

September 16, 2015

My name is Irvine Sobelman. I live in Northampton, MA.

I am a member of the steering committee of Climate Action Now, a local all-volunteer, grassroots group in Western Massachusetts dedicated to education, organizing and action as part of the global movement for climate justice, working in coalition with others in the valley, the state, the region and the country.

I have given testimony at several hearings in the past few months, opposing the Northeast Energy Direct Pipeline project.

At the FERC Scoping Hearing in Greenfield, I specifically focused my comments on Environmental Justice. I referenced Governor Patrick's Executive Order and the EJ information on the state website.

In thinking about this listening session, I realized that in the same way that it was important to bring up Environmental Justice at a hearing on fossil fuel infrastructure, I needed to bring up the build-out of fossil fuel infrastructure in our state at this hearing on Environmental Justice policy.

Because, as we all know, our EJ communities are the most vulnerable when climate-related disruptions occur, and the least able to adapt and bounce back after major storms and floods and heat waves and other climate-related catastrophes.

To quote President Obama,

*Our understanding of climate change advances each day. Human activity is disrupting the climate, in many ways faster than we previously thought. The science is stark. It is sharpening. It proves that this once-distant threat is now very much in the present.*

And he goes on to warn,

*...[I]f we stop trying to build a clean-energy economy and reduce carbon pollution, if we do nothing to keep the glaciers from melting faster, and oceans from rising faster, and forests from burning faster, and storms from growing stronger, we will condemn our children to a planet beyond their capacity to repair.*

Our leading scientists tell us that we must leave 80% of currently known reserves of fossil fuels in the ground in order to avoid catastrophic levels of climate disruption. So, what does that mean for us?

We need to be aggressively phasing out our dependence on fossil fuels, not building more pipelines that will lock us into years and possibly decades of increased greenhouse gas emissions.

So, I call on you to be sure that the references in this EJ policy to climate change and renewables and energy efficiency are not just pro forma words, but that you take seriously your mandate to protect our EJ communities and work explicitly to advance a sustainable and equitable energy policy in our state, at all the agencies within the purview of the EEA Secretariat.

Thank you.