***Just Transition and Green Workforce Development Statement from the South End Community Collaborative***

The Climate Action Council’s Draft Scoping Plan outlines a robust strategy in which to meet the strong climate mandates of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA). The South End Community Collaborative, which has been working on our own green workforce strategy for nearly one year, submits that the New York State plan must provide additional resources to support worker success in marginalized communities.

The Climate Action Council has placed a critical emphasis on the CLCPA’s core equity component—that a minimum of 35% of all clean energy investment go towards “Disadvantaged Communities,” defined by the CLCPA as “communities that bear burdens of negative public health effects, environmental pollution, impacts of climate change, and possess certain socioeconomic criteria, or comprise high-concentrations of low- and moderate-income households.” The Draft Scoping Plan has taken many of the recommendations of the CLCPA-mandated Climate Justice Working Group into consideration, including recommendations on how to facilitate a Just Transition to a low-carbon, inclusive economy in New York State.

The South End Community Collaborative (SECC), which represents a diverse, cross-sectional population of community members in Albany’s South End, is already in the process of developing and implementing a plan to connect low-income Albany residents with the emerging green workforce sector and encourages the Climate Action Council to direct additional resources to ensure the success of this and similar efforts.

To that end, we endorse the EarthJustice statement on Just Transition, and in particular draw your attention to Section D: *The Final Scoping Plan Should Outline Discrete Strategies the State will Pursue to Support Workforce Development*. As one model for this we offer the Workforce Development Position Paper developed by an SECC committee in February, 2022, and currently being implemented with one Albany project.

As the Climate Action Council and New York State continues to develop a working understand about what substantive clean energy investment in Disadvantaged Communities should look like, one key area of investment the SECC would like to emphasize is green workforce development, and investment in living wage careers that can grow and sustain a green economy and build generational wealth in these neighborhoods. According to the Just Transition working group, New York’s green workforce is expected to grow by 38%, or 189,000 net jobs, by 2030 and 54%, or 268,000 net jobs, by 2050. It is critical that a large percentage of these jobs be situated and nurtured in Disadvantage Communities.

Creating green energy workforce development hubs in these neighborhoods is not without its challenges, several of which are acknowledged in the scoping plan. Workforce development agencies are often hesitant to train workers for careers that don’t yet exist or are in a fledgling stage, so to truly grow a green workforce will take an active effort at parallel growth of a green economy that is supported by federal, state, and local government, higher education, as well industry, corporations, contractors, and not-for-profit partners. In addition, workforce development in disadvantaged communities requires particular care and emphasis around the “Wraparound Services” for workforce training, including transportation, childcare, mental health, and other support services.

The South End Community Collaborative’s Workforce Committee has created the following position paper on Wraparound Services: <https://avillageinc.box.com/s/iu4secee3x668xxe7ydjmcx07wbz62ju>

On its surface, Albany’s South End fits firmly in the CLCPA’s definition of a Disadvantaged Community as for decades it has borne the brunt of hazardous pollutants and disinvestment—these environmental hazards have a compound effect on the community in the form of critical public health threats, capital loss, and social stresses. The neighborhood has seen an urban highway built through its core, a Port and train yard that has historically dumped harmful pollutants into its residential areas, and a systemic pattern of disinvestment by multiple levels of governance.

However, when advancing this categorization of “Disadvantaged Community,” it is also important to acknowledge where each community or neighborhood stands in their community planning, and not assume that they are all starting at the same beginning point. In Albany’s South End, for instance, the SECC has already been engaged with months of planning to realize the opportunities presented by the Port of Albany’s offshore wind turbine manufacturing facility, which is adjacent to the South End. A historically contentious relationship between Port and community has been recently transformed into a productive one of cooperation and collaboration as the SECC works to leverage local workforce opportunities offered by the offshore wind turbine facility.

SECC’s green workforce planning includes key representatives from the neighborhood, the not-for-profit sector, organized labor, the City of Albany and the Capital Region’s Workforce Investment Board. Working together through a committee formed by the SECC, this group has drafted a foundation document outlining a strategy of “Wraparound Services” with specific roles for government and the not-for-profits; has started work on an outreach campaign utilizing the capabilities of those and other not-for-profits; and is already working with new local employers to place individuals in emerging jobs. In addition, this group is working with the Capital Region Building Trades Council to support the council’s new MAPP program in Albany with an offer to provide services on an as-needed basis to insure that the individuals in its pre-apprenticeship training programs can maintain a pathway to success.

The SECC’s plans and progress are still taking place within the contextual challenges of the South End, which has a history of disinvestment and socio-economic hurdles. But the SECC’s work thus far represents an important level of collaboration and cohesive visioning that must be acknowledged and embraced by state entities if we are to take this green energy investment to the next level. It is our belief that all the ingredients are in place—a new offshore wind facility, a network of workforce professionals and community organizations, a series of business and higher education partners eager to supply training and work—to make Albany’s South End a model for green workforce development as a critical tool for local Just Transition.

The above statement has been published for review by the South End Community Collaborative and is endorsed by the following organizations and individuals:

* Harris Oberlander, CEO Trinity Alliance
* AVillage…, Inc.
* Crickett Thomas-O’Dell, former South End resident
* Laura Travison, South End resident and Executive Director South End Improvement Corp.
* Tom McPheeters, moderator South End Community Collaborative
* Bill Ritchie, South End resident