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Massachusetts State Senate

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Massachusetts State Senate Unveils Next Generation Climate Policy

(Boston – 01/23/2020) Amid increasing reports of environmental devastation worldwide, the Massachusetts State Senate has taken major new steps in advancing the state’s approach to combating global warming. The Senate’s next generation climate policy package, including *An Act Setting Next Generation Climate Policy*, *An Act to Accelerate the Transition of Cars, Trucks and Buses to Carbon-Free Power*, and *An Act Relative to Energy Savings Efficiency*, were released by the Senate Ways and Means Committee today, and are scheduled to be debated by the full Senate next week.

“The young people of Massachusetts have told us in no uncertain terms that they are looking to state leaders to take bold action on climate change,” says Senate President Karen Spilka. “The Massachusetts State Senate has listened. I’m proud of Senator Barrett for his diligence in crafting a thorough legislative package that takes concrete steps to reduce emissions and provides a plan to create a greener, healthier and more sustainable future. I would like to thank Senator Barrett and Senator Michael Rodrigues for their contributions to this next generation of climate leadership.”

“As a result of a collaborative stakeholder process, the package of bills polled out by the Committee today proposes a comprehensive plan to reduce our carbon footprint and boldly confront the impacts of climate change,” said Senator Michael J. Rodrigues, Chair of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means. “I applaud Senate President Spilka for her leadership and Senator Barrett for his thoughtful collaboration and partnership, which helped shape our efforts to put forward a series of bills to achieve net-zero carbon

emissions by 2050 and transform our energy delivery system to benefit our climate and future generations. I look forward to a robust and energetic debate next week on the Senate floor.”

“Getting to net zero is absolutely necessary but it’s also a big lift,” said State Senator Mike Barrett, lead author and Senate Chair of the Utilities & Energy committee. “This bill is all about the how of it, as in ‘Here’s how we are going to get there.’”

Key provisions of the climate policy package include:

- **Setting a statewide greenhouse gas limit for the year 2050 of “net zero” emissions.** To achieve this, *An Act Setting Next-Generation Climate Policy* requires the state to hit near-term limits in 2025, 2030, and every five years thereafter; set sub-limits for transportation, buildings, solid waste, natural gas distribution, and other major sectors; and make implementation plans that are “clear, comprehensive, and specific.”
- **Establishing the Massachusetts Climate Policy Commission.** The commission would be a new, independent public watchdog to oversee government’s handling of the unfolding crisis of climate change. Commissioners will be charged with offering a nonpartisan, science-based view of the problem as it plays out in Massachusetts with its attendant natural, economic, and demographic impacts and risks.

“We want this commission to be an independent guardian of the future, notably the future of younger generations, insulated from political pressure and consisting of the most authoritative and credible Massachusetts voices we can find,” stated Senator Barrett. “Job one for the Commission is to tell us if we’re on track in bringing down emissions. Job two is to advise us on what to do next. The commission will give us objective information about the performance of both government and the private sector and will pay special attention to the impact on low-income and other disadvantaged communities. If the commission works as intended, it will be a new voice, standing apart from politics as usual and committed to shedding light on a very hard problem.”

- **Reflecting the price of carbon.** Under the bill, the Administration would be free to choose among various market based forms of pricing carbon—including a revenue-neutral fee or a regional “cap and trade” system similar to the Transportation Climate Initiative (TCI)—but he or she would have to do so by Jan. 1, 2022, for transportation; Jan. 1, 2025, for commercial, industrial and institutional buildings; and Jan. 1, 2030, for residential buildings. Any mechanism would be implemented so as to minimize the impact on low-income households, disadvantaged communities, and vulnerable manufacturing sectors.
- **Providing legislative direction to the Department of Public Utilities (DPU), the state’s primary energy oversight agency, for the first time.** Compensating for a decades-long omission, the bill assigns the DPU a mission statement. It requires the agency to balance five priorities: reliability of supply, affordability, public safety,

physical and cyber security, and, significantly, reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

- **Jumpstarting efforts to supply low-cost solar electricity to low-income communities.** To reverse the failure of state programs to incentivize solar energy projects in low-income neighborhoods, as well as spur job creation, the bill requires the Department of Energy Resources (DOER) to set aside future solar allocations for such neighborhoods.
- **Letting cities and towns adopt a “net zero” stretch energy code.** The bill allows the state to support communities that choose on their own to move away from fossil fuels as the source of heating for new buildings. The state’s contribution is to promulgate a “net zero” energy code, so that localities have the option available if they want to use it. The bill shifts responsibility for the code’s development from the Board of Building Regulations and Standards to the DOER.

“When it comes to bringing down emissions, buildings are the toughest nut to crack,” Barrett says. “We need to move on multiple fronts.”

