

# RENEW CONNECTICUT

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*For a More Just, More Sustainable & More Equitable Connecticut*

Climate change, COVID-19, racial injustice, and growing economic disparities are intertwined crises. RENEW Connecticut urges bold climate mitigation policies that prioritize investment in vulnerable communities and create good jobs. Low-income and communities of color are exposed to greater pollution; contaminated air, water and soil devalues property in these communities. RENEW Connecticut is committed to investing in a more just, equitable and sustainable future for Connecticut.

## **100% Clean & Renewable Electricity**

Set a requirement of 100% zero-emission renewable electricity by 2030, and take steps to equitably achieve it by increasing energy efficiency, solar, wind and energy storage.

## **Healthy and Sustainable Housing**

Improve the comfort and living conditions of our residents with comprehensive energy efficiency and renewable retrofits beginning with public housing and affordable housing.

## **Clean & Accessible Transportation**

Prioritize communities overburdened by transportation pollution by improving and electrifying public transit, school buses and the state fleet. Invest in improvements for safer, more accessible pedestrian and biking routes.

## **Healthy Communities, Clean Air & Water**

Transform environmental justice communities through Green Justice Zone pilots that vigorously clean up pollution, deploy clean and renewable technologies, and create jobs where they are needed most. Increase overall investment for stormwater infrastructure improvements including replacing aging infrastructure, lead pipe removal, CSO separation, advanced treatment septic systems and green infrastructure.

## **Food Justice**

Expand access to affordable and nutritious food in vulnerable communities, and support small local farms that use ecologically friendly agricultural practices.

## **Access to Health Care**

Guarantee health care for every Connecticut resident.

# 100% Clean & Renewable Electricity

Climate change is upon us. Rising sea levels threaten to flood coastal communities. Storms, droughts, and increasing temperatures are growing more severe. Climate change will impact our health, property, and security in Connecticut, with these impacts being disproportionately felt by our most vulnerable residents.

We can still prevent the worst effects of climate change by undertaking a dramatic and speedy transformation from climate destroying fossil fuels to clean and renewable energy.

Connecticut must act to set a goal of **100% zero-emission renewable electricity by 2030**, take steps to achieve it by increasing energy efficiency, solar, wind and energy storage, prioritize equitable distribution, and create good jobs.

Connecticut should:

- Set a goal of 100% zero-emission renewable electricity by 2030 with interim targets to ensure progress
- Invest in greenhouse gas reducing energy efficiency and clean energy; prioritize vulnerable communities for deployment energy efficiency and clean energy, with at least 40% of all benefits of investment in clean energy in Environmental Justice communities
- Reduce energy demand by protecting and increasing energy efficiency funds and requiring remediation of health and safety barriers
- Set aggressive deployment goals for local distributed generation of clean energy including rooftop solar, community solar, and battery storage
- Pass legislation enabling Community Power (aka Community Choice Aggregation/CCA) as a means of increasing local involvement, targeting efficiency dollars based on local imperatives, accelerating deployment of distributed-energy resources, and increasing options for municipal procurement of green energy
- Create training programs to prepare the workforce for clean energy jobs
- Clean energy deployment should prioritize local labor; project labor agreements and fair wages will ensure that workers have the protections they and their families need.
- Specific requirements for projected inclusion of small and minority owned businesses should be defined and implemented.

# Healthy and Sustainable Housing

Launch a comprehensive housing retrofit program that limits energy costs, delivers energy efficiency, mitigates health and safety barriers, and deploys solar, storage and heat pumps throughout Connecticut.

This will simultaneously decrease energy demand, reduce pollution, increase affordability and improve living conditions for residents. Begin by retrofitting public housing and affordable housing units.

Key elements of the program:

- Electric Utilities will equip 5% of public housing and affordable housing units with energy efficiency retrofits in 2021, another 5% in 2022, and another 5% in 2023, an additional 10% in 2024, another 10% in 2025, and another 15% in 2026. Each retrofit must improve the home's energy efficiency by at least 25% compared with a business-as-usual benchmark, and health and safety barriers such as gas leaks, mold, vermiculite, and asbestos will be mitigated to ensure energy efficiency measures are completed.
- Electric Utilities will equip 5% of public housing and affordable housing with rooftop solar photovoltaic panels in 2021, an additional 5% in 2022, and another 5% in 2023, an additional 10% in 2024, another 10% in 2025, and another 15% in 2026.
- Electric Utilities will equip 5% of public housing and affordable housing with heat pumps for in 2021, an additional 5% in 2022, and another 5% in 2023, an additional 10% in 2024, another 10% in 2025, and another 15% in 2026.
- Retrofits should prioritize local labor; project labor agreements and fair wages will ensure that workers have the protections they and their families need. Set asides should be made for small and minority owned businesses.
- Prioritize training and hiring workers directly from the low-income communities in which the retrofits will initially be concentrated.
- Connecticut will limit the maximum amount that gas and electric utility companies can charge to low-income residents no more than 6% of income, the affordability threshold, in combination with energy efficiency retrofits.

