

# Transforming Climate Policy Together with Community



## Mission:

*Address socioeconomic disparities, institutional racism, and inequities experienced by our communities; and organize communities for collective action resulting in social change to obtain self-determination, wellness, justice, and prosperity.*

As a grant-funded partner in the Climate Change Health and Equity (CCHE) network, the Coalition of Communities of Color (CCC) focuses on the needs of communities most affected by climate change and environmental pollution. CCC's policy work and advocacy efforts aim to promote equitable solutions. Their efforts align with the overall [CCHE Theory of Change](#) as part of Strategy 3.

CCC was an alliance of culturally specific community-based organizations (CBO) in Portland, Oregon with representation from the following communities of color: African, African American, Asian, Latine, Middle Eastern and North African, Native American, Pacific Islander, and Slavic. CCC supported a collective racial justice effort to improve outcomes for communities of color through policy analysis and advocacy, environmental justice, culturally-appropriate data and research, and leadership development in communities of color. Key areas of focus for CCC and its members under the CCHE initiative have included energy justice, water justice, and climate justice. CCC's CCHE-funded activities are outlined in a 2022 theory of change, [here \(slide 18\)](#) and described in more detail below. Key partners in CCC's CCHE-funded work are listed at the end of the document.

**Oregon Clean Energy Opportunity Campaign.** The Oregon Clean Energy Opportunity (OCEO) campaign formed in 2021 and was led by a steering committee of frontline CBOs including CCC and many of its coalition members such as Verde, APANO, NAYA, OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon, alongside the Oregon Just Transition Alliance (OJTA). They worked directly with communities to learn what Oregonians most at risk from climate change needed to see in Oregon's transition to clean energy. They then centered those learnings in the policy development process through a collaborative process including legislators, labor, local governments, utilities, and others. The result was the passage of 100% Clean Energy for All (HB2021), part of a suite of bills passed that focus on energy justice and housing, including reduced energy rates for low-income households and funding for home energy efficiency upgrades. A key bill, HB2021, mandated utilities to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions by 2040 and set clean energy standards for Oregon's two largest electric utilities. The Energy Affordability Act (HB2475) allowed all utilities to consider social and environmental justice factors when developing discount programs and rate classes for low-income customers. Additionally, a fund was created to enable environmental justice (EJ) communities and organizations to engage in Public Utility Commission rulemaking and policy-making, a first in this space. This initiative was a massive and historic effort that demonstrated the power of partnerships, collaboration, and inclusion in building stronger, equitable, and lasting climate policy.

# Policies, Activities, and Initiatives Advanced During the CCHE Initiative

## **Energy affordability and systems for sustainable energy were improved.**

In response to increasing energy costs in Oregon, Verde (CCC member focused on building environmental wealth to communities through social enterprise, outreach, and advocacy) teamed with the Bonneville Environmental Foundation to create one of Portland's first large scale community solar projects. When completed, it could help reduce energy bills between 30%-45% of 150 qualified low-income residents in the Cully neighborhood. Community solar was a solution that allowed renters and lower-income households to reap the benefits from the renewable energy transition.

### Select Resources and Media

- [Oregon Water Justice Framework](#)
- [Cultivating Justice in a Changing Climate](#)
- [Rooted in Values Guided by Vision, Community-Driven Climate Justice Framework for Multnomah County](#)

## **Housing stock was made healthier and more resilient to reduce adverse health outcomes.**

The [Building Community/Shifting Power \(Build/Shift\)](#) team was created to bring lived experience and expertise to develop a community-driven policy around building energy efficiency standards in Portland. Build/Shift was a team of BIPOC community members convened by CCC, Verde, and other community partners that collaborated with the City's Bureau of Planning and Sustainability on equitable building decarbonization. Recent efforts have focused on standards for rental apartments encompassing healthy housing, equitable energy, anti-displacement, resilience, and temperature, known as the HEART standards. Among other benefits, the standards aimed to provide renters with information on energy usage and increase transparency and disclosure of costs beyond rent and the health risks of gas stoves.

APANO (CCC member and one of Oregon's longest-standing Asian and Pacific Islander grassroots advocacy organizations) developed the Climate Health and Housing Institute (CHHI), a 6-month leadership program to train up leaders to be environmental champions. CHHI leaders explored the interconnections between the forces driving gentrification, health, disparities, and the climate crisis, and learned about ways to organize and advocate for justice in communities.

