

THE OFFICE OF  
**GOVERNOR MAURA T. HEALEY**  

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**LT. GOVERNOR KIMBERLEY DRISCOLL**

**Massachusetts Governor Maura T. Healey**  
**“Governing in the Time of Climate Disruption: A Blueprint for Transformative  
Change”**

**Vatican Summit: Climate Crisis to Climate Resilience, May 15, 2024**

Thank you. It is an honor to address this Summit in its opening session, and I’d like to thank our chairs and the Pontifical Academy. It is a pleasure to follow a member of the Academy who is a leader in higher education for our state and nation, UMass Boston Chancellor Suarez-Orozco.

I am especially grateful to His Holiness, Pope Francis, for bringing us together and for his unwavering global leadership on climate change. At COP28 in December, he spoke of the need for a “breakthrough that is not a partial change of course, but rather a new way of making progress together.”

In keeping with that charge, today I will focus on a “new way of making progress” in government, that I have come to believe is necessary if we are to meet this moment.

To give you an idea of my perspective, as a governor. Last year in Massachusetts, many of our communities were struck by flooding – at a scale and frequency no one could remember seeing before. After one series of severe rainstorms, rivers burst their banks and drainage systems were overwhelmed. As a result, hundreds of farms were damaged. Many lost their entire season’s crops, just before harvest time.

I will never forget wading through fields, knee-deep in muddy water, with farmers whose hard work and investment were destroyed. Their communities suffered as well; some of these farms supply food pantries that help our most vulnerable residents.

We rallied the state to raise relief and keep our farmers going – and we also paid attention to what these events were telling us. I don’t need to cite the Book of Genesis to say that a flood can send a message. It’s another piece of evidence that we are losing our stable climate.

Weather events are more severe, frequent, and damaging than before. Sea levels are rising more quickly along our coasts. We have 1,500 miles of shoreline in Massachusetts. Our infrastructure is aging, and much of it was not designed to withstand these conditions in the first place. Lives and livelihoods, homes and businesses, are at risk.

The same is true across the world. Floods, droughts, hurricanes, heat waves, wildfires – the Earth is sending us warnings and signs, every day, across our planet. Climate change is no longer a future concern. It is here and it is hurting all of us.

As elected leaders, our response can no longer be seen as a question of ideology, or the work of a single agency focused on the environment. Climate action falls squarely within the fundamental responsibilities of government: to protect public safety and prevent future harm; to safeguard public resources and ensure stability in our economies.

So getting to net zero by 2050 is not just our legislative mandate in Massachusetts. It's a social and economic imperative that informs everything we do.

But, like our aging physical infrastructure, many of our government systems were not designed to meet the scale and urgency of this challenge.

We need to change the way we work. We have to be nimbler and more innovative than ever before, to adapt to urgent new realities. We need to be more evidence-based than ever before, to inform all our policies with climate science. We have to be more collaborative than ever before, to work across every function of government and every sector of the economy. We need to align all our efforts around our climate goals.

In short, we need a new way of governing to meet this challenge. And in Massachusetts, we've developed a blueprint.

On my first day in office, my first executive order created the Office of Climate Innovation and Resilience; and the position of Climate Chief. This is the first cabinet-level Climate Chief in the United States. I appointed Melissa Hoffer, the former acting general counsel and principal deputy general counsel of the U.S. EPA. Chief Hoffer is here with us today.

The Climate Chief is my principal policy advisor on matters related to climate. At the same time, she is tasked with breaking down silos and driving coordinated climate action across all of state government. My cabinet now convenes regularly as a Climate Cabinet, guided by the Chief, to knit our Administration together around this whole-of-government approach. Each Executive Office has appointed a climate officer to manage alignment and implementation.

Our energy and environmental agencies continue to advance groundbreaking policies. But, for the first time: climate action is now our agenda across every agency of government.

