

September 23, 2021 Letter: Invest in Main Street Efficiency

The Honorable Joe Manchin III
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
United States Senate
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Maizie Hirono
Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Energy
Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
United States Senate
304 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

September 23, 2021

Re: Invest in Main Street Efficiency

Dear Chairman Manchin and Chairwoman Hirono:

Small businesses are the undisputed backbone of the U.S. economy, accounting for nearly half of the nation's gross domestic product and half of its employment. But Main Street is suffering!

We write today as a coalition of business, government, environmental, and consumer leaders, to urge you to invest in the economic vitality of Main Street, U.S.A., by establishing a federal grant program to make small businesses across the nation more energy efficient. Congress can help Main Street regain competitiveness while exiting the economic crater caused by the Covid-19 pandemic by including the Main Street Efficiency Act, introduced in the 117th Congress as S. 2665 by Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto, co-sponsored by Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, and Sen. Cory Booker, and as H.R. 4903 by Rep. Peter Welch, co-sponsored by Rep. Marilyn Strickland, Rep. Mondaire Jones, Rep. Mike Doyle, Rep. Marc Veasey, Rep. Lisa Blunt Rochester, Rep. Val Demings, Rep. Scott Peters, Rep. Paul Tonko, Rep. Ann Kuster, Rep. Doris Matsui, Rep. Barbara Lee, and Rep. Andre Carson, in any budget-based infrastructure legislation.

The Main Street Efficiency Act would establish a grant program at the Department of Energy to supplement, not supplant utility demand-side management investments in small businesses that not only save energy and avoid carbon emissions, but more critically to these struggling enterprises, reduce monthly operating costs for years to come, allowing entrepreneurs to re-invest in their businesses and employees.

This point can't be overstated – energy efficiency is not only the most cost-effective energy saving and carbon abatement solution; energy efficiency also reduces costs while creating non-exportable jobs in design, construction, and domestic manufacturing.

Prior to the pandemic, energy efficiency led the clean energy sector with a workforce employing nearly 2.4 million Americans — more than 40 times the size of the coal mining labor force, and nearly seven times as big as the wind and solar industries, combined. Although Congress has so far helped small-to-medium enterprises through forgivable loans and other targeted relief, more small businesses are currently shuttered than at any time during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Across the United States, small businesses account for as much as half of any utility's energy demand, yet, even under the best of economic times, investment in the sector lags, with less than 10% of most budgets aimed at small businesses. Nationwide, small businesses spend \$60 billion annually on utility bills, which are often among the top-3 largest expenses for any small business. These bills could be cut by as much as 30% with energy efficient upgrades, like those that would be funded under the Main Street Efficiency Act.

These are not new programs but have existed for decades; the ecosystem of regulatory authority and supply chains required for rapid infusion of capital into a critical economic sector already exists. Not only would federal funds be well shepherded by existing state and local regulatory bodies that already verify cost-effectiveness and quality control under existing mechanisms, but each federal dollar would additionally leverage non-federal investments for more “bang for the buck.”

As you navigate a generational investment in U.S. competitiveness, we urge you to include Main Street in any infrastructure package. We look forward to working with you to get this critical program across the finish line. Main Street depends on it.

Sincerely,

Acuity Brands Lighting
Advanced Energy Economy
Alliance to Save Energy
American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE)
Association of Energy Engineers
Association of Energy Service Professionals (AESP)
California Efficiency + Demand Management Council (CEDMC)
Center for Energy and Environment
Chelan County PUD
Dynamic Energy Strategies
Energy Efficiency Alliance of New Jersey (EEA-NJ)
Environment America
Equipment Controls Company
Erthe Energy Solutions
Facility Solutions Group Inc.
FCI Management
Franklin Energy
GridPoint, Inc.
International Copper Association
International Window Film Association (IWFA)
Keystone Energy Efficiency Alliance (KEEA)
Knauf Insulation
Krug Architects and CHP-Funder.com
Lime Energy
Metrus Energy
Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance (MEEA)
NAESCO
National Grid
NH Office of the Consumer Advocate
Northwest Energy Efficiency Council (NEEC)
Proctor Engineering Group
Puget Sound Energy
Rexel Energy Solutions
Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD)
Seattle City Light
Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors National Association (SMACNA)
Snohomish Public Utility District
Southwest Energy Efficiency Project (SWEEP)
Trane Technologies Company LLC

Uplight
Willdan

Cc: The Honorable Chuck Schumer, Majority Leader, United States Senate
The Honorable Bernie Sanders, Chairman, Committee on the Budget, United States Senate
The Honorable Catherine Cortez Masto, United States Senate
The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen, United States Senate
The Honorable Kirsten Gillibrand, United States Senate
The Honorable Cory Booker, United States Senate