

**United States House of Representatives
Select Committee on the Climate Crisis**

**Hearing on April 20, 2021
“Making the Case for Climate Action:
Creating New Jobs and Catalyzing Economic Growth”**

Questions for the Record

**Leticia Colon de Mejias
Founder
Energy Efficiencies Solutions
Policy Co-Chair
Building Performance Association, and
President
Green Eco Warriors**

The Honorable Kathy Castor

- 1. Mrs. Colon de Mejias, you lead a successful energy efficiency business. The work you do saves consumers money, and it reduces emissions. It also protects their health, which is critical during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. In your view, is energy efficiency something that should be supported by everyone? How would energy efficiency benefit the constituents of all Members of Congress?**

Efficiency should be supported by everyone because efficiency is simply efficient. Although this seems simplistic, it applies to everything. For example, if gas is used to generate electricity we can still benefit from using less of that resource, using less means there is more in reserve. This makes it more affordable and more accessible to all people and decreases our dependence on foreign resources stabilizing our economy and our energy grid. Using less of any resource ensures that we use fewer natural resources, and we inflict less harm on our planet resulting in more positive environmental justice outcomes. Energy efficiency is a proven resource to lift the health of all Americans¹. Beyond that, energy efficiency can be applied to every single-family home, multifamily buildings, commercial buildings, and schools. Wherever energy efficiency is employed appropriately and comprehensively, communities reap additional positive health and economic benefits. This is accomplished when we address issues such as gas leaks, mold,

¹ <https://efficiencyforall.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/h1801.pdf>

asbestos, vermiculite, or carbon monoxide, pests, cracks, leaks, drafts, and other harmful health hazards which exist in many low to moderate-income communities.²

Beyond the direct health implications of removing indoor onsite barriers, we also draw down the pollution created at the power plants.³ These emissions generated by the burning of fossil fuels to create heat or electric energy have broader implications on human health, resulting in asthma, cancer, and ramifications on our water quality and water cost.⁴ The more energy we save vs waste, the less we pay per kWh, this is another critical benefit of comprehensive home performance and efficiency measures; it lowers our costs as well as the related pollution.⁵ If these benefits are not enough to ensure our nation should invest in a wide expansion of energy efficiency, the jobs and economic benefits are just as impressive. Energy efficiency employs more people in the USA than we have teachers.⁶ Our workforce offers a wide range of job opportunities which many people are sadly unaware of at this time. Having a good job is one of the easiest ways to lift a person's mental health. It is important to think of equity, for how can one get ahead without a stable roof or a bed? To have these basic necessities a roof and a bed, lights, food, safety, and electricity Americans need jobs. All of these basic necessities directly or indirectly are impacted by how we create, distribute, and use energy. All things are connected, and our health is certainly connected to our housing and our energy plans.

Energy efficiency is the most effective and least expensive way to draw down carbon emissions, protect human health and provide career paths for people in the United States of America. It is a critical component in strengthening and stabilizing our electric and energy infrastructure. Whether our states choose to invest in fossil fuels, nuclear, electric, solar, hydroelectric energy, wind, or potential new energy resources, using less of any resource is more effective and efficient, as well as conservative and a responsible path forward.

Energy efficiency would benefit the constituents of all Members of Congress in a number of ways, including creating and sustaining local jobs. Energy Efficiency is a proven job creator in every state across America; wherever there are buildings, you can employ Energy Efficiency workers. Before the pandemic, energy efficiency was one of the nation's biggest job sectors, employing nearly 2.4 million Americans. The majority of energy efficiency companies are small businesses, with 70% of companies employing 10 or fewer workers. In 2020, the Energy Efficiency sector was expected to grow 3 percent.⁷ The pandemic resulted instead, in a loss of 11

² https://efficiencyforall.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/EE-Health_2-18-2019_Flyer.pdf

³ <https://efficiencyforall.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Energy-Efficiency-Economy.pdf>

⁴ <https://coeh.ph.ucla.edu/effects-residential-gas-appliances-indoor-and-outdoor-air-quality-and-public-health-california>

⁵ https://efficiencyforall.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/EE-2_13-Slides-2.pdf

⁶ According to the E2 Clean Jobs America 2021 report, energy efficiency jobs outnumber all elementary and middle school teachers across the country. <https://e2.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/E2-2021-Clean-Jobs-America-Report-04-19-2021.pdf> (p. 7, 13)

⁷ https://e4thefuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/EE_Jobs_America_2020.pdf

percent.⁸ Energy Efficiency can provide jobs regardless of the state or the local climate. Because drawing down peak demand is most effective in the hottest months or coolest months in any state.

