



Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice

Fostering Clean, Healthy and Safe Communities

Why the energy debate is so vital to our organization and the communities we represent

Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice envisions Detroit as the global model of a vibrant urban center where all thrive in environmental, economic and social health. Armed with that vision, and our history of creative alliance building, we are committed to taking on the big challenges and staying the course on major policy initiatives. We are an organization that is focused on system level changes as we work to foster clean, healthy and safe communities.

We bring fresh perspectives and unshakable resolve to the energy table because:

- Michigan needs an energy plan that ensures a healthy future and utilizes existing natural clean energy sources to improve the **health** of our children, broaden **middle-class job opportunities**, and create **better lives for everyone in the greater Detroit area**.
- According to the NAACP report, 65% of the people who live within 3 miles of the River Rouge Coal Plant are people of color. **Detroit has the highest asthma rates in the state, and its asthma-related hospitalizations are 4 times higher for African Americans than for Caucasians.**¹
- 275 people die each year in Michigan due to poor air quality, and **175 of those deaths occur in Wayne County.**²
- Research shows that **renewable energy and greater energy efficiency will save money for low-income households**, which spend a higher percentage of their income on energy costs. In fact, while the average U.S. household spends 2.9% of its income on electricity bills, **low-income households spend 8.3%—more when energy prices spike.**³

(over)

¹ https://www.michigan.gov/documents/Asthma_factsheet_6385_7.pdf

² American Thoracic Society

³ <https://www.nrdc.org/sites/default/files/clean-energy-benefits-vulnerable-comms-report.pdf>

- Residential energy hardships often **beget other material hardships, including housing, food insecurity and foregoing medical care.**⁴
- **July 2016 was the hottest month on record**, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. With higher temperatures come greater risks of health complications due to poor air quality, and the health impacts of poor air quality are exacerbated for residents living in cities and urban centers like Detroit.⁵
- There are nearly **17,000 asthma-related hospitalizations each year in Michigan**. The average cost of an asthma hospitalization is \$11,671. Add it all up, and we spend **over \$394 million per year** on asthma hospitalizations.⁶

Looking at energy costs:

- Renewable energy and energy efficiency are affordable and cost-effective solutions. The Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) has already **determined renewable energy is cheaper than new coal generation**. For every \$1 invested in energy efficiency, customers avoid \$3.55 in energy costs, according to the MPSC.⁷
- There are more than **87,000 clean energy jobs in Michigan that generate nearly \$5 billion in annual economic activity**—this means there are a lot of opportunities for clean energy development that will create jobs and reduce dangerous pollution.⁸
- Senator Nofs’ proposed plan will cost ratepayers **more than \$4 billion over the next decade at a time** when Michigan electricity costs are already the highest in the Midwest.
- The \$4 billion burden of these increased costs **will fall on the shoulders of families, seniors and small businesses across Michigan**, which in turn will disproportionately affect low income communities and communities of color.

We welcome further conversations and collaborative solutions.

Sincerely,

Guy O. Williams, President & CEO: guy@dwej.org

Kimberly Hill Knott, Director of Policy: kimberly@dwej.org

Wibke “Vee” Heymach, Program Coordinator: vee@dwej.org

DWEJ 4750 Woodward Avenue, Suite 415, Detroit, MI 48201 (313) 833-3935 www.dwej.org

⁴https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/122696/Bednar_Thesis_July%20%20%20Final%20Submission.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

⁵ NOAA monthly report: <https://www.climate.gov/news-features/featured-images/june-2016-warmest-june-record-us>

⁶ Asthma Initiative of Michigan, http://michigan.gov/documents/mdch/10_Ch8_Hospitalization_for_Asthma_274059_7.pdf

⁷ US Environmental Protection Agency, Michigan Public Service Commission, U.S. Energy Information Administration, U.S. Department of Energy

⁸ Clean Jobs Midwest: <http://www.cleanjobsmidwest.com/state/michigan/>