



Phaedra Ellis-Lamkins  
CEO, Green For All  
Oakland, California

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### ***Good Jobs and Careers in the Green Economy***

Chairman Obey and members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me here today.

I am here representing Green For All, a national organization dedicated to helping to build an inclusive, green economy – strong enough to lift millions of people out of poverty.

I have been asked to help the Subcommittee understand how the creation of a green economy will help the economic security of America's workers and the competitiveness of our employers.

Let me start by talking about how we define green jobs. Definitions matter: they matter from a policy standpoint because they allow us to maximize the effectiveness of economic and workforce development strategies; and they matter in a political context because the term green jobs, while widely known, is being defined in many ways by many parties. Unchecked, this process will undermine the usefulness of the term and render it meaningless – or worse, obscure its intended meaning.

We articulated a simple but I think useful definition in a report that we issued last year – *Green Collar Jobs in America’s Cities* -- with our colleagues at the Apollo Alliance: green collar jobs “are well paid career track jobs that contribute directly to preserving or enhancing environmental quality” ....By this standard “...if a job improves the environment, but doesn’t provide a family-supporting wage or a career ladder to move low-income workers into higher-skilled occupations, it is not a green-collar job. Such would be the case with workers installing solar panels without job security or proper training, or young people pushing brooms at a green building site without opportunity for training or advancement.”<sup>1</sup>

But why green jobs? Why now?

America confronts two enormous crises right now. The first is the economic crisis that this Congress and the Obama administration are grappling with on a day to day basis. There’s little I need to add to the debate around this issue. But I must note that the recession is hitting low-income communities and communities of color particularly hard. This disparity only compounds two long term trends: the extraordinarily high rates of poverty for a country as wealthy as our own – poverty that is unacceptably concentrated among people of color – and levels of income inequality that are as extreme as they’ve been since we first start gathering reliable data.

The second enormous crisis we face is global climate change. It is not melodramatic to call this the greatest crisis ever faced by humanity. And it is not simply an ecological crisis: Paul Volcker, the chairman of the U.S. Federal Reserve under President Reagan, has flatly stated that “if [nothing is done,] you can be sure that the economy will go down the drain in the next thirty years.”<sup>2</sup> Polar bears will not be the biggest victims of global warming. People will be the biggest victims – ourselves, our children, and grandchildren. And as Hurricane Katrina demonstrated, it will be poor people and people of color who are hit hardest.

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.greenforall.org/resources/green-collar-jobs-in-america2019s-cities>, page 3

<sup>2</sup> Associated Press. *Economist Paul Volker Says Steps to Curb Global Warming Will Not Devastate the Economy*. February 6, 2007.

We think there is a solution to these two problems: to build a green economy strong and inclusive enough to lift people out of poverty.

To, in effect, fight poverty, pollution and global warming at the same time. We want to build a green economy – but one that Dr. King would have been proud of.

In order to build that economy we need to create good jobs in basic green industries– renewable energies like wind, solar, and advanced biofuels; green building; transportation; waste management; water conservation; and environmental remediation.

Just as importantly, we need to create pathways into these jobs, and the careers they represent, for people who are at the margins, and often at the smokestack end, of the pollution-based economy.

I'd like, today, to talk about how federal policy is needed to create these jobs and ensure that they are both high quality and highly accessible. First let me articulate some of the characteristics of green jobs. The term, as I mentioned, is often used, but rarely with specific understanding of what it means. Here, then, are what I'd call the 4 truths about green jobs.

**1. The job creation potential is enormous.** A broad range of studies demonstrate that the renewable energy sector generates more jobs per megawatt of power installed, per unit of energy produced, and per dollar of investment, than the fossil fuel-based energy sector. It simply takes more work to manufacture, install and maintain renewable energy sources than it does to extract them from the earth. And the amount of work that goes into making a building more efficient is exponentially more work than simply maintaining a wasteful one. This job creation advantage extends beyond the energy sector. Take waste management: every time we throw away recyclable consumer waste or building materials, we're throwing away jobs that could have been created.

In essence, building a green economy represents not just a shift from a fossil fuel based economy to a clean energy economy; it represents a shift to a skilled labor-intensive economy.

**2. Green jobs are not out in a sci-fi future somewhere.** These

are jobs that for the most part already exist, but may need to be refocused on green outcomes. Building a green economy will involve some brand new industries and jobs, but for the most part it will involve transforming the industries and jobs we already have. Whether or not a job is green is not, if I may, black and white; there are many shades of green that evolve as industries change their processes and what they produce.