The bipartisan **HOPE for HOMES Act of 2021 (H.R. 3456, S. 1768)**, includes immediate and long-term initiatives to support the residential energy efficiency sector in the face of sustained challenges stemming from the pandemic, getting them back to work helping homeowners, multifamily property owners, and renters save energy and money by investing in clean, efficient technology. Through the establishment of grants for online workforce training, residential contractors will immediately gain access to online training designed to prepare them to conduct comprehensive home energy efficiency retrofits. These grants will allow small contracting businesses like mine to hire and re-invest in their employees despite continued economic recession.

Efficiency also supports resilience and energy security. When we strengthen the thermal boundaries we make our shelters more resilient to severe weather impacts, allowing people to shelter in a place during a pandemic, a storm, or any unexpected natural or man-made events. By drawing down energy demand, efficiency also helps improve reliability and reduce strain on the grid. When the climate is hot or cold, we sadly see blackouts and brownouts due to extended use of heating, cooling, and electric needs that occur across that state or region simultaneously. There is ample opportunity to lower peak demand through investments in energy efficiency in buildings. Therefore expanding comprehensive EE across America will make our energy grid more resilient, less reliant on imported resources, and more stable for American households and businesses. We know that climate change impacts are already being seen. A report by Dr. Bozzi at Yale was sobering for my staff and the State of Connecticut Commission on women children elderly equity and opportunity.⁹

The implications on heat index rise, sea-level changes, lack of access to potable water, and health were moving. We know that these issues are impacting the most vulnerable people in our nation, and it is our duty to take action now to protect them from the worst impacts of climate change. Expansion of energy efficiency supports and programs will lift Americans while we build bridges to opportunity and equity and tear down the longstanding walls of historical injustice.

As an American who has been working in the Energy Efficiency industry since 2010, I have seen incredible outcomes in my home state of Connecticut. Connecticut has removed the equivalent of two power plants, and millions of vehicles off the road just by implementing energy efficiency in residential and multifamily buildings.¹⁰ When viewed as a whole, this data demonstrates that a

⁸ <https://e2.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/E2-2021-Clean-Jobs-America-Report-04-19-2021.pdf>

⁹ <https://files-profile.medicine.yale.edu/documents/8a79a736-2706-4546-86fa-a1a0f0925065> .

¹⁰ <https://efficiencyforall.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Final-2017-Annual-Legislative-Report-WEB-2-20-18.pdf> .

major increase in investments in comprehensive EE will benefit ALL Americans. We must ensure that all Americans understand efficiency and conservation; that they know how to participate meaningfully and that we create equal access to programs, services, and career opportunities. We must provide support and incentives to help constituents afford the implementation of energy efficiency retrofits, specifically focusing on low to moderate households. When demand for energy at the usage site is drawn down, the cost of energy is also reduced, making it more affordable creating a stronger infrastructure that is more resilient, more stable, and safer.

Jobs = Opportunity: There is nothing better than giving someone a job because a job lifts the individual and the community that they live in. Having a job creates a positive outlook, it allows that person the ability to take care of and provide for their family. There is truly no better way to lift a community than to create paths to a positive workplace, and self-reliance is a key principle of the American way. Energy efficiency employs more people than police officers or teachers. We don't think about EE or retrofitting jobs as careers because so few people understand energy or our nation's infrastructure or the steps to obtain these careers. I have walked this path for the last 12 years and I have seen the benefit of providing jobs and careers in my own community. I have seen first hand the benefits of retrofitting people's homes and buildings. I have hundreds of letters from past customers, Americans, [who now pay 30% less on](#)¹¹ their heating and electric bills, who live better lives, who have personal stories of how their health improved, and who have careers that they now love and cherish.¹²

