



Marc C. Laredo
Mayor

City of Newton, Massachusetts
Office of the Mayor

Telephone
(617) 796-1100
Fax
(617) 796-1113
TDD/TTY
(617) 796-1089
Email
mayor@newtonma.gov

March 12, 2026

Honorable Cynthia Creem
Massachusetts State House
24 Beacon Street
Room 312-A
Boston, MA 02133

Cynthia.Creem@masenate.gov

Dear Senator Creem:

I deeply appreciate that you and your Senate colleagues have your work cut out for you on the important legislation that passed the House last week, An Act relative to energy affordability, clean power, and economic competitiveness (H.5151).

From my perspective, the version of H.5151 that emerged from the House is a significant improvement over the version released in November. Among other things, it reaffirms the Commonwealth's commitment to our 2030 climate requirements, maintains the Renewable Portfolio Standard annual increase at 3%, supports geothermal energy, preserves the fossil fuel-free pilot program (in which Newton participates), and prohibits deceptive practices by competitive retail suppliers.

However, I trust that I am preaching to the choir when I say that the proposed \$1 billion cut to Mass Save, out of the program's \$4.5 billion budget, makes no sense. I won't belabor the point because it seems obvious, but cutting funds that will help households and businesses become more energy efficient is penny-wise and pound-foolish in the extreme. Well-regarded economist Dorie Seavey estimates that every dollar spent on Mass Save returns \$2.76 in benefits.

I am certainly not minimizing the seriousness of the energy affordability crisis. But the idea that Mass Save makes a meaningful contribution to this crisis reflects a serious misunderstanding. The fundamental reason for our energy affordability challenges arises from New England's dependence on natural gas, resulting in higher energy bills for a number of reasons: (i) natural gas prices vary with international gas market disturbance and extreme weather events, both of which result in gas price volatility; (ii) since the war in Ukraine, higher gas prices in Europe have incentivized New England gas producers to ship gas to Europe, increasing gas prices domestically; and (iii) the competition for

gas for electricity and heating drives up winter energy bills.

There are additional reasons contributing to recent bill increases. The winter of 2024-2025 was one of the coldest in recent years (the first in more than a decade with below-normal temperatures during the entire season). Further, New England's energy infrastructure is aging, resulting in costly expenditures and making it particularly vulnerable to storms.

These are not easily solvable short-term problems. One approach to lowering energy bills in New England would be to facilitate the development of offshore wind; but unfortunately, federal permitting is not in your domain.... Also, as I'm sure you know, Governor Healey just announced a \$180 million initiative to reduce residential electric bills by 25 percent and natural gas bills by 10 percent during February and March of this year.

By contrast, cutting Mass Save is purely performative and will only cost Massachusetts energy customers money. It does nothing to address the fundamental issues underlying our energy affordability challenges.

I would be happy to discuss these issues at any time if that would be helpful. As always, thank you for the work you are doing for us and for future generations.

Sincerely,



Ann G. Berwick
Co-Director of Sustainability