

CLIMATE EMERGENCY DECLARATION AND POLICY

WHEREAS, on August 21, 2018, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts enacted An Act Promoting Climate Change Adaptation, Environmental and Natural Resource Protection and Investment in Recreational Assets and Opportunity (H. 4835);

WHEREAS, the stated purpose of that Act is “provide for a program of climate change adaptation and the preservation and improvement of the environmental and energy assets of the commonwealth;”

WHEREAS, the stated purpose of that Act is not being met, and the commonwealth has not provided an effective program of climate change adaptation or the preservation and improvement of the environmental and energy assets of the commonwealth;

This bill would declare that it is the policy of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to restore an optimal safe climate and to provide maximum protection from climate change to all people and species, globally, including the most vulnerable. The bill would state the intent of the Legislature that the commonwealth, in furtherance of that policy, undertake various immediate and large-scale efforts, including conversion of the economy to zero greenhouse gas emissions by no later than 2025, with an immediate phaseout of fossil fuels. The bill would make related legislative findings and declarations.

Climate Emergency Declaration and Policy

I. The Legislature finds and declares the following:

(a) A climate emergency exists that threatens the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the nation, humanity, and the natural world.

(b) Irrevocable damage to the environment has been caused by global warming of approximately 1 degree celsius demonstrating that the Earth is already too hot for safety and justice, as attested by increased and intensifying winter storms, heatwaves, floods, rising seas, diseases, droughts, wildfires, hurricanes, and extreme weather.

(c) Climate change and the global economy’s expansion beyond ecological limits are driving the sixth mass extinction of species, causing a 60 percent decline in global wildlife populations since 1970.

(d) The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change and has already been subjected to devastating disasters caused by global warming, including increasingly severe Nor’easters, blizzards, droughts, heatwaves, and coastal and inland flooding.

(e) Marginalized populations in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and worldwide, including people of color, immigrants, indigenous communities, low-income

individuals, and people with disabilities, are already disproportionately affected by climate change, and will continue to bear an excess burden as temperatures increase.

(f) The United States has disproportionately contributed to these climate and ecological crises through its historic use of carbon-producing fossil fuels.

(g) Restoring a safe and stable climate and reversing biodiversity loss requires an emergency “Climate Mobilization” on a scale not seen since World War II to attain zero greenhouse gas emissions across all sectors at wartime speed, to rapidly and safely draw down or remove all excess carbon from the atmosphere, and to implement measures to protect all people and species from the consequences of abrupt climate change and ecological destruction.

(h) Building a society that is resilient to the current, expected, and potential effects of climate change will protect health, lives, environments, and economies. Resilience is best achieved by preparing for the most dramatic potential consequences of climate change.

(i) Justice demands climate policy that addresses the specific experiences, vulnerabilities, and needs of the marginalized communities most affected by the effects of climate change, and includes those communities in climate and ecological resilience planning, policy, and actions.

II. It is hereby declared to be the policy of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to restore an optimal safe climate and to provide maximum protection from climate change to all people and species, globally, including the most vulnerable.

(a) It is the intent of the Legislature that the state do all of the following in furtherance of that policy:

(1) Convert the economy to zero greenhouse gas emissions as quickly as possible, but no later than 2025, which requires an immediate phaseout of fossil fuels.

(2) Immediately initiate a multigenerational effort to draw down the greenhouse gases already in the atmosphere in as short a time as possible, and develop research in support of this goal.

(3) Immediately initiate a massive effort to restore ecosystems.

(4) Respond to the climate emergency based on a just transition framework that focuses on equity, self-determination, culture, tradition, deep democracy, and the fundamental human right of all people in the world to clean, healthy, and adequate air, water, land, food, education, and shelter.

(5) Engage the public in climate-emergency-related deliberations on a massive scale, so that millions of citizens influence, and can see their influence on, the policy and

resource decisions that impact their daily lives and their future, by convoking a Citizens' Assembly.

6) Encourage nongovernment actors to contribute to the development and implementation of solutions.

(7) Catalyze and organize an emergency mobilization to restore a safe climate in other states and at the federal and global level.