In housing, we are prioritizing the decarbonization of the building sector – which in urban areas drives up to 70% of emissions. In transportation, we are investing in public transit and electric vehicle infrastructure. In education, we are funding energy efficient school buildings and climate career pathways for students. In health care, we are working to identify and mitigate the harms of extreme heat and air pollution. In emergency

management, we are focused on readiness and resiliency in the face of more frequent extreme weather events.

Across all these areas and many more, we are prioritizing environmental justice – to put first those who have been harmed most. We are engaging businesses, labor unions, philanthropists, community groups, and young people in all of our work. We've got everyone thinking about resilience and working together to meet our climate goals.

This new approach is getting new results. For example: Last year we created the Massachusetts Community Climate Bank. It's the first green bank in the United States dedicated to decarbonizing affordable housing.

We also developed a planning tool to ensure that our capital investments are consistent with our plan for achieving net zero by 2050. A big part of what government needs to do is align our public spending with our climate goals.

At the same time, we need to put climate action at the center of our vision for the whole economy. President Biden has led the way with the largest clean energy investment in America's history. And in Massachusetts, we are deploying our unique talent for innovation to help solve the climate crisis.

Our economic development legislation calls for a \$1.3 billion-dollar investment in technologies that accelerate the energy transition, decarbonize the economy, and increase resilience. Already, we are home to one of world's leading ClimateTech ecosystems – with research, startups, and venture capital all connected. We have companies commercializing technology, developed in our universities, to decarbonize steel, cement, battery production, hydrogen fuel, and more. These will be the innovations that green the global economy – and return our investments today many times over.

We've done this before in Massachusetts. We invested in medical science and became the world's leading producer of life-saving cures and vaccines. Now, we want to be the global innovation lab for the clean energy revolution.

To do that, though, we're going to need a lot of well-trained and well-paid workers. Because the heroes of this revolution will be the electricians, train operators, heat pump installers, wind turbine technicians, and much more.

We need people who are skilled and ready to do these jobs. And we need to bring these opportunities to those who need them most. That means adapting our education and training systems, along with our economy.

Already, we have been working with schools, colleges, unions, and employers to create new pathways into climate careers. Today I can share a new step forward in this work.

I am announcing the Massachusetts Climate Careers Fund. This is a first-of-its-kind social impact fund to support workforce training in climate technologies. The Fund will leverage

philanthropic, public, and private-sector resources to accelerate the work we are doing to grow a diverse, skilled climate workforce.

It will provide low-cost loans to support high-quality training, including needs like childcare and transportation. That will enable more women, workers of color, and low-income residents to participate in the clean energy economy. It's a recycling fund, where workers and employers pay back the loans into the fund to help more people and fill more jobs.

The Massachusetts Climate Careers Fund is led by Social Finance, the innovator of social impact investment, in collaboration with agencies across our government. Co-founder and CEO Tracy Palandjian is here this week and we're grateful for her partnership.

In Massachusetts, we cherish our history of mission-driven innovation. We are America's state of firsts. The first public school, library, park, and subway system were built in Massachusetts. We pioneered the computer, cancer treatment, and COVID vaccines.

Now, America's first utility-scale offshore wind farm is operating off our coast, powering thousands of homes and businesses. America's first green bank for affordable housing is making environmental justice a reality in our communities. And, the first social impact fund for climate careers is set to create a growing supply of talent for a just and equitable energy transition.

These are the innovations unlocked so far by our blueprint for a new approach to government in the era of climate change. We are eager to see them built on, across America and the world.

We know there is much more we can, and must, do. Governing in this time of climate disruption requires us to be serious about transforming how we work. It takes a willingness to listen, adapt, change, and grow. It takes a commitment to break through the barriers that divide our work and truly collaborate – across government, academia, industry, and philanthropy.

This openness to new ways of doing things is at the core of our state's culture and climate strategy. It's something I encourage every leader to embrace and communicate. I'm grateful for the opportunities to foster collaboration at this Summit.

There is a long way to go, and change is never easy. But it's our obligation to those we serve and represent: To create a better world – a more just, equitable world that provides opportunity for all – and healing for our planet and our communities. Let's keep that vision before us, as we do this work; and let's make it our legacy.

Thank you.

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