



From: Leann Leiter  
Mailing Address: 614 S. 4th St. #307  
Philadelphia, PA  
19147

Email Address: lleiter@keealliance.org  
Organization: Keystone Energy Efficiency Alliance

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**Re: Pennsylvania Democratic Policy Committee Hearing on Whole-Home Repairs:  
Preserving PA’s Homes, Stabilizing Communities, and Reducing Utility Bills**

To Committee Chair Muth and Members of the Democratic Policy Committee:

On behalf of the Keystone Energy Efficiency Alliance, we thank the Pennsylvania Democratic Policy Committee for holding this forum on housing stability and performance, and for the opportunity to comment in support of legislative action on this vital issue.

The Keystone Energy Efficiency Alliance (KEEA) is Pennsylvania’s trade association for the energy efficiency industry. The energy efficiency industry is composed of a diverse range of professions—from contractors and manufacturers to engineers, architects, and software developers—and a local workforce that cannot be outsourced. Our membership, comprising 75 companies, ranges from small local firms to large multinational corporations. While the pandemic and related lockdowns caused enormous job losses, energy efficiency is still the largest energy sector in Pennsylvania, employing more than 65,000 workers.<sup>1</sup> Prior to the pandemic, our industry was also the fastest-growing US energy sector, boasting a growth rate 1.7 times faster than the national workforce from 2016-2019.<sup>2</sup>

**Fulfilling Urgent Housing Needs**

The need for this legislation is clear. Across the state, communities are facing a severe lack of affordable housing,<sup>3</sup> estimated at a shortage of more than 275,000 units.<sup>4</sup> The age of housing stock is a risk to maintaining the residential units we do have, and contributes to the need for whole home repair services. Across the state, 40% of homes were built before 1950, and in Philadelphia, a shocking 95% of homes were built before 1978, the year lead paint was banned.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ee.e4thefuture.org/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://e4thefuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/National-Summary\\_EE-Jobs-in-America.pdf](https://e4thefuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/National-Summary_EE-Jobs-in-America.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.phfa.org/forms/housing\\_study/2020/county-profiles.pdf](https://www.phfa.org/forms/housing_study/2020/county-profiles.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [https://nlihc.org/housing-needs-by-state/pennsylvania#:~:text=Across%20Pennsylvania%2C%20there%20is%20a,area%20median%20income%20\(AMI\)](https://nlihc.org/housing-needs-by-state/pennsylvania#:~:text=Across%20Pennsylvania%2C%20there%20is%20a,area%20median%20income%20(AMI))

For these reasons and others, including asthma triggers, radon, and carbon monoxide exposure, the National Center for Healthy Housing considers Pennsylvania a “high hazard housing state.”<sup>5</sup>

Similar problems plague nearly every part of the state. Like Philadelphia, the City of Pittsburgh has the dubious distinction of being among the top ten cities with highest “energy burdens” in the country, according to data from the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy (ACEEE).<sup>6</sup> Lead paint problems are also endemic to Pittsburgh, McKeesport and the surrounding region, as evidence in a sequence of mapping data.<sup>7</sup> Likewise, Pennsylvania’s rural communities are subject to the same trend of aging housing stock and higher need for maintenance.<sup>8</sup>

Improving housing stock improves lives, saves energy, reduces costs for tenants and residents, and helps protect our climate. Nationwide, housing is responsible for 29% of all energy use and 75% of all electricity use,<sup>9</sup> representing a major opportunity to cut emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. ACEEE estimates that “making common efficiency upgrades to residential units that fall in the top 25% of multifamily energy users could reduce multifamily residential energy use across the United States by approximately 17% and save residents \$3 billion in energy costs.”<sup>10</sup> The US EPA considers investment in EE a low-cost measure for achieving carbon reduction goals, calls EE the “cornerstone” for achieving those goals, and recommends state governments act “expeditiously” to implement EE programs and policies.<sup>11</sup>

While various state, federal, and utility-led programs and funding exist, significant gaps and a lack of clear mechanisms for coordination between programs mean that many Pennsylvanians go unserved. For example, analysis of Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) services in PA indicated that more than a third of customers are deferred annually from participation due to structural or health issues in the home that aren’t covered by these programs, such as moisture issues, roof repair, and knob-and-tube wiring.<sup>12</sup> This doesn’t just leave extensive energy savings on the table. It also allows poor housing conditions and unaffordable utility bills to persist for some of the Commonwealth’s most vulnerable residents.