Another benefit of Energy Efficiency to all constituents, of all members of Congress, is the fact that comprehensive energy efficiency retrofits create a healthier environment while simultaneously drawing down the cost of energy, and strengthening our nation's infrastructure. Every state would enjoy the lower cost of energy and the benefits of lowered air and water pollution. This is even more important when there are pockets of people of color and at-risk groups with asthma. The time for action is now; cleaning up our air and our water and Energy Efficiency is the best, and least expensive, way forward to do such a thing.¹³

2. Mrs. Colon de Mejias, I am working on a bill to establish a nationwide benchmarking program to encourage disclosure of the energy use and emissions of commercial and multi-family buildings. What would greater transparency about energy use and emissions do for businesses like yours? Would it help create greater demand for energy efficiency services?

I'm so excited to hear about your bill to establish a nationwide benchmarking program. It is time for Americans to understand their energy bills and the demands, as well as where their energy

¹¹ <https://efficiencyforall.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Uconn-2.pdf>

¹² <https://eesqogreen.com/customer-testimonials/>

¹³ https://youtu.be/l_7MUJDb2E0

comes from. Yes, I do believe that transparency on energy used in multi-family and commercial buildings would create a greater demand for efficiency services. Greater transparency in energy use helps people understand where energy is being wasted. This will help them know how to draw down those demands and get their energy use under control. I have seen that once someone has access to information they can make much better-informed decisions. Knowledge is power. Knowing how our energy usage impacts people, the planet, our nation, and our economy is imperative as we move into the future. Americans deserve to know where energy comes from, which resource is being used, and how they can save energy and save Dinero.

3. Mrs. Colon de Mejias, you are the President of Green Eco Warriors, which focuses on climate education. The Climate Crisis Action Plan recommends expanding Federal support for climate literacy in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education programs in our schools, with an emphasis on removing barriers and broadening participation for underrepresented groups. Based on your experience, why is climate education so important? What kind of gaps are you seeing in the real world in terms of the public's understanding of energy use, the climate risks we face, and the opportunities that we have for climate solutions?

Knowledge = Power

America is a diverse place where innovative ideas and solutions abound. For far too long, people of color have been underrepresented or more often completely left out of the conversation on climate change, energy plans, and energy infrastructure. This has left them without access to job opportunities, and often also leads to a lack of participation in programs and services that would lower their energy burdens. This type of unintentional procedural exclusion is historic and broadly impacts underrepresented populations negatively. **If we desire meaningful engagement, we must ensure equal access to information that allows people to make informed decisions, and to empower them with information and stackable learning opportunities starting at an early age. The best path forward to lift communities is to provide low cost accessible engaging diverse education that would empower Americans with information and allow them to participate meaningfully in careers, programs, and policy creation.**

Unfortunately, some areas of our nation have been historically oppressed by economic distress or other socio-economic disparities, this results in a lack of focus on applied science and STEM skills. When youth do not have the opportunity to be engaged in applied science they have a hard time seeing themselves in careers that are science-based, and they are often left unprepared for career opportunities. We can address this issue by ensuring applied hands-on science is taught in all public schools. This will spark interest and engagement in communities which have been historically left behind and, intentionally or unintentionally, excluded from these career opportunities and the program supports which are offered to help lower energy burdens.

Building science and energy efficiency as well as climate science and environmental issues may not be the most pressing issue on the minds of some Americans. This is only true because many Americans may not be aware of the far-reaching implications of climate change, on our health, wealth, daily lives, and ultimately on our survival as a nation and as humans.

In my career as an educator, workforce specialist, and trainer, I have learned that to affect meaningful long-term change a person must understand what they are learning and be able to assimilate the ideas. This requires the participant to see themselves as capable of learning the material, and the person needs to see value in learning the material. The most effective way to encourage someone to pay attention to a topic, is to demonstrate the direct relation of that topic to the person or people related to that person. This is because people care when they see an issue as directly related to them. Starting education early increases the potential that a person will gain stackable knowledge and be able to apply what they learned. I suggest we start in Pre Kindergarten and offer education at school, online, and through media platforms such as books, graphic texts, children's TV shows, or videos.

