

The background features a large, bright yellow sun with a gradient, partially obscured by a larger, lighter yellow circle. Below the sun, there are stylized buildings in shades of green and yellow, with grey rectangular windows. The overall design is clean and modern, using a color palette of yellows, greens, and greys.

# Building a Brighter Day:

Energy Efficiency Innovations Yield  
High Returns for the Commonwealth

---

A TRIPLE WIN FOR EMPLOYMENT, EQUITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

**Community Labor United**

*Report author: Judith Grant, MPH*

---

## Executive Summary

Over the past four years, Community Labor United's Green Justice Coalition (CLU/GJC) has created a groundbreaking model for energy efficiency. Working with the state and utility companies, CLU/GJC has brought Massachusetts's home weatherization program to working-class communities of color, dramatically improved wages and job standards for weatherization workers, and kept tens of thousands of tons of greenhouse gases out of the air. CLU/GJC has won:

### *Policy Breakthroughs*

- ✓ **HIGH BENCHMARKS FOR GREENHOUSE GAS REDUCTION:** CLU/GJC joined a broad set of organizations to push for ambitious state climate goals. Adding the voices of immigrants, working-class communities and labor unions, we helped win the strongest greenhouse gas reduction standards in the country. We then went on to make sure that weatherization workers and communities of color benefited from those goals.
- ✓ **ACCESSIBLE HOME WEATHERIZATION:** CLU/GJC worked with utility companies to design and test Community Mobilization Initiatives (CMIs). These pilot projects hired trusted local organizations to reach out in their neighborhoods, sign residents up for home weatherization, and walk them through the complicated approval process. The CMIs found union and community contractors who hired and trained local workers and created pathways into construction careers. The CMIs also showed that subsidies for low- to moderate-income families and subsidies for "pre-weatherization" building repairs were necessary and cost-effective in making energy efficiency accessible to working-class communities. The state and utilities agreed to incorporate CMI lessons in the upcoming three-year energy efficiency plan.
- ✓ **OVERCOMING AFFORDABILITY HURDLES:** Our CMIs helped identify the biggest barriers to weatherization in low- to moderate-income communities. Massachusetts's new three-year plan will fund Efficient Neighborhoods+ (EN+), a targeted program for working class neighborhoods that includes:
  - tiered rebates that make weatherization more affordable,
  - "pre-weatherization" subsidies that fix problems like old wiring and carbon monoxide emissions, and
  - effective outreach by trusted community organizations.The three-year plan will also remove the complicated process of verifying income eligibility of households by automatically qualifying all families living in defined low- to moderate-income neighborhoods.
- ✓ **DATA ACCESS:** Effective programs need to track whom they are serving. After much negotiation, CLU/GJC won a commitment to establish a database that uses utility data to track weatherization work geographically and tell us if low- to moderate-income communities are being adequately served.
- ✓ **EQUITY:** While all these policy breakthroughs can certainly be seen as equity gains, CLU/GJC has achieved something broader. We have made equity part of the Commonwealth's energy efficiency policy and worldview. Access to good jobs and weatherization services for all rate-payers – regardless of race, income, and language – are now explicit goals of Massachusetts's energy efficiency programs.

These solutions originated with our grassroots leaders, who live the challenges of equity and affordability every day. Their policy breakthroughs have led to dramatic economic gains for working class communities, weatherization workers, and the Commonwealth.

Still on the agenda are completing the data access project; allocating more funds for community outreach; and adopting broader societal benefit-cost measures in calculating energy efficiency gains.