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**ELEVATE ENERGY**  
Smarter energy use for all

October 26, 2020

**TO:** Senate Executive, Energy and Public Utilities, Environment and Conservation Committees

**RE:** Delmar Gillus' Environmental Justice and Energy Policies October 22, 2020

Dear Mr. Ozie Goodwin,

Below please find my Senate Committee Testimony:

Good Afternoon – Thank you to the committee chairs, committee members, Rep Harper, and Sen Lightfoot for the invitation to testify today. I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this very important discussion.

My name is Delmar Gillus, COO of Elevate Energy, IEC Board Treasurer, and am participating in the Governor's working groups for equity/just transition and energy efficiency.

While I initially wanted to focus all of my testimony on the future and how we all could better engage black and brown communities in the clean energy economy, with the recent uptick of COVID-19 cases, I feel compelled to briefly start my remarks with a discussion on the impacts of the pandemic on black and brown communities.

### **Impacts of COVID-19**

A few weeks ago I moderated a film screening of *Cooked: Survival by Zip Code* ([link here](#)) that chronicles and discusses the tragic loss of 740+ lives due to the Chicago heat wave of 1995. While the film is 25 years old, in many ways the situation and community conditions are very similar for black and brown communities as it relates to responding to a public health crisis that disproportionality impacts black and brown communities.

Fast forward 25 years and there are still challenges accessing critical resources, especially those that have been impacted by COVID's reduction in services and programs. Specifically,

- PPE for frontline workers that are disproportionality black and brown
- Social Services
- Access and to food (food deserts, and access needs of seniors who have limitations on shopping due to pre-existing services)
- Senior care
- Health care
- Shelters (will need additional resources to prevent COVID)

As Blacks in Green (BIG) mentioned previously, access to utilities during a pandemic is a human right. Water, Gas, and Electric are critical to those trying to follow the Governor's and CDC's guidelines on being COVID-safe.

Elevate has been working with community partners, like Blacks in Green, the Black Water Council, LVEJO, and municipalities like the City of Chicago to address these challenges. While we work on systems and process change like the ones Ms. Davis mentioned in her testimony, we (Elevate and our community partners) see immediate public health needs and have delivered over 200,000 bottles of water to communities on the south and west sides of the city. Unfortunately, this and the other challenges mentioned previously are ongoing and will only get worse as the pandemic continues.

Specifically, we all need to address the need for:

- Additional protections, accountabilities and funding are needed to ensure these challenges are addressed as COVID spikes and winter approaches
- Ways to better engage black and brown contractors and majority black and brown non-profits in the solution of the community-based challenges
- Programs to protect and support black and brown businesses from business losses due to COVID-19. The Payroll Protection Program (PPP) was/is helpful but doesn't always address the needs of black, brown, and small businesses that don't have all the banking relationships and who hire a significant amount of W-9 workers.

### **Engaging Black and Brown Communities in the Clean Energy Economy**

The Future Energy Jobs Act did a lot to kick start the clean energy economy in IL, but more needs to be done for black and brown communities

- Expand equity provisions to market rate programs: specifically adjustable block programs and energy efficiency programs
- Increase projects in black and brown communities
- Support and develop black and brown contractors through specific and called out programs
- Provide no and low cost capital through grants and 'green bank' solutions
- Utilize community-based organizations to do the work
- Additional oversight, metric, and reporting
- Requirements and incentives for employers to hire and retain workers and black and brown contractors
- Work with the labor unions to ensure black and brown laborers and contractors are trained, supported, and accessing project opportunities

All of these ideas need to be interconnected for the system to work equitably. In isolation, spot solutions increase frustration and tease program participants. Training without jobs, projects without capital, contractors without access to projects will not work. They need to be interconnected in a way that addresses long term inequities. As we consider solutions, ensuring this need for interconnectivity is required and needs to be expressly called out and monitored in any new clean energy legislation. I look forward to working with this body to further explore these and other ideas to ensure Illinois' clean energy future is equitable and accessible to all.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify today,

Delmar L. Gillus, Jr.  
COO, [Elevate Energy](#)