The areas that I see lacking in our current educational platforms and workforce programs are the basic sets of information including but not limited to: where energy comes from, the types of energy renewable and nonrenewable resources, what uses the most energy, how our energy grid works, the impacts of energy use and energy choices on people and the planet, how to save energy, how to reduce an energy bill, the interconnectedness of energy and water nexus, the concepts all things are connected and our choices do matter, civic engagement (how policies and laws are made), fiscal responsibility and the impacts of our financial choices. These are the areas that cause the highest levels of disengagement and procedural exclusion for communities of color.

If the United States of America truly wants to invest in communities of color and underrepresented groups, and lift the communities they reside in, then it is time to invest in expanding access to climate literacy, energy literacy, energy equity, and STEAM education. I specifically mentioned STEAM education vs. STEM education because I find the addition of art and music to science technology engineering and math increases youth and adult opportunities to be engaged by lowering the anxiety of participating. I believe we need an intensional emphasis on removing barriers to underrepresentation in the education field, the American energy workforce, and in energy efficiency and home performance careers.

Based on my experience, I know climate change education is important because before I knew about climate change I had no desire to work in an Energy Efficiency career. This is because I did not know that there were building performance or energy careers. I had no knowledge of where electricity came from or the impacts on human health. But once I learned about the issues and the direct impact on my children's health, and wealth I was moved to quit my job and create

a path for minorities to work in this industry. Had I not seen the film “Kilowatt Ours”, by Jeffery Barrie and the DOE, I would have never created my company where I now employ 22 people of color and help thousands of people a year reduce their energy bills and improve their health. Nor would I have helped thousands of Americans lower their energy waste, energy bills, and energy costs, or educated thousands of children and families on the issues of energy and climate connections. I have seen the outcome of educating the community on the topics of energy and climate. As I have successfully helped thousands of families and children learn through our own work at Green Eco Warriors. Success stories are located here¹⁴ and in the attached Appendix A.

There are real gaps in terms of public education and understanding of energy use, as well as climate risks. We must expand access to science, technology, engineering, art, and math as it directly relates to the understanding of climate change and climate impacts. Certainly ensuring equal access to science and climate change education would create bridges to allow underrepresented groups to find new career opportunities in many areas that relate to those fields and connect them to ways they can save energy and lower energy bills.

“There is a huge opportunity to simultaneously build a skilled clean energy workforce, support small businesses, and dramatically improve and decarbonize America’s building stock. According to a recent report from E2 and E4TheFuture, if Congress directed \$60.7 billion to the energy efficiency sector, over a 5-year period it would **add \$254.7 billion to our nation’s economy and create 737,200 full-time jobs across every region and state.**¹ Investing in a robust workforce of skilled energy efficiency workers will help power our economic recovery and our nation.² “

- **Appendix A attached, includes comments collected from students and teachers which were gathered through our work as Green Eco Warriors (G.E.W). G.E.W is a minority-run nonprofit, with a focus on Energy Equity, civic engagement, and Creating a Culture of Sustainable Thinkers™ .¹⁵**

The Honorable Garret Graves

1. **Representative Palmer asked you about concerns with China being the world’s leading supplier of the minerals critical to the manufacture of renewable and storage technologies. I appreciate your statement that “we have the opportunity to really do this right.” 90% of the world’s solar panels currently come from China. Are you concerned with the potential national security and human rights implications associated with the current state of the supply chain? Do you agree that we should increase domestic production of these minerals? Can you share your thoughts on how best to pursue a clean energy technology approach and disconnect our reliance on China?**

¹⁴ <https://www.gewportal.org/articles/>

¹⁵ <https://www.gewportal.org/>

Yes, I am concerned with the implications of using child labor, or any labor that results in harm to humans or abuses humans. I feel strongly that it is our responsibility to choose wisely about where we purchase products or services from. This is why my company uses local windows made in America, as well as American made insulation, and if it was readily available we would use solar that were made in America. Creating material and technology in the USA allows us to control the safety of the supply chain and ensure workforce safety standards.

Increasing domestic production of clean energy resources is a wonderful way to create local jobs, to ensure our supply chain is stable, and to expand our clean energy resources, stabilizing our electric grid and national infrastructure which is a benefit to all Americans.

