



June 22, 2022

The Honorable Michael J. Barrett  
The Honorable Jeffrey N. Roy  
The Honorable Cynthia Stone Creem  
The Honorable Tackey Chan  
The Honorable Bruce E. Tarr  
The Honorable Bradley H. Jones, Jr.  
State House  
Boston, MA 02133

*(Delivered Electronically)*

Dear Distinguished Members of the Conference Committee,

On behalf of the 351 cities and towns across Massachusetts, we are writing to express our deep appreciation for the many provisions in the climate and energy bills approved by the House (H. 4524) and the Senate (S. 2842) that would greatly improve both the energy sector and the environment in the Commonwealth. Both bills emphasize the important roles of state, municipal, and industry partners in working together to address climate change. The Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA) appreciates the opportunity to discuss municipal priorities related to the two bills as the conference committee works to finalize climate change legislation this session.

#### **H. 4524, An Act advancing offshore wind and clean energy**

The House's offshore wind bill, H. 4524, provides numerous pathways to strengthen the state's energy sector with a focus on sustainable, resilient innovation and infrastructure. In the Commonwealth, offshore wind provides so much potential - for clean and renewable energy, new jobs, and industry investment - as well as an opportunity to be a leading state on energy policy. With robust opportunities for offshore wind development off the coast of Massachusetts, the MMA applauds the House's provisions to create increased opportunity and provide incentives for offshore wind development throughout the legislation.

The MMA additionally supports the bill's investments to further develop high-skilled, high-demand workforce opportunities, especially in the energy efficiency, clean energy, and clean heating and cooling industries. The promotion of workforce training, educational development, and professional development in these sectors will be crucial as the state looks towards fulfilling its 2030 and 2050 goals to reduce carbon emissions.

We greatly appreciate the House's leadership in developing this legislation. We hope the conference committee will not underestimate the importance of incentivizing action from both the private sector as well as the state to combat climate change through offshore wind. The strategic partnership to address the state's need for clean energy requires a careful approach that maximizes the benefits of climate action while protecting the interests of municipalities, environmental justice communities, and the environment as a whole.

The language proposed in H. 4524 prioritizes urgent offshore wind development, which is critically-needed for coastal and inland residents alike; its incorporation in the final version of the bill will only assist in addressing climate change and building energy resilience in Massachusetts.

### **S. 2842, An Act driving climate policy forward**

Just as the inclusion of offshore wind provisions in H. 4524 will make significant strides to address climate change, the Senate's counterpart, S. 2842, will tackle this shared goal by reducing emissions through electric vehicles and clean energy while also promoting local options to address climate challenges.

In particular, the MMA strongly supports Section 65 of S. 2842, which would establish a demonstration program to allow select municipalities to adopt restrictions or bans on fossil fuel use in new building construction or major renovation projects. As the [MMA stated back in April](#), this pilot program is an innovative and appropriate response to municipalities that have asked repeatedly for options to cut down fossil fuel use.

The Department of Energy Resources plays a major role in assisting municipalities in their efforts to reduce carbon emissions and support greener technologies to mitigate climate change. Allowing the Department to collect data on best practices, monitor emissions impacts, and evaluate cost implications of cities and towns participating in the demonstration program will help future solutions and similar actions be more effective and successful. This is a necessary step to support the integral role of local governments in meeting the state's climate goals.

We are also happy to support measures of S. 2842 that promote the shift to electric vehicles as well as build an inventory of data on vehicles and driving habits to assist in the planning and implementation of more sustainable public transportation options. This bill contains a great opportunity for the Massachusetts Department of Transportation to collect vehicle data that can support future policy action and funding of electrification projects. The decarbonization of transportation will be an integral component in reducing existing carbon production, especially as the sector accounts for 42% of the Commonwealth's greenhouse gas emissions, per the [2020 Transportation Sector Report](#).

In line with our testimony this spring, the MMA continues to have concerns about Sections 35 and 36 of S. 2842 regarding solar zoning. These changes to Chapter 61A would extend property tax benefits beyond the original intention of incentivizing agricultural production by

allowing solar arrays of unlimited size on farm or horticultural land to qualify for those benefits. Converting land that is exclusively agricultural into dual use could leave municipalities without the ability to tax the full value of these significant income generators. While we will continue to support each community's ability to pursue solar while protecting natural and working lands, we do not see Sections 35 and 36 as the proper vehicle to do so. Further, many communities that have adopted solar zoning are concerned that these sections could preempt their municipal authority to protect forested lands and address other environmental concerns. We respectfully request that you hold these sections in conference and not include them in the final legislation.

### **SUMMARY**

The Massachusetts Municipal Association is pleased to support this conference committee and its efforts in reconciling H. 4524 and S. 2842. Our members are committed to assisting the Commonwealth in meeting its goals to reduce fossil fuel use, prioritize clean energy, and incentivize municipal and individual actions to reduce climate change. With your collective leadership, the Massachusetts Municipal Association is confident that the final legislation will prove to be a balanced approach to address climate change through meaningful, deliberate action.

We greatly appreciate your attention to these bills and the many important issues that must be addressed through bold climate strategies. If you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to have your office contact me, MMA Legislative Director Dave Koffman, or MMA Legislative Analyst Josie Ahlberg at 617-426-7272, ext. 161, or [ahlberg@mma.org](mailto:ahlberg@mma.org) at any time.

Sincerely,



Geoffrey C. Beckwith  
Executive Director & CEO