



Youth Climate Strike, September 2019

Last month, SEIU 1021 member and legislative assistant Chris Naso supported Berkeley Vice Mayor Kate Harrison in drafting and passing historic climate justice [legislation](#), funding unionized contractors to replace dangerous, toxic, and polluting gas home appliances with clean and efficient all-electric versions. The \$1.5 million program, which aims to leverage additional regional, state, and federal funding, represents a key partnership on labor and the climate emergency between the Bay Area public sector and building trades unions, and the broader environmental movement.

The legislation requires contractors to meet minimum labor standards that benefit unionized contractors, and which were developed in partnership with the Construction Trades Workforce Initiative (CTWI), the nonprofit partner of the East Bay Building Trades. The program will also be administered by Berkeley City staff who are SEIU and PEU members.

Households eligible for the program include low- to moderate-income tenants and property owners residing in affordable housing units and homes. In solidarity and partnership with California IBEW workers, the legislation also includes a resolution calling on state leaders to rapidly decommission the natural gas distribution system in a way that is safe, economical for remaining customers, and that provides a just transition for affected gas utility and extraction

workers.

Natural gas, also known as [methane](#), is 86 times more potent over a twenty year period than carbon dioxide at trapping heat in the atmosphere. From gas wells to home appliances, scientists have determined that natural gas is constantly leaking at [alarming rates](#) across the entire gas pipeline supply chain. When accounting for leakage rates, natural gas is one the largest sources of climate emissions in California cities. In Bay Area cities like Berkeley, electricity is largely produced by carbon-free and renewable energy.

In 2019, Vice Mayor Harrison's office passed the [nation's first prohibition](#) on natural gas infrastructure in new construction, helping spark a nationwide movement to electrify new and existing buildings.