Investments in our public school systems to ensure youth are learning STEAM skills and are ready to workforce ready, will help in creating technology in our nation, and will help future job seekers prepare for the use of new technology. We need to expand investments in workforce programs that support small businesses, and which support training for historically underrepresented populations. Far too often workforce programs are focused only on unions and this leaves small businesses with little to no support.

Small Businesses are the backbone of America and we should be intentional in our plans and budgets to ensure small businesses like mine and the many home performance contractors and solar installers, electricians, heat pump installers, and other American workers have access to training support which are accessible and affordable. This will pave the way to our clean energy future.

With access to workforce development and robust short-term training programs, struggling Americans can become fully equipped to fill existing jobs and new careers in this emerging clean energy economy. The **Blue Collar to Green Collar Jobs Development Act (H.R. 156)**, introduced by Congressman Rush, has a crucial energy workforce grant program that small businesses can apply to directly to help them hire and train new workers as opposed to going through labor organizations or registered apprenticeship programs that do not exist for the home performance industry and often perpetuate diversity disparities. Small businesses like mine are the backbone of the efficiency industry, and I urge Congress to support this type of direct support to make an immediate difference for our industry.

The **HOPE for HOMES Act (H.R. 3456, S. 1768)** would also support jobs and small businesses in our industry through remote training opportunities and rebates to drive demand. Energy efficiency is a proven catalyst for broad economic recovery that can create solid careers in every state and county for years to come, and independent research shows the HOPE for HOMES Act would create local jobs while saving energy and reducing carbon emissions. A 2020 analysis

from the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE) of a smaller-scaled bill estimated it could support 42,000 annual jobs (job-years) over the next few years, and 85,000 total jobs.¹⁶ This updated version of HOPE for HOMES would create even more jobs in an industry adversely affected by the pandemic.

Americans need to understand the value of this work to draw down the cost of energy, the pollution-related to energy, and the Environmental Justice impacts of our energy choices. The HOPE for HOMES Act, and the Blue Collar to Green Collar Jobs Act would go a long way to spark the work which we must undertake to expand our clean energy infrastructure and ensure Americans receive the benefits of the local jobs and clean energy.

Workforce in Connecticut update: This week, we were honored to learn that Efficiency For All (EFA), a minority-run nonprofit focused on closing the energy equity gap, and creating a diverse energy workforce, was granted funds to train ten energy efficiency workers in building science. Our participants will be selected from at-risk and underserved populations. They will learn soft skills, problem-solving, energy career options, and they will graduate with a certification in Building Science Analysis, OSHA 10, Lead RRP, and other critical skill sets. They will then be placed in a six-week internship at a minority-owned or veteran-owned contractor. We will work to highlight the trainees and track their career progression to ensure we document successes and demonstrate that these careers lift people and the communities in which they reside. We look forward to sharing our successes.

I thank you for the opportunity to provide additional responses and resources on these important topics. I am at your service as an American citizen who holds my government and my nation in high regard, and as a Latina Small Business owner who loves my career, my staff, and the Americans we serve through our work in energy efficiency, home performance, community engagement, and education.

¹ <https://e4thefuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/E2E4-Build-Back-Better-Faster-Stimulus-Projection-Report-July2020.pdf> ² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e8j-YJdbWZY&t=247s>
³ https://www.eesi.org/files/Leticia_Colon_de_Mejias_093020.pdf

¹⁶ <https://www.aceee.org/white-paper/2020/09/growing-greener-economy-job-and-climate-impacts-energy-efficiency-investments>

Appendix A

Exhibit A

Sena Wazer, Student at University of Connecticut

As a youth myself, I speak with other students, elementary through college, on a regular basis. From these interactions, I know that most students have a very limited understanding of the science behind climate change, as well as possible solutions. Furthermore, when they do know about climate change, it is often due to their own personal research, not what has been taught to them in school.

With the exception of students whose teachers are particularly interested in climate change, most students are not taught in a comprehensive manner about climate change. They do not understand how different sectors contribute to climate change (ex. turning on lights or having your computer plugged in draws energy which, according to the [US Energy Information Administration](#), is mostly coming from fossil fuels), or what the possible solutions are, such as solar panels, geothermal, and wind turbines.