## **The most impacted Oregonians spent less money on heating and cooling, had refuge from bad outdoor air, experienced fewer sick days/emergency room visits, and lived in more disaster-resilient homes.**

In 2022, CCC, Verde, and other partners helped lead and support a campaign to pass the Emergency Heat Relief Act (SB 1536). This landmark bill was developed in response to the Pacific Northwest heat dome that occurred in Summer 2021 and led to the deaths of 96 Oregonians, many of whom were seniors, people with disabilities, and people with underlying medical conditions. The bill increased access to portable cooling devices, required new rental units to provide adequate cooling, created a program to distribute air conditioners and filters to vulnerable people on an emergency basis, and expanded a grant program to support emergency shelters that provide shelter in case of poor air quality or extreme heat or cold.

## **The most impacted Oregonians had access to clean drinking water, spent less money on water, were prepared during emergencies, and were educated on water resources to be better equipped to advocate for their water needs.**

Since 2020, CCC has worked in deep collaboration with partners to advance water justice efforts in Oregon. In 2022, after conducting dozens of interviews during the pandemic to gather community concerns and priorities, CCC and Verde, along with other Oregon Water Futures Collaborative partners including Willamette Partnership and the University of Oregon, released the [Oregon Water Justice Framework: Community-Driven Principles and Priorities to Advance Water Justice](#). This policy framework was used by decision-makers and was recently quoted and referenced by the Governor as a tool for leading legislative efforts involving frontline communities.

## Insights from CCHE Initiative

- **Over the years, CCC has deepened its relationships with healthcare organizations.** One of the clearest examples was the creation of a storytelling zine in July 2023 in collaboration with community and the Multnomah County Health Department. The zine—[Cultivating Justice in a Changing Climate: A collection of stories and art rooted in Multnomah County's communities of](#)

color-blended art and data in an accessible way to create a fuller and more detailed picture of the ways that climate change impacted communities of color and empowered frontline communities to use these data to influence policy. CCC, along with community partners, collected stories through over 150 surveys, a focus group, and interviews with community members about the impact of climate on communities of color. The zine included indicators like walkability, tree canopy cover, air quality, and access to green spaces, and included original artwork by a local BIPOC artist. CCC also collaborated with Multnomah County on the development of a community-driven climate justice framework. The framework—[Rooted in Values, Guided by Vision: Community-driven Climate Justice Framework for Multnomah County](#)—served as a guiding document for the creation of Multnomah County’s first ever Climate Justice Plan and as companion document to the zine.

- **Through their involvement with CCHE, CCC has successfully leveraged additional resources to improve community resilience and environmental justice impact.** In partnership with Multnomah County Health Department, the Multnomah County Office of Sustainability, and the City of Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, CCC continued work on a new community initiative to address racial and health inequities. Through the Modernized Anti-Racist Data Ecosystems (MADE) for Health Justice grant, a local data ecosystem was created to improve community health, connect data across local government sectors, and prioritize frontline communities in the context of climate impacts. Portland was one of four select cities to participate in MADE, a 3-year \$1.2 million effort funded by the de Beaumont Foundation and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. CCC staff said their participation in CCHE has strengthened their application by demonstrating ongoing work at the intersection of climate justice and health equity. Their CCHE work gave them access to a network of other CBOs with whom they could share ideas and best practices as they applied for new funding. CCHE has provided “spaces to come together and learn from one another.” Additionally, CCC has worked with other healthcare partners including Kaiser Permanente and Oregon Health Authority, who have provided funding to help advance climate and environmental justice efforts.
- **Working with government entities and utilities required deft navigation of power dynamics but led to successful outcomes.** Power dynamics often stifled collaborative efforts, particularly in community-driven processes involving powerful groups accustomed to making all the decisions. The success of OCEO can be attributed to its inclusive steering committee, which was comprised of CCC, OJTA, and other frontline CBOs who held ultimate decision-making power. CCC’s advocacy has consistently championed more meaningful community engagement, and over time, they have observed a positive trend in local governments’ desire to co-create spaces that foster community knowledge and lived experience. Increasingly, CCC has been invited to present their work to other funders and discuss the connections between climate and health equity.

## Looking Ahead

The passage of the bills championed by OCEO was a historic win for energy and environmental justice in Oregon. Looking forward, CCC will focus on implementation of the policies passed in 2021 and build in longer term solutions for energy burden. On water justice, CCC alongside other Oregon Water Futures collaborative partner organizations, plan to advocate for policies outlined in the Oregon Water Justice Framework. CCC will also continue efforts to accelerate the development of health-focused local data systems that center principles of anti-racism, equity, justice, and community power through participation in the MADE project.

## Key Partners

Organization	Type
APANO	Community Partner
Energy Justice Leadership Institute	Institutional Partner
Multnomah County Office of Sustainability	Government Partner
NAYA	Community Partner
OPAL	Community Partner
Oregon Health Authority	Government Partner

Organization	Type
Oregon residents	Community Partner
Oregon Just Transition Alliance	Environmental Partner
Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility	Health Partner
Verde	Community Partner