Dear Speaker Phelan and Lt. Gov. Patrick,

We, the undersigned, call on Speaker Dade Phelan, Lt. Governor Dan Patrick, and the Texas Legislature to pass legislation that lowers utility bill burdens on Texas families, strengthens our electric grid, and creates quality green jobs in our state.

Electric bills are too high. Energy companies have made billions while everyday Texans struggle with rising costs of living. In 2022, many Texas families were paying 50% more for electricity than they were in 2021, and they are still paying for the failures of utilities and power companies during Winter Storm Uri. We are concerned that, despite proclamations to have fixed the grid, Texans remain vulnerable to the high costs of the climate crisis. Instead of forcing ratepayers to foot the bill for building expensive, climate-polluting gas power plants, we want to see the Texas Legislature invest in the lowest-cost, most-effective solution to our grid crisis: energy efficiency.

People-first solutions like weatherizing homes, insulating small businesses and upgrading windows can stabilize the grid, help control the cost of electricity by reducing demand, and make it easier for Texans to stay cool or warm inside their homes. Specifically, we ask that you:

Pass legislation to assist low income families whose electric utility bills represent more than 10% of their monthly income through payment assistance and weatherization.

Raise the statewide goal for energy efficiency to just 1% of utility sales. Some estimates suggest we could have reduced the extra energy demand of Winter Storm Uri by half if we had a 1% goal in place. Texas has not raised its goals for energy efficiency in more than 12 years. Now is the time.

Move ambitiously to access new federal funding in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill and Inflation Reduction Act to set up the rules for state-administered programs and support increased funding in weatherization, energy efficiency rebate and loan programs, clean energy, resilient building codes, environmental justice projects, and transmission.

Create a Texas Energy Efficiency Council, a collaboration of state agencies, as well as public and private utilities and other stakeholders to collaborate on energy efficiency funding and programs, including federal funds.
Approve a robust sunset bill to make the Public Utility Commission of Texas responsive to the public, and provide additional resources for up to 60 additional staff, including an Office of Public Engagement and an Energy Efficiency Office.

Texas used to be a top-ranked state in energy efficiency, but we have sunk to 29th nationwide, according to the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy. If we claim to be a state of innovation, friendly to local businesses, and always looking for ways to reduce financial burdens on families, then energy efficiency should be at the top of your legislative agenda.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter for our members and supporters.

Sincerely,

Air Alliance Houston  Este Poder  Sierra Club
Altruistic Endeavors NGO  Fort Bend County Environmental Organization  Somos Tejas
Another Gulf Is Possible Collaborative  Galveston Island Voter Education Resource & Services  South Texas Environmental Justice Network
Asian Texans for Justice  Grassroots Leadership  Southwest Laborers District Council
Border Workers United  Indivisible Austin  South-Central Partnership for Energy Efficiency as a Resource
Cameron County Democratic Women  International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local Union 520  Sunrise Movement Austin
Carrizo Comerucdo Tribal Nation of Texas  Liveable Arlington  Terra Lumina Consulting
Centex Action Network  MOVE Texas Action Fund  Texans Against Gerrymandering
Central Texas Building Trades  NextGen America  Texas Campaign for the Environment
Chispa Texas  People Organized in Defense of Earth and her Resources (PODER)  Texas Freedom Network
Citizens Climate Lobby Texas  Public Citizen  Texas impact
Coalition for Environment, Equity, and Resilience  Rio Grande International Study Center  Texas Poor People’s Campaign
Commission Shift  SanArte Healing and Cultural Clinic  Turtle Island Restoration Network
Environmental Defense Fund  Solar United Neighbors  West Street Recovery