

RESOLUTION ENDORSING THE DECLARATION OF A CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND
REQUESTING REGIONAL COLLABORATION ON AN IMMEDIATE JUST TRANSITION AND
EMERGENCY MOBILIZATION EFFORT TO RESTORE A SAFE CLIMATE

WASHTENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

September 18, 2019

WHEREAS, in April 2016 world leaders from 175 countries recognized the threat of climate change and the urgent need to combat it by signing the Paris Agreement, agreeing to keep warming “well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels” and to “pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C”;

WHEREAS, convective weather, severe winter temperatures, extreme temperatures, flood hazards and petroleum and natural gas pipeline accidents, all hazards exacerbated by climate change, make up six of the top ten hazards facing residents of Washtenaw County as determined by Washtenaw County Emergency Services Division and the Homeland Security Task Force’s Hazard Analysis;

WHEREAS, deaths and economic and natural resource destruction already caused by global warming of approximately 1°C demonstrate that the Earth is already too hot for safety and justice as attested by increased and intensifying extended and excessive rainfall in Michigan, floods, rising seas, wildfires, diseases, droughts and extreme weather;

WHEREAS, climate change and the global economy’s overshoot of ecological limits are driving the sixth mass extinction of species, which could devastate much of life on Earth for the next 10 million years;

WHEREAS, the United States of America has disproportionately contributed to the climate and ecological crises and has repeatedly obstructed global efforts to transition toward a sustainable economy, and thus bears an extraordinary responsibility to rapidly solve these crises;

WHEREAS, restoring a safe and stable climate requires an emergency mobilization on a scale not seen since World War II to reach zero greenhouse gas emissions across all sectors at wartime speed, to rapidly and safely drawdown or remove all the excess carbon from the atmosphere, and to implement measures to protect all people and species from the consequences of abrupt climate change;

WHEREAS, the term “Just Transition” is a framework for a fair shift to an economy that is ecologically sustainable, equitable and just for all its members;

WHEREAS, just transition strategies were first forged by a ‘blue-green’ alliance of labor unions and environmental justice groups who saw the need to phase out the industries that were harming workers, community health and the planet, while also providing just pathways for workers into new livelihoods;

WHEREAS, just transition initiatives shift the economy from dirty energy to energy democracy, from carbon-intensive transportation to public and carbon-neutral transit, from incinerators and landfills to zero waste, from industrial food systems to food sovereignty, from sprawl and unbridled growth to smart urban development without displacement and support for working farms, and habitat and ecosystem restoration;

WHEREAS, justice requires that frontline communities, which have historically borne the brunt of the extractive fossil-fuel economy, participate actively in the planning and implementation of this mobilization effort at all levels of government and that they benefit first from the transition to a renewable energy economy;

WHEREAS, fairness demands a guarantee of high-paying, good-quality jobs with comprehensive benefits for all and many other tenets of a Green New Deal effort as the mobilization to restore a safe climate is launched;

WHEREAS, Washtenaw County can act as a global leader by both converting to an ecologically, socially and economically regenerative economy at emergency speed, and by catalyzing a unified regional just transition and climate emergency mobilization effort this year;

NOW BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, Washtenaw County acknowledges that a climate emergency threatens our city, region, state, nation, civilization, humanity and the natural world;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Washtenaw County commits to a countywide just transition and climate emergency mobilization effort to reverse global warming, which, with appropriate financial and regulatory assistance from and State and Federal authorities, ends countywide greenhouse gas emissions as quickly as possible and no later than 2035, immediately initiates an effort to safely draw down carbon from the atmosphere, and accelerates adaptation and resilience strategies in preparation for intensifying climate impacts;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Washtenaw County commits to educating our residents about the climate emergency and working to catalyze a just transition and climate emergency mobilization effort at the local, state, national, and global levels to provide maximum protection for our residents as well as all the people and species of the world;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Washtenaw County underscores the need for full community participation, inclusion, and support, and recognizes that the residents of Washtenaw County and community organizations, faith, youth, labor, business, academic institutions, homeowners' associations and environmental, economic, racial, gender, family and disability justice and indigenous, immigrant and women's rights organizations and other such allies who will be integral to and in the leadership of the mobilization effort;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Washtenaw County commits to keeping the concerns of vulnerable communities central to all just transition and climate emergency mobilization effort

planning processes and to inviting and encouraging such communities to actively participate in order to advocate directly for their needs;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Washtenaw County joins a national-wide call for a regional just transition and climate emergency mobilization collaborative effort focused on transforming our region and rapidly catalyzing a mobilization at all levels of government to restore a safe climate; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Washtenaw County calls on the State of Michigan, the United States of America, and all governments and peoples worldwide to acknowledge and declare a Climate Emergency; and to initiate a just transition and climate emergency mobilization effort to reverse global warming by restoring near pre-industrial global average temperatures and greenhouse gas concentrations, that immediately halts the development of all new fossil fuel infrastructure, rapidly phases out all fossil fuels and the technologies which rely upon them, ends greenhouse gas emissions as quickly as possible, initiates an effort to safely draw down carbon from the atmosphere, transitions to regenerative agriculture, ends the sixth mass extinction, and creates and guarantees high-quality, good-paying jobs with comprehensive benefits for those who will be impacted by this transition.