

State Renewable Energy Policy for Climate, Health, and Equity: **A FACT SHEET FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS**

Energy for electricity, heating, and cooling has greatly improved our quality of life, providing for lighting, heating, cooling and the manufacture of many helpful products. But the way in which this energy is currently produced — mainly through burning of fossil fuels — comes at a high cost to our health and to the environment (and that’s even without accounting for the added impacts of extracting, transporting, and storing the fossil fuels). Significant reductions in illness and deaths can be achieved if we switch from dirty fossil fuels to renewable energy. As a result, health professionals should have a prominent voice in energy policy conversations.

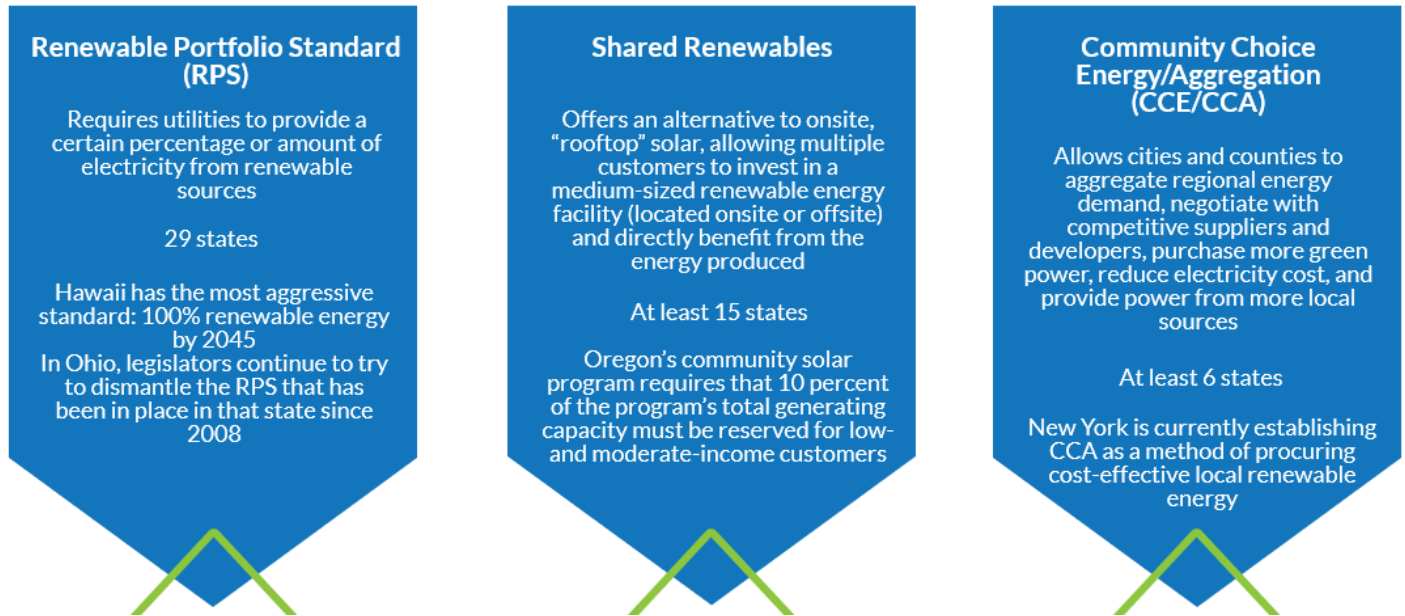
Given ongoing policy gridlock at the federal level and the Administration’s rollback of federal efforts to address climate change, more attention is shifting to state legislatures as venues for renewable energy policy. States can lead the way on renewable energy, but can also be venues for detrimental legislation.

To assist you in making your voice heard in energy policy conversations at the state level, this fact sheet summarizes some of the significant state renewable energy policies, offers key messages to use in advocating for state renewable energy policy, and points to additional information and resources.

State Renewable Energy Policy

State renewable energy policy generally consists of a suite of policies designed to work together to promote renewable energy. Many states set goals or mandates for a specific amount of renewable energy production in the state. States also commonly work to reduce technical and financial barriers to renewable energy development and usage (e.g. providing financial incentives to encourage new renewable energy installations). Because renewable energy production is more likely to lend itself to distributed generation (think solar panels on home rooftops as opposed to centralized, coal- or gas-fired power plants) many policies also focus on facilitating distributed generation. Common state policies in this regard include standards to ensure renewable energy systems can connect to the power grid and net metering which provides a way for renewable energy system owners to be credited for energy they provide to the grid. Some states also work to ensure that low- and moderate-income people can access renewable energy (e.g. supporting development of shared renewables).

A few of the specific renewable energy policies particularly important to climate, health, and equity are detailed on the following page with a general description of the policy, how many states currently have the policy in place, and a specific state example.



Using Your Voice to Influence State Renewable Energy Policy

As a health professional, you have an important voice to bring to state energy policy conversations. You witness the health impacts of energy policy (e.g. treating asthma attacks exacerbated by air pollution from burning fossil fuels or preparing emergency response plans for extreme weather events due to climate change). Your professional experience and the stories of what you are seeing on the ground are the best advocacy tools you have to influence decision-makers. To supplement your own experiences and stories, we've provided some specific guidance on what types of state energy policies to support or oppose and some key messages on renewable energy, climate, health, and equity. You can use this information when contacting or meeting with state legislators, testifying on a bill, writing op-eds, or engaging in other advocacy on state renewable energy policy.

Support state energy policies that...

Oppose state energy policies that...

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize renewables over fossil fuels • Establish/strengthen requirements for renewable energy production (e.g. Renewable Portfolio Standards) • Ensure renewable energy reaches low- and moderate-income people (e.g. promoting shared renewables) • Facilitate community participation in energy decisions (e.g. Community Choice Energy/Aggregation) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize fossil fuels over renewables • Repeal/weaken Renewable Portfolio Standards • Prevent individuals and communities from pursuing renewable energy |
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KEY TALKING POINTS

- Climate change is the greatest public health challenge of the 21st century. Electricity production is one of the largest sources of climate pollution in the U.S., responsible for nearly 1/3 of greenhouse gas emissions (GHGE). Electricity generated from renewables releases about 1/20th the GHGE of coal over the full lifecycle. Switching from fossil fuels to clean, renewable energy is a critical path to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.
- Current energy production also contributes to air, water, and soil pollution, and harms our health in many ways. For example, air pollution from burning coal causes over 13,000 deaths and 20,000 heart attacks in the U.S. each year. Likewise, extraction, storage, and transport of natural gas can result in negative health impacts due to associated emissions of particulate matter, methane, and volatile organic compounds.
- Low-income communities and communities of color are disproportionately burdened by the health impacts of energy production from fossil fuels. For example, coal power plants are disproportionately located in low-income communities and communities of color.
- Renewable energy offers substantial benefits for health, including reductions in asthma and other respiratory disease, cardiovascular disease, and premature deaths. Switching from coal combustion and other fossil fuels to clean, safe, renewable energy - like wind, solar and hydroelectric - is one of the most important things we can do for our health and for the climate.

Visit the **US Climate and Health Alliance State Policy Initiative [website](#)** for more information on how you can take action, as well as tools to help you along the way.