

October 31, 2025

María Belén Power, Undersecretary of Environmental Justice and Equity
Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
Office of Environmental Justice and Equity
Via email to ej.inquiries@mass.gov
Subject: Written Testimony on Draft Standards and Guidelines CBP and CBA

Dear Undersecretary Power:

Community Labor United (CLU) and our partners would like to thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on the Draft Standards and Guidelines: Community Benefit Plans, Community Benefit Agreements. For the last 20 years, CLU has united labor unions and community organizations representing 100,000 working class families in the Greater Boston area. Our Green Justice Coalition is a partnership dedicated to achieving environmental and economic justice and a just transition to a sustainable economy.

We commend the Office of Environmental Justice and Equity's leadership and staff for your substantial and expeditious efforts to promulgate these regulations and guidance as required by "An Act Promoting a Clean Energy Grid, Advancing Energy Equity, and Protecting Ratepayers" ("2024 Climate Act").

First, we express our robust support for the importance of community benefit plans and agreements. The Guidance is critical to ensuring that local communities have the opportunity to negotiate agreements that reflect their own needs and priorities. This is a hallmark of environmental justice and we strongly endorse the OEJE's emphasis on and process for meaningful participation and ensuring the benefits and burdens of the clean energy transition are shared fairly. To this end, we strongly support OEJE's own recommendation that a draft CBP be a required component of a project's application to a municipality or the EFSB.

Second, we are greatly supportive of OEJE's inclusion of community-based organizations, EJ organizations, and labor unions in the list of Key Stakeholders with whom applicants should be engaging in the development and discussion of draft CBPs. The list of stakeholders currently varies slightly across two separate mentions (page 3 and page 9), and should be harmonized. To further ensure involvement of labor entities, we recommend including central labor councils and building trades councils. Thus, we can ensure that all aspects of the labor community are included in important discussions about community and worker benefits.

The remainder of this letter focuses on strengthening and expanding the examples of meaningful commitments provided in the document. We understand that, on the one hand, examples are merely illustrations of the type of agreements that *could* be included in a CBP or CBA –not directives that are applicable to every project. However, the examples provided will undoubtedly shape both project proponents' and communities' ideas of what is both possible and desirable within these plans and agreements.

In particular, we urge you to modify the examples of meaningful commitments in the priority area of Economic Development & Workforce Creation (EDWC) as follows.

Hiring goals

Driving local hiring into good careers is a central goal of many CBPs and CBAs. We strongly support the inclusion of examples that emphasize equitable pathways for local residents, women and people of color. However, the current guidance expresses these as quotas, which are not allowable under U.S. anti-discrimination and other laws. Instead, goals may be set and policies enacted to ensure equitable pathways for local residents, women and people of color. We recommend that the guidance remove any reference to quotas and instead focus on hiring goals.

Integrate good jobs measures

In the Guidance, the OEJE defines Economic Development and Workforce Creation as “creating **good-paying, accessible** jobs for local residents, supporting small and minority-owned businesses, and building **long-term economic opportunities** (emphasis added).

We would expand this definition by emphasizing that good jobs not only provide family-sustaining wages, but also benefits and a voice on the job, such as that provided by a union. Examples of meaningful commitment for EDWC should emphasize the creation of good jobs. We believe that these goals are equally applicable to large and small projects, as some of the latter are likely to be quite substantial in size and construction timelines. For example, a 44 acre solar array currently planned by MassPort at the Worcester Airport would be one of the largest solar projects in Massachusetts to date, but still be considered a “small project” under the new siting and permitting regulations because it is a 20 MW project.¹

To ensure integration of good jobs measures, we recommend that OEJE:

- Add the example commitment “**Commit to a Project Labor Agreement that includes pathways for local and diverse hiring.**”
 - To quote from Governor Healey’s recent Executive Order 641, *Using Project Labor Agreements to Promote Successful Delivery of Major Projects*, PLAs support the creation of “high quality jobs and careers with competitive and sustaining wages and benefits, and... increase opportunities for access to those jobs for all.” Including a commitment to PLAs strengthens a CBP or CBA, by bringing on PLAs’ proven ability to :
 - Open pathways to good careers for women, people of color, and low-income residents through apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs, targeted hiring on projects, and outreach to historically underrepresented groups in construction.

¹ <https://www.massport.com/media/newsroom/massport-build-one-largest-solar-fields-ma>

- Strengthen proven “earn while you learn” registered apprenticeship training programs by setting apprenticeship utilization requirements on projects and funding pre-apprenticeship programs.
 - Protect all workers on a project by setting safety standards and protecting workers from wage theft, misclassification, and discrimination.
- Add the example commitment “**Commit to Labor Peace Agreements for Operations.**”
 - Labor peace agreements allow for a free and fair organizing process for employees if they choose to form or join a union and ensure smooth workplace operations after a project is constructed.
- Modify the training-related example (currently “Fund workforce training centers or pre-apprenticeship programs...”) to read: “**Support pathways to registered apprenticeship and fund pre-apprenticeship programs with proven outcomes.**” Pre-apprenticeship programs and registered apprenticeships are essential to creating equitable pathways to good careers. However, not all training is equal.
 - Communities and developers should be given guidance attentive to training quality. Too many programs follow the “train and pray” model of workforce development — where workers are given limited training but no clear path to employment, leaving them praying to find a good job. In contrast, the “earn while you learn” apprenticeship opportunities already offered in the building trades pay workers as they are trained and lead to lasting careers with middle class incomes and fair benefits.
 - Highlighting registered apprenticeship programs is consistent with the 2024 Climate Act’s stated intent to bolster registered apprenticeships (Chapter 239, Section 23(o) and Section 98 (c)).
- Add additional examples of meaningful commitments to address needs fundamental to economic prosperity:
 - **Provide childcare support to local community members.**
 - Childcare is a key economic and workforce development support, especially for women. Without accessible, trusted childcare, parents are unable to join the workforce, with negative impacts on the stability and well-being of their families.
 - **Provide transportation support or funding to local community members.**
 - Like childcare, access to public transit is a prerequisite for many community members to find and commute to a job. Even with the increased availability of fare-free riding at the state’s Regional Transit Authorities and reduced fares at the MBTA, residents may struggle to afford transit fares. Construction sites may also require workers to commute to and from work during times when the MBTA is not in service.
 - **Create pathways to good jobs for formerly-incarcerated and/or justice-involved local community members.**
 - Incarceration and court involvement disproportionately affects Black and Latine residents of Massachusetts. In communities with a large portion of

Black and Latine residents, hiring discrimination against people with a history of court involvement or incarceration can trap individuals, families and communities in poverty.

- CBPs and CBAs could include commitments to hire without Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) checks to provide pathways for justice-affected people.

In closing, we thank you for your attention to our comments on these guidelines. We appreciate your ongoing diligent work to advance clean energy infrastructure and environmental justice, to build a thriving economy in the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,



Community Labor United
Alternatives for Community & Environment
Boston Climate Action Network
Chinese Progressive Association
Clean Water Action
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 103
New England Community Project
The Northeast Regional Council of SMART