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U.S. Department of Energy  
Offices of EERE, Electricity, Policy, Fossil Energy and Carbon  
Management, and Economic Impact and Diversity  
Communities LEAP Pilot  
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SUBJECT: Comments from the Greater Bridgeport Community Enterprises, Operation Fuel, and Connecticut Green Bank – Communities LEAP Pilot

To Whom it May Concern:

The Greater Bridgeport Community Enterprises (“GBCE”), Operation Fuel, and the Connecticut Green Bank (“Green Bank”) (i.e., together the “Respondents”), appreciate the U.S. Department of Energy’s (“DOE”) efforts through the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (“EERE”), Electricity, Policy, Fossil Energy and Carbon Management, and Economic Impact and Diversity for issuing this competitive opportunity – Communities Local Energy Action Plan (“LEAP”) Pilot – which will support 24-36 communities with technical assistance services.

As diverse leaders of organizations serving underserved communities throughout Connecticut, the Respondents support the Justice 40 Initiative by the DOE to ensure that everyone is afforded an opportunity to participate fully in its programs, opportunities, and resources. The following are comments by the Respondents on the Communities LEAP Pilot:

- **Include “Recycling Planning and Investment” Pathway** – the Communities LEAP Pilot identifies seven (7) pathways to clean energy-related economic development with an emphasis on developing energy jobs and workforce skills, as well as promoting minority-owned businesses and small- to mid-size businesses. Consideration should be given to including an additional pathway called “Recycling Planning and Investment” that would seek to support the development of facilities for recycled materials (e.g., solar PV panels, battery storage, Energy Star appliances), support workforce training, and acquire the necessary machinery arising from the successful growth and development of a clean energy economy. The Respondents would be happy to work with the DOE staff to develop a “Recycling Planning and Investment” pathway to be included in Appendix A.
- **Race to All vs. Race to the Top** – the Respondents appreciate the efforts by the DOE to support competitive solicitations for technical assistance through programs such as the Communities LEAP Pilot – such competitive solicitations inspire collaboration and innovation. However, for those communities that are encouraged to register and apply, but are unsuccessful – this can be devastating to expectations and progress made within a community and result in less participation

(e.g., application) in future DOE solicitations. The Respondents would suggest that the DOE consider additional support like:

- **Applicant Technical Assistance** - provide potential applicants with preproposal stage technical assistance directed to preparing community actors for the application process. For example, the DOE could initiate a program that prepares communities and their environmental justice groups to respond to opportunities presented by the Administration.
- **Additional Program Resources** - increasing the budget for technical assistance to support local communities develop their Launch or Accelerate develop their project concepts (i.e. go beyond supporting up to 36 applicants and unlock it to thousands of environmental justice communities). Perhaps state and local governments, and/or philanthropic institutions (e.g., community-based foundations) would be interested in co-funding such an effort alongside the DOE to ensure that the race for environmental justice is for all and not the select few.
- **Participatory Democracy and Unheard Voices** – everyone within the environmental justice community recognizes the challenges of having consistent participation in regulatory, statutory, and other political processes (e.g., planning) in order to effectively advocate for vulnerable communities. The Respondents are unsure as to what the DOE can do to support the foundational needs of community engagement in local democracies, but offer-up the notion that there needs to be steady representation that can advocate on behalf of the community in order to develop and then implement actions to advance the local clean energy economy. Perhaps each state, or DOE-identified environmental justice communities within a state, could be provided access to an experienced consulting firm like 38 North Solutions, APPRISE, Institute for Sustainable Communities who can support the advocacy, facilitation, guidance, and other needs of the community.
- **Eligible Entities: Local, Tribal, or Territorial Government Entity** – making steady progress in environmental justice communities to advance the benefits of the clean energy economy can ebb-and-flow with local politics albeit new leadership, changing staff, or other dynamics. The Respondents would recommend that all levels of formal and informal government be allowed to be considered as part of multi-stakeholder teams, so as to navigate the ever-changing transitions of leadership in government – “Include at least one neighborhood revitalization zone, local, regional, state, tribal, or territorial government entity.”

We stand ready as minority-led organizations from Connecticut to work with the DOE to advance its Justice 40 Initiatives to enable our communities to access the economic and environmental benefits of clean energy.

Sincerely,

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