In 2026, the electric utilities will equip remaining residential customers over 6 years as above, with a priority of providing these retrofits to families with a cumulative annual income of less than \$50,000.

The electric utility companies must obtain the homeowner's permission to retrofit their home. The utility must inform all customers of retrofit options along with a statement on the rights of renters to seek retrofits.

# Healthy Communities, Clean Air & Water

Residents of our distressed municipalities are more likely to live in the shadow of a power plant, trash incinerator, or other polluting source. Chemical pollution from long-gone industries lingers. This injustice has alarming impacts on human health. Asthma rates are higher in communities with more Black and brown children.

Now is the time to transform communities overburdened with pollution through that vigorously clean up pollution, deploy clean and renewable technologies, and create jobs where they are needed most.

**Create a Green Justice Zone pilot** to start in two Connecticut locations. This pilot will dramatically reduce industrial pollution and provide funding for environmental remediation projects. Key elements of Green Justice Zones:

- Provide state funding for remediation projects in Green Justice Zones
- Remove polluting sources in Green Justice Zones
- Hold at least 6 community meetings to learn about the possible remediation projects:
  - lead service pipe replacement
  - energy efficiency and weatherization retrofits with full remediation of health and safety barriers
  - install energy-efficient heating systems in residential homes (energy efficiency retrofits must precede this)
  - install solar panels on residential homes and other local buildings (energy efficiency retrofits must precede this)
  - install ventilation and air filtration systems in residential homes
  - install a microgrid in the local community, powered by local renewable energy generation
  - renovate old, residential, low-income, houses with high-quality building materials
  - clean up local pollution
- Community votes to decide on projects
- Local residents of the Zone will be the first to be offered project jobs
- Connecticut will also provide funding for union-led programs to equip Zone residents with the job skills needed

**Statewide, increase investment** for stormwater infrastructure improvements including replacing aging infrastructure, lead pipe removal, CSO separation, advanced treatment septic systems and green infrastructure; prioritize vulnerable communities for investment, jobs, and job training.

## Clean & Accessible Transportation

Transportation is the largest source of climate-destroying greenhouse gas emissions in Connecticut. According to DEEP's 2017 Connecticut Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory, transportation accounts for 38.1 percent of all greenhouse gas emissions—more than any other sector.

Connecticut can change this -- and inequity in transportation -- by building a clean transportation system that centers equity and justice. Low-income and Black and brown communities bear the greatest public health impact from emissions, and low- and moderate-income (LMI) households spend a greater share of income on transportation. Many cannot afford vehicle ownership.

To reduce transportation emission and center equity and justice, Connecticut should set a goal of 100% zero-emission vehicles by 2030 and prioritize communities overburdened by transportation pollution by:

- Investing in improvements to public transit, and in transit fleet electrification to meet state goal of 100% zero-emission vehicles by 2030; prioritize fleet vehicles that operate in LMI and EJ communities in transition of the state fleet
- Rapidly electrify school buses
- Invest in improvements for safer, more accessible pedestrian and biking routes
- Set a statewide goal to reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled at least 5% by 2030
- Create transit benefit and/or parking cash-out, and increased telecommuting flexibility for State and Municipal Employees
- Expand U-Pass to private colleges and universities, and beyond that to employers and institutions
- Expand Zero Emission Vehicle rebate programs to include e-motorcycles, e-bikes

# Food Justice

The overwhelming majority of our food is mass-produced by underpaid workers using environmentally destructive agricultural practices, and shipped to us over long distances through carbon-intensive supply chains. Approximately 406,000 Connecticut residents are food insecure.

This legislative package will pilot a model of our region's next food system – one that revolves around localized production, fair labor standards, ecologically sustainable farming practices, and a fundamental right to nutritious food. In future years, we will expand this model as rapidly as possible to locally produce at least two-thirds of the food our region consumes.

It will:

- Provide financial support for small, independent farmers that use sustainable ecological practices and fair labor standards.
- Increase food security for low-income communities.
- Provide a way to newly establish and continue to run small scale ecologically sustainable agricultural operations in vulnerable communities in CT that are worker owned and prioritizes a network of ownership and membership among BIPOC residents. This network will provide affordable memberships and nutritious locally grown food. Residents that make below 130% of the poverty line can qualify for free membership of the network and all members receive a share of the crops produced.