- **Nudging natural gas utilities to adapt.** The bill authorizes utilities to test technology and pipelines that generate and transport “renewable thermal energy,” an emissions-free way to heat buildings that draws on the relative warmth of temperatures below ground.
- **Strengthening executive branch oversight of MassSave.** The bill directs the Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) to set emissions reduction goals, in advance, for each three-year plan the utilities formulate for MassSave. It requires the DPU, at the conclusion of each three-year plan, to certify how much the plan actually contributed to meeting the Commonwealth’s greenhouse gas emission limits.
- **Tightening the alignment between MassSave and emissions limits.** The bill requires electric utilities to include an explicit value for emissions reductions whenever they calculate the cost-effectiveness of a MassSave offering.
- **Setting a deadline for converting MTBA buses to all-electric power.** *An Act to Accelerate the Transition of Cars, Trucks, and Buses to Carbon Free Power* directs the MBTA to limit bus purchases and leases to zero-emissions vehicles beginning in 2030, and to aim for an all-zero-emissions fleet by 2040, to reduce transportation-related emissions in city neighborhoods.
- **Offsetting the Trump Administration’s efforts to slow progress on efficient appliances.** *An Act Relative to Energy Savings Efficiency* updates Massachusetts appliance standards to improve energy and water efficiency standards for common household and commercial appliances, helping to conserve energy and save consumers and businesses money.

Other provisions include:

- Assembling the state’s first-ever database of energy use in large buildings.
- Adding two building efficiency experts and an expert in advanced building technology to the membership of the Board of Building Regulations and Standards, which will retain responsibility for the base energy building code.
- Authorizing the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC) to fund energy innovation pilots, and to take actions addressing health effects associated with the distribution and consumption of fossil fuels such as natural gas.
- Directing the DPU to consider the impact on emissions when it reviews electric and natural gas rates, prices, charges, and contracts.
- Directing state government to limit purchases and leases of vehicles to zero emissions vehicles only, beginning in 2024, if affordable replacements are available.
- Conducting a study of the opportunities to electrify vehicles owned or leased by municipalities, regional school districts, and regional transit authorities, taking into account costs and possible sources of financial help from state and federal government.
- Providing permanent statutory authorization for the “MOR-EV” program, the Commonwealth’s system of financial incentives for purchasers of zero emission vehicles.

"In Boston, we set a goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2050," stated Boston Mayor Marty Walsh. "Buildings along with transportation make up nearly 99 percent of Boston’s carbon emissions and I’m proud to join my colleagues at the Legislature in support of this proposal, which puts critical strategies in place to cut emissions across the Commonwealth. Together, we’ll work towards a more sustainable Boston for our residents, and generations to come."

"We applaud the Senate's leadership and are pleased to see President Spilka making good on her promise to move forward critical climate legislation," stated Jacob Stern, Deputy Director of the Massachusetts Sierra Club. "Given that climate science tells us we only have until 2030 to substantially reduce our emissions, we hope that this legislation will serve as a catalyst for immediate action. We look forward to reviewing the bill in detail and working with our movement allies to pass these much-needed policies into law."

"NECEC commends Senate President Spilka and the Massachusetts Senate for proposing a net zero emissions standard, in alignment with scientific consensus," said Northeast Clean Energy Council (NECEC) President Peter Rothstein. "Swift passage of this legislation will accelerate the clean energy transition in the energy, buildings and transportation sectors, and will cement Massachusetts’ position as a premier place to build a robust clean energy economy."

“We thank the Senate for releasing an energy bill that sets us on a course to more boldly address climate change—the most critical issue of our time,” stated Elizabeth Henry, President of the Environmental League of Massachusetts. “By setting interim GHG reduction targets and echoing the Governor’s call for net zero emissions by 2050, the Senate acknowledges how much work is left to do. In particular, we applaud the Senate for directing DOER to develop a net zero stretch code to address the built environment, and for including provisions that would accelerate electric vehicle use and ability of low income communities to access solar energy.”

“With the bill released today, President Spilka and Senate leadership are setting the Commonwealth on a meaningful pathway to a net-zero carbon economy by 2050”, said Deborah Donovan, Acadia Center’s Massachusetts Director. “The strong interim target of a 50% reduction by 2030 ensures that Massachusetts will make the next decade count. The ambitious provisions of this bill will boost our economy and protect the health of our most vulnerable residents and our planet.”

“Communities want and need a Net Zero stretch code in order to meet their local climate goals,” said Rebecca Winterich-Knox of the Mass Climate Action Network. “Committing to the goal of Net Zero by 2050 is a big step in the right direction, and will let cities and towns take leadership on better buildings.”

“The Senate Committee’s climate bill will make a real difference for people’s health and our climate,” said Alyssa Rayman-Read, Vice President and Director of CLF Massachusetts. “Getting to zero emissions by 2050 is an absolute necessity, and pushing the T to exclusively use electric vehicles will go a long way towards hitting that goal.”

"This legislation will continue to fuel our transition away from a carbon intensive economy, while promoting new job growth and economic opportunities for the Commonwealth," stated Michael Green, Executive Director of Climate Xchange. "A carbon free economy will benefit all of the Massachusetts businesses and residents. This legislation will unlock much needed market signals, providing the opportunity for sustainable business growth, innovation and continue to make Massachusetts one of the most vibrant economies in the nation."

The entire Senate is expected to vote on the legislation by the end of January.

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