### **Growth of the Workforce Pipeline**

The energy efficiency industry is vital to the execution of these energy-saving and health-improving measures, and it is well-established, ready, and eager to do this work. In fact,

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<sup>5</sup> [https://nchh.org/resource-library/Healthy\\_Housing\\_Fact\\_Sheet--Pennsylvania\\_2015\\_7.15.15\\_final.pdf](https://nchh.org/resource-library/Healthy_Housing_Fact_Sheet--Pennsylvania_2015_7.15.15_final.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.aceee.org/press/2016/04/report-energy-burden-low-income>

<sup>7</sup> <https://gettheleadoutpgh.org>

<sup>8</sup> <https://pahra.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Home-Repair-Program.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> [https://e4thefuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Energy-Efficiency-Jobs\\_2021\\_All-States.pdf](https://e4thefuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Energy-Efficiency-Jobs_2021_All-States.pdf), pg. 10

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.aceee.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/multifamily\\_high\\_impact\\_programs\\_final\\_7-2-21.pdf](https://www.aceee.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/multifamily_high_impact_programs_final_7-2-21.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2015-08/documents/ee\\_and\\_carbon.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2015-08/documents/ee_and_carbon.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> <https://nascsp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/PA-2019-2020-LIHEAP-Deferral-Program-Guidelines.pdf>, pg. 2

PA is home to well over 10,000 EE businesses, and EE workers exist in *every single county* in PA.<sup>13</sup>

But estimates indicate that almost 5 million homes in Pennsylvania are due for energy retrofitting services and upgrades, and this work will require nearly 55,000 *new* construction jobs to serve 80% of PA homes by the year 2030.<sup>14</sup>

The clean energy sector has taken a blow due to COVID-19-related impacts, losing more than 13,000 jobs during the onset of the pandemic alone.<sup>15</sup> Nationwide, the EE industry has suffered more of these losses than other clean energy sectors,<sup>16</sup> and Pennsylvania has been among the hardest-hit.<sup>17</sup> KEEA members have been the leading business voice for EE's role in the economic recovery, sharing their stories and support for investment in our industry at this critical juncture.<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, the energy efficiency industry has been impacted by worker shortages which predate the pandemic, and the shortage of qualified workers is one of the primary concerns reported by KEEA members and other industry professionals.<sup>19</sup> We therefore need urgent investment in our workforce. We must make training and certifications more geographically available, make these quality careers more accessible to groups currently underrepresented in our industry—women and people of color<sup>20</sup>—and provide new and sustainable opportunities for energy workers transitioning from other sectors such as fossil fuel extraction and development.

Growing the EE sector is good for workers and good for PA's economy. Energy efficiency and other clean energy jobs are *good* jobs, with Pennsylvania workers reporting high rates of job satisfaction, opportunities for advancement, and provision of key employee benefits.<sup>21</sup> On average, US EE workers earn a median hourly wage of \$24.44—beating out the economy-wide wage (\$19.14) by an impressive 28%.<sup>22</sup>

KEEA and our members are committed to the advancement of policy solutions to address these issues, and recently conducted a focus group with Senator Nikil Saval and staff, attended by

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<sup>13</sup> [https://e4thefuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Pennsylvania\\_2021.pdf](https://e4thefuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Pennsylvania_2021.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> [https://e4thefuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Energy-Efficiency-Jobs\\_2021\\_All-States.pdf](https://e4thefuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Energy-Efficiency-Jobs_2021_All-States.pdf), pg. 242-245

<sup>15</sup> [https://files.dep.state.pa.us/Energy/Office%20of%20Energy%20and%20Technology/OETDPortalFiles/2021CleanEnergyGapAnalysis/PA\\_2021\\_Clean\\_Energy\\_Gap\\_Analysis\\_Report.pdf](https://files.dep.state.pa.us/Energy/Office%20of%20Energy%20and%20Technology/OETDPortalFiles/2021CleanEnergyGapAnalysis/PA_2021_Clean_Energy_Gap_Analysis_Report.pdf), pg. 10

<sup>16</sup> <https://e360.yale.edu/digest/more-than-400-000-u-s-clean-energy-jobs-have-been-lost-so-far-during-the-pandemic>

<sup>17</sup> <https://energyefficiencyalliance.org/indispensable-ee/>

<sup>18</sup> These stories and other resources on EE's role in the economic recovery can be viewed here:

<https://energyefficiencyalliance.org/indispensable-ee/>

<sup>19</sup> As reported in a survey conducted November 2021. Published results forthcoming.

<sup>20</sup> [https://e4thefuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Pennsylvania\\_2021.pdf](https://e4thefuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Pennsylvania_2021.pdf), pg. 4

<sup>21</sup> [https://files.dep.state.pa.us/Energy/Office%20of%20Energy%20and%20Technology/OETDPortalFiles/2021CleanEnergyGapAnalysis/PA\\_2021\\_Clean\\_Energy\\_Gap\\_Analysis\\_Report.pdf](https://files.dep.state.pa.us/Energy/Office%20of%20Energy%20and%20Technology/OETDPortalFiles/2021CleanEnergyGapAnalysis/PA_2021_Clean_Energy_Gap_Analysis_Report.pdf), pg. 6

<sup>22</sup> [https://e4thefuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Energy-Efficiency-Jobs\\_2021\\_All-States.pdf](https://e4thefuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Energy-Efficiency-Jobs_2021_All-States.pdf), pg. 6

seven of our member-businesses working in the residential retrofit sector, to provide technical recommendations and industry expertise in crafting a whole home repairs and workforce development program.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments in support of legislative action on this vital issue. We are eager to continue to be a resource to the Democratic Policy Committee and the General Assembly as a whole in the development of related policies.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Leann Leiter". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned centrally below the word "Sincerely,".

Leann Leiter  
Director of Policy & Research  
Keystone Energy Efficiency Alliance