Young people will face a disproportionate amount of climate change effects since climate change will continue to worsen over time ([NASA](#)), and as such, young people should be equipped with the facts about what is happening to their future. It is also important that there is climate education in all public schools because otherwise, it introduces inequity in access to information. This often leads to students from majority communities of color, and low-income communities, knowing less about climate science than students in richer and whiter communities. This is especially concerning because people of color and low-income individuals are disproportionately affected by climate change.

Finally, I have heard the concern that teaching climate science will unnecessarily scare students. However, as a young person, I would like to push back on this idea. Climate change is certainly frightening, but not being educated is even more upsetting and frightening. Students want to learn, want to be a part of the solution, and so I am asking that you empower teachers to give them that information and opportunity.

Jennifer Solomon - Teacher at Loomis Chaffee School Windsor, CT

Dear Honorable Chair Kathy Castor,

It is incredibly important that we require and fund climate literacy and stem education programs, additionally it is in other content areas (the humanities, Arts, Etc.). Students might regularly ask “why do I need this? When will I use this?” when learning units throughout their education. There are perhaps few topics more important than climate change education, which impacts our children TODAY. It impacts them not just as a global threat, but in their own communities. This

is particularly true for lower-income communities and communities of color, which have experienced the effect of environmental racism for decades. In many areas, true climate change education comes during an environmental studies class, typically reserved for high-achieving science students in a course that is not required for graduation. All of my own 12th-grade students who recently did a project with Leticia: de Mejia, remarked that they had not known how dire the situation was with climate change and what they could do about it until working with her. Learning this in the 12th grade is excellent, but far too late climate change education should be a requirement, and Beyond merely learning what is happening, have students learn what they can do to slow this change. Empower them with the information and skills to make a difference. However, when speaking with science and Decatur's, many might say something like quote climate change is important, but what would we give up to make room for this?" This is the take-it-or-leave-it mentality created by not having climate-change education required. It is also the product of a system that removes educator voice and choice. Not only should climate change be required as a topic, but teachers should also be given the opportunity to differentiate how this topic is taught based on their geographic location and the needs of their students. Perhaps there is a power plant near the neighborhood that impacts health outcomes in their community. That educator should be able to have their students analyze this and use their voices to address it in the classroom.

-Jennifer

Tom - Student at Loomis Chaffee Loomis Chaffee School Windsor, CT

Leticia,

It was such a pleasure to meet you and work with you. I love listening to you talk about your passions to fight climate change and starting your companies. This experience alarmed me of the short amount of time that we have before the irreversible consequences. It also made me realize the power ordinary Americans have to influence government policies through their representatives. It is truly people's own call to take Advantage of powers that we're entitled to them. And in order for them to do that, they must be informed of their power and the issues at State. This is why education is important. And accessible, inclusive, and interesting climate education. Thank you for showing us that we don't need a Ph.D. to take climate actions, and the power we have to influence others around us.

-Tom

Matt - Student at Loomis Chaffee Loomis Chaffee School Windsor, CT

Dear Leticia,

Thank you so much for taking the time to talk to our class about the importance of climate change. I know what I will say about what stuck with me will be very similar to many of my classmates since everything was so incredibly important therefore, I'm trying to give you a full overview of everything I found important. The first thing that struck me was the disparities in the neighborhoods. Whether it be separated by race, age, or both, there were disparities. Next, Sena Wazer's "We have 9 years" speech, which I also used at the start of my group presentation, was one of the most eye-opening facts I've heard about climate change. Last week, the Board of Education member who asked me if hot air rises then why are the tops of Mountains Cold?. Not only did this question surprise me, it kind of annoyed me. Having people on the board of education, aka the people in charge of making the curriculum, spreading lies that climate change doesn't exist Kirk's me. So, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for educating my class about the current distressing state of climate change and climate change education.

Sincerely,

Matt

Ethan - Student at Loomis Chaffee Loomis Chaffee School Windsor, CT

Hi Leticia,

I just wanted to say thank you so much for working with us. I feel that you really taught us so much. Starting with the amazing panel which opened our eyes to so much information that we were not privileged too prior. I think that this project has made me truly aware of the current situation and that action needs to be taken. I know for a fact that I will be continuing with sustainable goals and sustainable living moving forward. It was an honor to work with you Leticia, thank you.