**3. Green jobs are often middle-skill jobs, requiring some post-secondary education but less than a four-year college degree.** It won't be handful of scientists and engineers who will build the green economy – although obviously these are essential roles. Nor will it only be people who live in certain counties in California and drink too much Chablis. It will be pipefitters and machinists and technicians who build the green economy. These can be good middle-class jobs, and - importantly - accessible to low-income, low-skill workers, who simply need the right training and support.

**4. A lot of these jobs are difficult if not impossible to offshore.** These jobs tend to involve transforming and upgrading the immediate environment, both natural and man-made. You don't ship a building to China to retrofit and ship it back. And building trades jobs are not the only green jobs that are more likely to be made in America. The manufacturing sector, which, as you know, has seen enormous job loss in recent years, could receive a substantial job creation boost from a shift to renewable energy. These are industries which rely on component parts that are very big (like wind turbines) or very fragile (like solar panels) - therefore being harder to transport over long distances .

Those four truths represent the good news. But the bad news is that the promise of green jobs and a green economy – not to mention the liveable planet we must leave for our grandchildren – will be lost unless we change the rules of our economy. Right now, it relies on mistaken assumptions: that fossil fuel energy is abundant and cheap; that pollution is free; that fast and cheap is the same as quality and productivity.

To change these tenets, we need specific policies to ensure that markets for industries that create green jobs are supported, that

these jobs provide family sustaining wages and benefits, and that there are pathways to green economy careers for those Americans who most need them.

Here are several policy recommendations that this Subcommittee might consider to achieve that goal.

**1. Smart energy and climate policy has to be the foundation of an inclusive green economy.** Although energy and climate legislation is not within the jurisdiction of this committee, it is almost certain that at some point in the 111th Congress, the House will vote on a climate and energy bill. This country - and our planet - needs a bill that limits greenhouse gas emissions and advances aggressive climate solutions that are timely enough to avert the worst environmental and economic consequences of global warming. We need a bill that invests generated revenue to maximize the gain and minimize the pain for low-income people in the transition to a green economy.

**2. Maximizing impact will require policies at a scale commensurate with the challenge we face.** Green For All and our partners have developed a proposal for a Clean Energy Corps (CEC), which is an ambitious effort to integrate jobs, training, and service to combat global warming, grow local economies, and demonstrate the employment promise of a clean energy economy. In this era of widespread budget deficits, it makes sense to implement large-scale energy-saving measures on existing buildings – retrofits that can be financed by a revolving loan fund that will replenish itself with the energy savings achieved. In this time of crisis, when Americans are looking for solutions, the CEC can be a signature initiative that captures the imagination of America, unites key constituencies, and motivates millions to act. On that note, I want to thank members of the House for passing the GIVE Act last week, which contains a crucial national service component of the CEC.

**3. Job quality in the green economy won't happen without smart public policies that ensure it.** I'd like to recommend to the Committee a recent report written by our colleagues at Good Jobs

First -- *High Road or Low Road: Job Quality in the New Green Economy*.<sup>3</sup> The report documents the divergence we're seeing between employers in green sectors who treat workers with respect and fair compensation, and those that do not, which includes businesses offshoring production of clean energy products in to pay substandard wages. Fortunately, we have a toolbox of policies that have been honed and tested at the local level -- including community benefit and project labor agreements, high-value contracting, and wage standards -- to ensure that the green economy we create takes the high road and not the low road.

**4. The green economy won't be built without a skilled workforce.** I want to thank you Mr. Obey, your fantastic staff, and this entire committee for including \$500 million for green job training in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. We will be working with our partners to ensure we receive the maximum impact for that investment. We commit to bringing back to this Subcommittee the stories we hear and lessons we learn from our training partnerships, and identifying those that provide the best models for connecting skilled workers to emerging green industries. I would also respectfully ask the Committee to look beyond the two years of funding provided by the Recovery Act and consider reserving funds in next year's appropriations bill for the Green Jobs Act, authorized in the 2007 Energy bill and authored by Secretary of Labor Solis.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak with you today. Your consideration of our efforts -- an attempt to bridge two enormous global challenges to the benefit of American working people -- is humbling and inspiring. You are in the unenviable position of having to figure out how to solve problems of enormous difficulty and import. Rest assured that Green For All will stand with you in your efforts, and that we stand ready to provide any additional information you seek.

Thank you.

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<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.goodjobsfirst.org/pdf/gjfgreenjobsrpt.pdf>