



Opportunities for Climate Action by Regulatory Agencies:

Notes from the Connecticut Virtual Stakeholder Workshop

OVERVIEW

On October 27, 2022, representatives from the Brown University Climate and Development Lab, Synapse Energy Economics, and Climable.org convened a virtual stakeholder workshop on Zoom. This Connecticut workshop was the eleventh of 12 that will be conducted around New England in 2022. The purpose of the workshop was to crowdsource insights and discuss ideas from stakeholders in Connecticut—especially those representing environmental justice communities—regarding the climate actions of the utilities, the regulatory structures that the Connecticut Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) has in place to mitigate climate change and the opportunities and challenges for implementing lasting and equitable climate and energy solutions.

The insights from each workshop are summarized, distributed to all participants, and posted publicly here: <https://climable.org/brown>. In early 2023, a summary report will present a variety of options that state regulatory agencies could pursue to meet climate goals based upon the workshops.

We are incredibly grateful to those who were able to attend and appreciate all of the ideas and feedback we received. The following notes are from the Connecticut workshop and include PURA actions and actions by other stakeholders.

PURA ACTIONS

- Leadership at PURA is coming from an individual in a critical role. The current Chair brought expertise in new and relevant topic areas (energy storage) and Maryland's regulatory environment to Connecticut. There is a desire not to change the power
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structure now, as it could hinder the progress that is underway. There is a hope that the change in culture and procedures stick and attract additional leaders who can carry on and expand this progress. Further reflection on the characteristics of a good leader should lead to proactive identification of others who should be leading and a move to appoint them to critical positions.

- Weather events and outages have driven increases in PURA authority and changed the nature of incentives for utilities. However, PURA should not have to wait until crisis to take action. PURA should have the explicit authority to deny carbon emitting measures or use offsetting mitigation measures to address carbon.
- The process for appointment to the PURA board can be tainted by politics or patronage. This process could be improved by making it more like the [process for appointing state prosecutors and district attorneys](#) which was changed in 2005 due to issues with fairness and conflict-of-interest. Connecticut could also introduce more 'stakeholder representatives' with clear and specific mandates.
- Interconnection processes and fees need to be updated to allow for more renewables on the grid.

ACTIONS BY OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

- PURA should be decoupled from DEEP, as this structure is impairing progress.
- Other regulatory agencies in the state should replicate PURA's mechanisms for public outreach and plain-language content. A PURA 101 slide show is helping stakeholders understand PURA's role and systems: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qux48uLQSIY>. PURA's new quarterly newsletter provides a summary of past dockets and decisions and a schedule and summary of upcoming opportunities to participate: <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/PURA/PURA-Quarterly-Newsletter.pdf>.
- The two additional PURA seats that have been vacant for years should be filled with experts in climate and equity.
- Broad citizen suits related to carbon goals are implicitly allowed through Environmental Protection Act, but the connection to state climate targets should be more explicit. Suits should follow if goals are not met.