduce their carbon footprint. Visitors pledge actions that are tracked and followed up on, leading to measurable change in the community. The [MassEnergize platform](#) as well [as paper](#) or digital carbon trackers are used for this purpose.

Cooler Communities has developed a [playbook](#) along with [a curriculum guide](#) (currently being expanded) for all grades and subjects to encourage interdisciplinary and project based learning.