-Ethan

Simone - Student at Loomis Chaffee Loomis Chaffee School Windsor, CT

Dear Leticia,

It was a pleasure to work with such an awe-inspiring, drive, and high-spirited mover and shaker like yourself. Your enthusiasm encouraged me to devote a stronger passion to this work and to seek opportunities to connect with people who will aid in this fight for equitable, diverse, and interesting climate change education. Over the past few weeks, I learned how urgent this matter is, how powerful real stories are, and how demanding this work can be. In the expert panel, Sena Wazer spoke to the gravity of climate change and stated that “we only have 9 years” until the impacts of climate change become irreversible. Her opening remarks forced me to acknowledge that time will run out if we do not take the necessary steps to advocate for climate change policy and encourage members of our community to develop sustainable practices. Dr. Bozzi accompanies Wazer’s call to action with a pristinely drafted document of the 19 indicators in CT that show the reality of climate change. Not only did her data present a compelling case for climate-curious or denying individuals, but when coupled with her claims about real people and real stories, the issue seemed to hit home for me. Yes, data is great, but the stories are what will move the needle forwards; hence why Dr. Bozzi showed us a photo of a home destroyed by a hurricane. This photo stuck with me the most and proved to me that the livelihood of ordinary people is at stake. As long as the communities most affected are barred from the conversation, the negligence of lawmakers and the ignorance of man will continue to hamper the efforts of climate change advocates like you and me. Until then, I’ll do my part of teaching kids in my community the importance of speaking up about the inequities that plagued my city while watching you take down all opposition in congressional hearings. Collective action will get us where we need to be - I’m sure of it! Thank you, Leticia, for igniting a fire in me that -after this project - will never burn out! I look forward to connecting with you for future projects!

-Simone

Kariuki - Student at Loomis Chaffee Loomis Chaffee School Windsor, CT

Dear Leticia,

I believe wholeheartedly that you changed my perspective on what climate change really is. Before our meeting with you I could not see it being more than just polar ice caps melting and sea levels rising. But, after our conversations and after see how much it affects minority groups throughout America and even the world I am beginning to understand just how much this situation affects me and my people. For this realization I want to thank you! Even though I am

going on to college to do other things I will make sure to keep this in mind as I move into my adult life and continue to learn more.

Best,
Kariuki

CT State Representative - Christine Palm



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GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION AND ELECTIONS
COMMITTEE

To: House Select Committee on Climate Crisis

Date: May 20, 2021

Dear Chair Castor and Esteemed Committee Members:

Thank you for your dedication in addressing the climate crisis. I write to you today in support of climate change education.

Here in Connecticut, where I am a state legislator, many public schools teach about climate change as an urgent problem largely caused by human activity. But not all do. The unequal adherence to climate change curricula is further widening the gap between those being prepared for green jobs and those destined to be left behind. And this is appalling in a state already known for having among the greatest wealth disparity in the nation.

Connecticut is one of about 18 states that adopted the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), which recommend that climate change be taught as part of the science curriculum. However, NGSS, while excellent pedagogical standards, are not mandates. They are educational suggestions for best practice.

Therefore, in my first term (2019) I introduced a bill to codify into state statute that climate change be mandated (by changing the “may” currently in the NGSS language to “shall”). Although the bill passed the Connecticut House on a bipartisan basis, it was never called in the Senate and so failed.

The bill:

<https://www.cga.ct.gov/searchresults.asp?cx=005177121039084408563%3Ahs1zq3ague8&ie=UTF-8&cof=FORID%3A10&q=2019+Palm+climate+teaching+&submission=%EF%80%82>

I intend to continue to introduce it until it passes.

In the meantime, climate change education seems to be a rare weak link in the Biden Administration's otherwise wonderful progress, attitude and direction concerning the planet.

(Read here: <https://news.climate.columbia.edu/2020/11/17/biden-harris-climate-change-education/>)

Therefore, I urge you to push for national climate change education wherever and whenever appropriate, while still respecting states' rights over curricula development.

With Respect,

Rep. Christine Palm