

Honorable Tyisha Walker-Myers  
President, New Haven Board of Alders

Dear President Walker Myers

We would like to respectfully submit to the Board of Alders the attached Resolution committing the City of New Haven to a leadership role in electrifying its buildings and vehicle fleet. In 2019, our City declared that the existential threat of climate change merits urgent action. Since then, the COVID-19 pandemic has devastated communities of color, highlighting how health and environmental injustices put our most vulnerable community members most at risk. This is particularly true of issues of respiratory health, like asthma, which afflict New Haven residents at the 11<sup>th</sup> highest rate in the nation.

Electrification of buildings and vehicles directly addresses the air pollution that causes climate change, respiratory illnesses such as asthma, cancer, and heart disease. Fully electrified buildings will also result in safer living conditions as residents are less exposed to carbon monoxide leaks and fires.

There are also considerable economic advantages to electrification and locally-sourced renewable energy: each year Connecticut spends \$5 billion on fossil fuels that could be redirected into local green jobs and businesses. For the City's budget, electrification will increase the grand list by spurring investments in our electric grid from our largest personal property taxpayer, United Illuminating.

Through continual evaluation of our systems and strategic investments, New Haven can play a leading role in electrifying our buildings and vehicle fleet. These investments can show residents and neighboring municipalities what is possible, while reducing operational costs and harmful pollution.

Therefore we ask that the New Haven Board of Alders please approve the attached New Haven Community Electrification Resolution.

Thank you for your consideration of this resolution on an issue at the intersection of public and environmental health, one that affects all City residents and particularly our most vulnerable,

Sincerely,

## **New Haven Community Electrification Resolution**

**Whereas** in 2019 New Haven declared that we face an existential climate emergency that threatens our city, region, state, nation, human civilization, and the natural world; and

**Whereas** the New Haven Board of Alders officially committed to leading an emergency mobilization effort that would work to end community-wide greenhouse gas emissions by or before December 31, 2030, and immediately initiate an effort to safely draw down carbon from the atmosphere; and

**Whereas** New Haven must take additional measures to decarbonize, transitioning from fossil fuel-powered buildings and transportation vehicles to electric-powered ones; and

**Whereas** the COVID 19 crisis has highlighted the vulnerability of front-line communities to social, political, and environmental systems that harm respiratory health; and

**Whereas** New Haven is ranked 11th of 100 US metropolitan cities that are most challenging to live with asthma by Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America in large part because of the burning of fossil fuels; and

**Whereas** electrification will improve air quality as all-electric buildings will improve indoor air quality and overall health, by eliminating natural gas combustion inside homes that produces harmful indoor air pollution; and

**Whereas** all-electric transportation vehicles improve outdoor air quality, particularly for residents in urban neighborhoods and for those living near major roads; and

**Whereas** life expectancy in New Haven is lower than surrounding towns, due in part to poor air quality, which causes respiratory diseases, heart disease and cancer; and

**Whereas** electrification is widely recognized as a powerful strategy to both combat climate change and address poor air quality in the front-line communities most harmed by climate change; and

**Whereas**, as a coastal city, New Haven is particularly vulnerable to the devastating consequences of climate change, including more intense storms, flooding and sea-level rise; and

**Whereas** electrification will reduce noise pollution as electric vehicles produce far less noise than gas-powered vehicles, and noise pollution has been shown to have detrimental effects on human health; and

**Whereas** Avangrid is a global provider of electricity with a stated goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2035; and

**Whereas** its subsidiary United Illuminating is the largest personal property taxpayer in the City and increasing electrification will lead to grid improvements that will increase the grand list; and

**Whereas** every new building relying on fossil fuel for its heating and cooling will have a negative impact on the climate for decades to come and require additional investments to be retrofitted to electric systems as the climate emergency worsens; and

**Whereas** 50% of electricity in Connecticut comes from nuclear power and other clean sources and the State has committed to 100% clean electric grid by 2040, electrification will increasingly reduce the carbon footprint of the City of New Haven; and

**Whereas** electrified buildings provide safer living conditions in that it leads to lower risk of building fires or carbon monoxide leaks; and

**Whereas** electrification will potentially reduce construction and maintenance costs as all-electric new buildings do not require the installation of gas infrastructure, saves space within buildings, and reduces upkeep costs; and

**Whereas** electrification will increase social equity as all-electric new construction can reduce housing costs as disadvantaged populations spend a disproportionate amount of their income on energy and are more likely to suffer from asthma due to poor air quality; and

**Whereas**, unlike fossil fuel whose price is highly connected to uncontrollable natural resources and political issues, electricity has a variety of production which guarantees its steady price; and

**Whereas** an electric future means New Haven and Connecticut can move towards building a local clean energy industry that will supply all our energy needs, redirecting the \$5 billion Connecticut spends on fossil fuels each year into to local businesses; and

**Whereas** we learned from the lesson of COVID-19 that we should prepare ourselves from potential crises and risks before damage has already begun; and

**Whereas** more and more cities have started their implementation of new policies and ordinances for cleaner cities, New Haven, as a city with history of making great innovative policies, should take actions as well; and

**Whereas** it is clear that the energy system of the future is 100% electric and that the vast transition to electric systems will greatly increase energy efficiency, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve public health and increase the quality of life throughout the city; and

**Whereas** the City of New Haven recognizes the broad benefits of accelerating the transition to electric buildings and transportation throughout the City.

**Now Therefore Be It Further Resolved**, that the City and Board of Alders commit to working with the State of Connecticut and relevant agencies to encourage a sustainable electric generation portfolio; and

**Be It Further Resolved**, that the City of New Haven commits to electrifying its own building and transportation systems by December 31, 2030; and

**Be It Further Resolved**, that the Chief Administrative Officer reports back to the Board of Alders in six months with an analysis of how many City vehicles can be feasibly replaced with electric vehicles over the next two capital planning cycles, including an estimate of the lifetime savings from electrifying light duty and refuse vehicles; and

**Be It Further Resolved**, that the City Engineer shall develop a schedule for the replacement of all existing heating systems, shall evaluate fully electrifying all new construction and all existing heating systems, and shall report the results of these evaluations back annually to Board of Alders; and

**Be It Further Resolved**, that the City in consultation with the Board of Education shall work to develop plans to electrify school transportation and school facilities as soon as practically possible; and

**Be It Further Resolved,** that the City Plan Department will work to update policy, including zoning, to incentivize new construction to shift all-electric construction to the greatest degree possible and will require developers to calculate carbon emissions during the plan review process; and

**Be It Further Resolved,** that the Livable City Initiative and the Building Department will work with United Illuminating, the Green Bank and other partners to educate building owners of various building electrification incentives and resources; and

**Be It Further Resolved,** that the Board of Alders encourages the City's state delegation to prioritize passing policies that require and incentivize electrification statewide; and

**Be It Further Resolved** that the Economic Development Department report back to the Board of Alders in six months with a plan for how to use the coming electrification, energy efficiency and clean energy transition to create local jobs and grow locally owned businesses, giving special priority to historically marginalized communities.