

## **Comments on the Draft Energy Master Plan**

My name is Jo Sippie-Gora. Over a hundred years ago, my parents emigrated to NJ from an impoverished part of Italy. I feel deeply privileged to have been born in a land of opportunity, a resource-rich nation where exponential technological growth and physical expansion have produced an enviable global economy. But our economy grew at a steep price. Little attention was paid to the connection between our use of natural resources and the well-being of the planet that sustains us. We cannot ignore it anymore.

After years of the previous administration's lukewarm support for addressing our climate change crisis, I felt relieved when Gov. Murphy signed the Clean Energy Act, which kicked off the Plan we are discussing today. Thank you for providing the public opportunities to comment upon the Plan, which I generally support. However, it falls short in several ways. The EMP lacks the sense of urgency required to avoid the irreversible climate catastrophe predicted if we don't act quickly. The Plan does not place a moratorium on fossil-fuel projects and allows the proposed natural gas projects to continue. This is akin to running water into an already full bathtub. Also, the plan redefines Clean Energy as Carbon Neutral, which means carbon may still be released after the 2050 target date. In addition, the draft plan provides an escape clause for nuclear generation, which presents real risk and produces radioactive waste that still lacks a safe method of disposal. Finally, Low-income communities and communities of color, which have not shared equally in the benefits of past programs, would continue to be burdened.

Our culture is based on consumption, and our economic policies are driven by it. We need to address this fact in the energy master plan. I am deeply, and morally, convinced that this state must face the scientific data head-on. We know that New Jersey, especially our shore communities, face future catastrophic losses unless greenhouse gases are reduced rapidly. Even those who live in the more suburban and rural areas of the state – like myself - will suffer from shortages of food, energy, medicine, transportation failures, and more.

A very important part of the Plan is its sixth strategy, which calls for supporting community energy planning and action in Environmental Justice communities, but it has a hitch: your BPU grant program for community energy planning views proposals more highly if they come from communities with prior success in clean energy projects. This requirement will exclude most environmental justice communities. Clean energy must not be a luxury of the well-heeled. It must be economically accessible to everyone. At present, there are incentives for homeowners who are installing solar panels and purchasing new cars to buy EVs. These are not the kinds of purchases that environmental justice households can consider. Environmental Justice consumers must have viable options they can use to participate in clean energy. Also, you should exempt Environmental Justice communities from “Societal Benefits Charges” or subsidize them. Provide more grants to these communities to upgrade the lighting on their recreation fields and parks, promote the use of LED bulbs with give-away programs and especially, upgrade their bus systems to include jitneys for a smaller number of riders.

As a Humanist, I believe that humanity must take responsibility for its own destiny. As a Unitarian Universalist, I practice the seven basic Principles of our faith, which include respect for this interdependent web of all existence of which we are all a part, and to call for justice, equity and compassion in all our relations. I am here today as one of the representatives of the Environmental Justice Task Force of Unitarian Universalist Faith Action of NJ.

Through our Environmental Justice Task Force, we at Unitarian Universalist FaithAction NJ intend to work hard with our coalition partners Jersey Renews, Empower New Jersey, and Greenfaith in the effort to make the Governor's draft Energy Master Plan not only workable, visionary and impactful--but equitable and just too.

Thank you.

Jo Sippie-Gora

4 Dogwood Trl

Kinnelon, NJ 07405

[josippie@gmail.com](mailto:josippie@gmail.com)