



December 10, 2020

Congressman Bill Keating
2351 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Keating:

In May of 2019, the Martha's Vineyard Commission (MVC) established the Climate Action Task Force (CATF) to develop and implement energy transformation and resiliency plans to make our Island more secure in the face of mounting climate hazards. At the end of 2019, the MVC adopted a [Climate Crisis Resolution](#).¹

As the work on Martha's Vineyard to address climate change continues, we have been actively assembling the components of a successful climate change adaptation program. One key piece that is still missing is meaningful partnerships at the federal government level. Now, with a change within the Executive Branch certain, we must bring the weight of the federal government to the table. Green infrastructure, energy transformation, and ecologically regenerative best practices must be deployed with urgency, and at the scale and speed required, with help from the federal government.

As we initially drafted this very letter, Beach Road — linking our lone hospital and year round ferry terminal — was flooding in several places due to a fairly routine nor'easter. Even astronomical high tides are showing up as “sunny day” nuisance flooding in more areas across the Island every year. With our coastal resources under immense threat, we have committed to becoming a leader in the larger quest to adapt to climate disruption. The Island community is engaged and willing; we stand ready to actively partner with state and federal government entities looking to showcase proofs of concept and refine them for real world application in other regions. Such collaboration positions us for best practices and policies that account for unique local conditions.

We hope the ability to work with your offices as soon as possible will signal a recognition of the urgency to begin to rapidly transform not just the Island but our country and world in response to the threat of runaway climate change. We must make this year the first year when real progress begins, and continue that progress year in and year out until we have stabilized a situation that is [by all measures getting away from our control](#).² With this in mind, we would like to host a joint meeting with your office and Senator Markey's and Senator Warren's offices in early January to discuss how we can work together for solutions for Martha's Vineyard.

¹ <https://www.mvcommission.org/sites/default/files/docs/MVC%20Climate%20Crisis%20Resolution%20December%202019.pdf>

² <https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/sgsm19311.doc.htm>

Background

The Island's resiliency planning will continue to be developed over the coming years, and will include [living documents](#) for our community as this climate crisis accelerates.³ A long-term partnership with the federal government can join ongoing collaboration with a range of regionally strategic partners. We are working with our neighboring island of Nantucket on initiatives of mutual concern. We have engaged in strategic planning sessions with our energy provider, Eversource, and have taken steps to ensure ongoing dialogue and coordination. Offshore wind developers are already engaged with the local community for job training and resiliency efforts as well as developing a maintenance facility in our main port of Vineyard Haven. In the name of broad-based participation, we are hosting numerous listening sessions with state agencies charged with resiliency, along with a diverse group of Island stakeholders and citizens. Notes from those meetings can be found [here](#).⁴

Our Island is highly vulnerable to the hazards of climate change, and our community recognizes the importance of proactive planning to ensure its viability for future generations. The scale and scope of impacts from a shifting climate will be extensive and span all facets of our lives, including detrimental impacts to our abundant natural resources. Climate change will have indelible effects on our geography, economy, health, natural resources, and environmental services. Although we have a growing local economy, we rely heavily on the mainland for resources. Residents and business alike are immensely dependent on the Steamship Authority (SSA) for the people and products they transport, and the entire enterprise is increasingly contending with [rising costs owing to climate disruption and the electrification of its ferry fleet](#).⁵ Protecting our harbors, coastlines, and water-adjacent properties will carry a heavy price tag and involve significant infrastructure upgrades.

We strive to use our remote location to our advantage, but find it increasingly challenging. Aquaculture has been a viable livelihood for generations, yet its future here is greatly troubled by a warming and acidifying ocean. Our economy, underpinned by a seasonal influx of residents and tourists, may also be threatened by increasingly catastrophic weather events and global disruptions from climate change. Pandemics and destabilized regions across our country and the world will only compound these challenges.

We represent in many ways the proverbial and *actual* last-mile problem when it comes to aid from either the state or federal government, and are acutely aware of the need for external assistance to implement critical planning priorities needed for resiliency. We also recognize that we have often been underserved in the past as planning and implementation dollars go to larger, more populated regions. Earnings may be buoyed by the short and busy seasonal economy, but our Island's modest [year-round income of under \\$40,000 per capita](#) — roughly on par with the state average — is greatly eroded by a [cost-of-living index of 133.3](#).⁶

At the same time, our Island offers an opportunity to explore innovative, nature-based solutions. Many of our retirees and seasonal residents bring extensive practical experience from across the country, in both private and public practice. When paired with an industrious year-round citizenry, the Vineyard offers an apt prospect for deploying strategies as a sort of testing ground. Whether these are innovative salt marsh protections, or autonomous EV fleets, there are many solutions that could be applied within a finite geography such as ours for realistic dollar investments. Best of all, these solutions could improve the lives of Island households, while serving as a pilot for larger communities elsewhere. On the more immediate horizon, we have some priority projects that are already designed and vetted that will need financial assistance to get off the ground.

³ Visit <https://www.mvcommission.org/climate-change> change for Energy Working Papers and Adaptation Booklets

⁴ <https://www.mvcommission.org/climate-change>

⁵ https://www.mvcommission.org/sites/default/files/docs/SSA_analysis_March2020.pdf

⁶ https://www.mvcommission.org/sites/default/files/docs/web03_MVSP%20FINAL%20PRINT%202019-03-21-3.pdf

We would very much like to continue correspondence with your office, to collaborate and learn, and inform your important work in the upcoming Congress. Please let us know how we can further engage. Again, we seek to schedule a meeting in the near future to advance these important conversations, and work toward meaningful solutions to address climate change in the coming decade.

Adam Turner
Executive Director

Doug Sederholm
Commission Chair

Ben Robinson
Chair of Climate Action Task Force

CC Secretary John Kerry
Governor Charles Baker
Senator Julian Cyr
Representative Dylan Fernandes