

Tenant Benefit and Protection Principles

PURPOSE

Energy Efficiency For All's Tenant Benefit and Protection Principles advance energy equity for renters by improving energy security and affordability. These principles create a foundation for a set of policy, program and capacity building solutions through advocacy or pilot demonstrations. These solutions reach beyond energy efficiency and recommend comprehensive strategies to reduce energy cost burden, increase access to energy and health resources, safeguard the net financial benefits received by tenants, and protect tenants from undue risks affecting energy and housing affordability and resident health and safety. Principles elevate what core values shall have to address energy equity challenges affecting renters and recommend actions on how those values can be achieved.

PRINCIPLES

1

Promote equitable access to affordable clean energy and healthy affordable housing as a fundamental right.

Energy security and quality housing that is safe, healthy and affordable create opportunities for people to live healthier and more prosperous lives. Studies have shown significant disparities remain in health outcomes that are tied to race, income, neighborhood poverty level, energy burden and housing status, among other social and environmental conditions. These neighborhoods have higher poverty, fewer resources, and weaker infrastructure to support good housing and health. The shortest life expectancies are concentrated in these places. In Oakland, as an example, the greatest disparity in life expectancies between neighborhoods is 20 years.

2

Incorporate the perspectives of low-income renters by engaging a diverse community of renters, community advocates, property owners, policymakers and program administrators to ensure that the concerns of people directly affected are addressed in the solution.

Engagement with a diverse community of renters, community advocates, property owners, policymakers and program administrators can ensure that the concerns of people directly affected are addressed in the solution. A community-based approach can look like a clean energy partnership with stated goals that leverages community attributes or institutions to tailor delivery of energy efficiency or renewable energy services to a target community. Solutions can be tailored to overcome barriers related to costs, awareness, trust, capacity, and reaching the populations while taking into account non-monetary barriers and leveraging trusted community partners.

3

Improve the energy security of low-income multifamily renters through actions that reduce high energy cost burdens.

Low-income renters will have more capacity to respond to utility cost risks and leverage new investment

opportunities if they have equitable access to information, tools and resources needed to reduce energy consumption and costs. Although energy equity would require that utility costs be fair and equitable, low-income households typically pay a much higher share of their incomes on energy. This “Energy Burden” is the often cited rationale for targeted energy actions, but trends suggest that we have not moved the needle in reducing household energy burdens. Since 2000, the data suggests that household energy burdens have increased.

4

Improve the health and safety of low-income renters through actions that also address adverse environmental and safety conditions.

Energy equity initiatives have given focus to barriers to accessing available programs, but without much attention on whether the potential benefits are sufficient to mitigate cost burdens and risks. Energy equity initiatives can also generate co-benefits that contribute to household security. These benefits include improvement to community and household health and local job creation.

5

Incorporate responsible and enforceable safeguards to protect renters from adverse energy- and housing-related actions.

Advancing greater energy investments in rental properties can have unintended consequences for renters. To mitigate potential risks to housing security and affordability, tenants may require additional protections from rent increases, displacement, eviction, or other unintended consequences that may arise from energy investments or compliance with energy requirements.

6

Demonstrate measurable energy justice and equity outcomes that create accountability and link energy, health and financial benefits for renters.

Programs lack useful metrics for determining whether or not energy investments and services are effective at reducing energy burden, increasing energy security and improving health and quality of life. Programs track achievements like customer participation, energy savings, and goal realization, but should be tied to achievements of holistic and community outcomes. Outcome-based metrics will demonstrate impact and provide rationale for level of investment.

Supporting Resources

American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy, *Lifting the High Energy Burden in America's Largest Cities: How Energy Efficiency Can Improve Low-Income and Underserved Communities*, April 2016. Available at: <https://aceee.org/research-report/u1602>
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California Department of Public Health, *The Overlapping Issues of Health and Housing: A Report on California Statewide Data and Healthy Housing Indicators*, October 2013. Available at <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/DEODC/EHIB/CPE/CDPH%20Document%20Library/Mold/HealthyHousingIndicators.pdf>
Energy Democracy: *Advancing Equity in Clean Energy Solutions*, October 2017. Available from Island Press at: <https://islandpress.org/books/energy-democracy>
Scavo, Jordan, Suzanne Korosec, Esteban Guerrero, Bill Pennington, and Pamela Doughman. 2016. *Low-Income Barriers Study, Part A: Overcoming Barriers to Energy Efficiency and Renewables for Low-income customers and Small Business Contracting Opportunities in Disadvantaged Communities*. California Energy Commission. Publication Number: CEC-300-2016-009-CMF.