

February 26, 2018

Dear Governor Baker:

Poet and farmer Wendell Berry wrote, “The care of the Earth is our most ancient and most worthy, and after all, our most pleasing responsibility. To cherish what remains of it and to foster its renewal is our only hope.”

Our religious traditions acknowledge the sacredness of our planet, but many of us worry that its future is bleak. As faith leaders, we feel a spiritual and moral obligation to express in the strongest possible terms our commitment to protecting the web of life. We are committed to building a just and sustainable society in which human beings and our other-than-human kin can survive. We are acutely aware of our moral obligation to the poor, to front-line communities, to our children, and to generations yet unborn. We are fiercely dedicated to preserving a habitable world.

The residents of Massachusetts understand that droughts, storms, heat waves, spreading tropical diseases, and sea-level rise will rapidly intensify unless we take swift, bold action to shift our energy sources away from fossil fuels and toward viable renewable energy technologies. We are also painfully aware that climate change disproportionately harms poor communities and people of color, the very people who have the least power to influence policy decisions.

Several recent studies have made it clear that the Commonwealth does not need new fossil fuel infrastructure to meet its energy needs.¹ Nevertheless, fossil fuel infrastructure projects continue to be built all across Massachusetts. Citizens on the South Shore are imperiled by the proposed Weymouth Compressor Station; in metropolitan Boston, residents of West Roxbury and Dedham have been forced to accept the West Roxbury Lateral Pipeline and Metering & Regulation Station; in western Massachusetts, the Connecticut Expansion Project cut through Otis State Forest in Sandisfield and built out around the Agawam compressor station; on the South Coast, citizens face proposed LNG storage and liquefaction facilities, new pipelines, and compressor stations as part of the Access Northeast pipeline, and now National Grid is installing a pipeline in the Back Bay so that luxury condominiums can have gas fireplaces. The Columbia Gas proposed “Reliability Project” once again adds infrastructure (an upgraded compressor and new pipeline) in Agawam, as well as new and expanded pipelines in Springfield, West Springfield, and Longmeadow. Berkshire Gas has also floated the idea of building either a new pipeline or a massive LNG facility in Franklin County to expand its customer base.

Governor Baker, we call upon you to meet with a small group of concerned faith leaders to discuss the values that lead us to oppose construction of all new fossil fuel infrastructure in the Bay State. We would also like to share with you our vision of how Massachusetts can move quickly to 100% renewable energy in a way that provides jobs and healthier living for all the residents of our Commonwealth. We are likewise eager to hear your thoughts and concerns, your hesitations and hopes as the Commonwealth makes decisions about its energy future.

We request a meeting with you by March 19. Kindly be in touch with the Rev. Dr. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas (margaretbj@aol.com or 413-695-7683) or the Rev. Dr. Ian Mevorach (ian@commonstreet.org or 508-654-7487) at your earliest convenience.

With best regards,

Rabbi Katy Z. Allen, BCC

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The Rev. Dr. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas

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The Rev. Mariama White-Hammond

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Bethel AME Church

For *Exodus from Fossil Fuel: An Interfaith Witness for Climate Action*

ⁱ We direct your attention to the report commissioned by Attorney General Maura Healey (Power System Reliability in New England: Meeting Electric Resource Needs in an Era of Growing Dependence on Natural Gas, November 2015), which clearly demonstrates that we do not need to be taking the extraordinary and costly step of building more natural gas pipelines in order to keep the lights on or to control costs.