

**Testimony of Gilbert Campbell  
Co-Founder  
Volt Energy**

**Committee on Energy and Commerce  
Hearing on the Blue Collar to Green Collar Jobs Development Act of 2019**

**February 27, 2019**

Chairman Rush, Ranking Member Upton, and members of the Committee, I am honored to be invited to testify on the *Blue Collar to Green Collar Jobs Development Act of 2019* (the “Bill”). My name is Gilbert Campbell and I am the co-founder of Volt Energy, a clean energy development firm that finances and develops solar projects, electric-vehicle charging stations, and micro grid solutions for commercial, governmental, educational and non-profit institutions. Volt Energy’s mission is to uplift communities through the opportunities and benefits provided by clean technology. Volt’s notable clients include: The Cheesecake Factory, Subaru, Pepco, Howard University, Wake Forest University, KIPP DC, and the District of Columbia Government.

We are at an exciting time in American history, where our energy infrastructure is being modernized by clean technology. America’s transition to a cleaner, technologically advanced, and resilient energy infrastructure is a key driver of job creation and growth, that will forever change the fabric of this nation. The renewable energy sector employs 770,000 people, roughly the same as the U.S. telecommunications industry. Solar and wind jobs outnumber coal and gas jobs in 30 states, including the District of Columbia. Last year, energy storage jobs surged to over 90,000, grid modernization efforts have created more than 55,000 jobs, and there are 174,000 Americans who develop and manufacture electric vehicles. As you can see, the clean energy sector is one of our nation’s fastest growing sectors and the transition from blue collar to green collar jobs should not be viewed as a blue issue or a red issue, rather it should be viewed as a red, white, and blue opportunity for our nation to modernize our energy infrastructure while providing good paying jobs and wealth creation opportunities for all Americans.

I am a strong supporter of the Bill, for the following reasons:

- 1) In order to achieve our clean energy goals, we need a talented, trained and diverse workforce.
- 2) Given our nation's history, we need to remedy the disproportionate negative impact of energy policies on diverse communities and double down on our investment in those communities.
- 3) We have already seen the impact of these policies nationally and the Bill will enhance and scale these impactful efforts to ensure that all Americans benefit from the growth of clean energy.

Private-public partnerships have been the primary driver of new solar, wind, geothermal and biomass projects to power our country's emerging clean energy infrastructure, along with investments in new transmission, energy storage, micro grid, energy efficiency, and electric transportation systems. We need to invest in all of these opportunities as a country since a primary goal of climate legislation must be to create jobs here in the United States. In order to accomplish this goal we must make investments in workforce development training through STEM programs that cultivate the untapped but abundant talent that reside in the under-represented communities in urban and rural America.

We also must be honest that our country's aging energy infrastructure was built at the expense of minority and rural communities. For example, studies show that 71 percent of African-Americans live in counties that violate federal air pollution standards and nearly 70 percent of African-Americans live within 30 miles of a coal-fired power plant. African-American children are 4 times more likely to be hospitalized for asthma, and 7.1 times more likely to die from asthma than white children. Hispanics are also 165 percent more likely to live in counties with unhealthy levels of power plant pollution than non-Latino whites. Another example lies within rural America in the coal industry. While the coal industry is rapidly declining, the incidences of premature deaths continue to rise, amounting to over 50,000 deaths per year. As we transition to a cleaner energy infrastructure, it is only equitable that minorities, women, veterans, the disabled, returning citizens, and other marginalized Americans must be given the opportunity and training to thrive in the clean energy economy that received \$333.5 billion in global investment in 2017.

This Bill will positively impact Americans and there are plenty of success stories all across the country that highlight how this Bill will further enhance this transition from blue collar to green collar jobs. The February 24, 2019 edition of the Washington Post, featured the story of a soybean farmer in Illinois who wants to convert a portion of his 6,500 acres of land typically dedicated to soybeans and corn to a revenue generating solar farm. He anticipates that his small conversion would produce earnings three times his normal crop yield.

Here in the District of Columbia, Mayor Muriel Bowser and regional utilities Pepco, WGL Energy and others are supporting the DC Infrastructure Academy whose mission is to train a diverse and under-represented workforce to fill the current need for skilled labor in the electric and natural gas industry as well as the emerging renewable markets. I also serve on the Energy Advisory Board of the Faunteroy Community Enrichment Center (FCEC) that serves low-income residents of DC. In a community stricken by extreme poverty, high unemployment and high incarceration rates, we were able to launch a solar training program, enroll more than 71 students, and employ 48 of those students into full time jobs with an average wage of \$18 per hour.

My company, Volt Energy, is currently developing numerous solar installations at Howard University, one of our nation's oldest and most prominent historically black colleges and universities. We have also partnered with Howard to ensure that students at all schools (i.e. business, law, engineering, communications, etc.) are gaining a first hand understanding of the numerous career paths in clean energy.

In closing, I support the Bill because it will help us to achieve our clean energy goals and restore our standing as a global leader in energy, remedy the wrongs of our past and continue to enhance the lives of Americans all around the county.