



**Office of
Representative Hannah E. Kane
Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

For Immediate Release

Contact: Anna Darrow, 617-722-2810, Anna.Darrow@mahouse.gov

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Rep. Kane supports climate change bill setting net-zero greenhouse gas emissions target for 2050

BOSTON – State Representative Hannah Kane (R-Shrewsbury) recently supported climate change legislation to accelerate the state’s timeline for achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

House Bill 4912, *An Act creating a 2050 roadmap to a clean and thriving Commonwealth*, was the subject of two days of debate, and was engrossed by the House of Representatives on a vote of 142-17 on July 31. The bill is a redrafted version of Senate Bill 2500, which passed the Senate on January 30.

Representative Kane said House Bill 4912 directs the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) to establish a “2050 Emissions Reduction Roadmap Plan” by December 31, 2022, outlining feasible and equitable pathways for achieving the targeted net-zero goal. The bill sets interim goals calling for emissions to be at least 50% below 1990 levels by 2030, and at least 75% below those levels by 2040. In developing its roadmap plan, EOEEA will be required to create regulations that protect – and, where possible, improve – the condition of low and moderate income persons and environmental justice populations.

To further address environmental justice issues, House Bill 4912 directs electric and gas distributors to create programs administered by the low-income weatherization and fuel assistance program network that result in whole home retrofits, including weatherization and electrification for low-income and fixed-income households. The legislation also calls for the establishment of a low-income whole home retrofit task force to develop program recommendations for distributors. An amendment adopted during floor debate sets a cap of 80% of statewide median income for which low income households may receive funds from the a low-income whole home retrofit task force for home weatherization retrofits.

House Bill 4912 provides for improvements to the Commonwealth’s utility grid by establishing a future utility grid commission to study the establishment of a long-term grid modernization plan. The commission must convene its first meeting by January 31, 2021 and schedule a minimum of three public hearings across the state to solicit public comment, with a final report and draft recommendations due to be filed by November 21, 2021.

Under the House bill, Municipal Lighting Plants (MLP) will need to establish a greenhouse gas emissions standard (GGES), setting a minimum percentage of non-carbon emitting energy to be sold by each MPL to its retail end-user customers, using targets that are consistent with the state’s reduction goal. The bill also expands the state’s net metering program to exempt private Class II or III facilities

from the aggregate nameplate capacity and allows these facilities to accrue net-metering credits for on-site generation, provided they have an executed interconnection agreement with a distribution company on or after January 1, 2021.

In addition, the bill creates a clean energy equity workforce and market development program to provide workforce training, educational and professional development, job placement, startup opportunities and grants promoting participation in the Commonwealth's energy efficiency and clean energy industries to certified minority-owned and women-owned small business enterprises; individuals residing within an environmental justice community; and both current and former workers displaced from the fossil fuel industry.

Several amendments were adopted during floor debate prior to the bill's passage, including proposals to:

- require EOEEA to measure the amount of carbon stored by and released from natural and working land across Massachusetts, including farmland and forests, and to set up a plan to achieve numeric goals for replacing carbon emissions and increasing the carbon sink on these lands;
- require EOEEA to make recommendations for increasing small businesses' access to energy efficiency grants and programs;
- establish a land use commission to develop recommendations on land use restrictions within the Solar Massachusetts Renewable Target (SMART) Program, and to recommend land use policies to encourage conservation of open space, farm and forestlands in a responsible manner;
- direct the Department of Energy Resources (DOER) to study the feasibility of ferry operators located in Massachusetts converting vessel fleets to electric and hybrid electric ferries by 2050;
- authorize the procurement of 3,600MW of offshore wind by 2027 and accelerates the timeframe in which DOER must create a staggered procurement schedule from 24 to 18 months of the previous solicitation, while also allowing the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development to be involved in the review of proposals to encourage job development;
- require the Department of Environmental Protection to provide a detailed summary of the steps taken by the Commonwealth to improve or mitigate economic, environmental and public health impacts on low or moderate-income individuals and environmental justice populations;
- establish an environmental justice council to advise and provide recommendations to the secretary of EOEEA on relevant policies and standards to achieve environmental justice principles, and require the departments, divisions, boards and offices under the secretary's control and authority to consider these principles when reviewing or undertaking any project;
- require the filing of an environmental impact report when a project is likely to cause environmental damage and is located within one mile of an environmental justice population;
- provide a property tax exemption for any solar or wind powered system capable of producing not more than 125% of the annual energy needs of the residential property upon which it is located;
- authorize cost recovery for pilot projects proposed by gas companies to develop and deliver utility-scale renewable thermal energy; and
- require DOER to publish a guide to assist cities and towns with developing programs that allow residents unable to install off-street electric vehicle charging stations to install curbside electric vehicle charging stations proximate to their residences.

The House and the Senate will now appoint a conference committee that will attempt to reconcile the differences between House Bill 4912 and Senate Bill 2500 and produce a compromise bill that can be sent to Governor Charlie Baker.

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