July 23, 2020

General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts
24 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 0213

Dear Honorable Members of the General Court:

I am contacting you from Second Nature, a Boston-based NGO focused on accelerating climate action in, and through, higher education to ask you to support Bill H.4264 (An Act Relative to Environmental Justice in the Commonwealth). We have 29 member institutions in Massachusetts including all of the schools in the University of Massachusetts system, Tufts University, Northeastern University, and Framingham State University.

For higher education institutions who are focused on educating the leaders of today and tomorrow, it is crucial that they have leadership - not just on their campuses but also in government - who are committed to making real and lasting change in combating the global climate crisis and advocating for environmental justice.

Climate change affects those communities that are the most vulnerable - communities of color, low income communities and others - more drastically than other communities; including here in Massachusetts. According to a 2020 report put out by the office of Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey, “Globally, nationally, and regionally, low income communities and communities of color are slated to be hit “first and worst” by climate change impacts.”

When it comes to climate change and racial inequality, they are intersected. You cannot create effective climate justice solutions, without also creating racial justice solutions. H.4264 is a step in the right direction for climate and racial justice.

H.4264 includes the following three main provisions:

1. Codifying a definition of “Environmental Justice (EJ) community” in state law that includes race, income, and English language proficiency;
2. Enhancing reviews from projects proposed in EJ communities so that they include consideration of potential public health impacts and long-term harms; and
3. Ensuring that residents have reasonable access and information to meaningfully participate in public processes concerning projects in their neighborhoods.

These provisions are necessary for real change to occur. I ask you to support Bill H.4264, because the Commonwealth cannot accomplish the goal of being carbon neutral by 2050, without also ensuring that every Environmental Justice community has a seat at the table when decisions are being made.

Thank you,

Tim Carter, President
Second Nature