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In The Wake Of Hurricane Sandy, Boston Students Deliver Climate Change Petition to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection

Boston, Massachusetts – A group of Boston-area students hand-delivered their climate change [Petition for Rulemaking](#) to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. The students filed the petition in an attempt to get the State to protect Massachusetts' climate system and shorelines by adequately protecting the atmosphere, a public trust resource upon which all Massachusetts residents rely for their health and safety.

The students had planned to deliver the Petition on Monday, but were delayed by Hurricane Sandy, which shut down Boston schools and government offices. The hurricane is one of the largest storms to ever hit the East Coast. Massachusetts was hit with heavy winds that toppled trees and power lines, causing close to 385,000 residents to lose power. Shorelines were pounded by high seas, forcing evacuations in low-lying areas. Scientists will have to study whether this storm would have happened notwithstanding our changing climate, but increasing surface ocean temperatures, increased moisture in the air, and increasing sea levels certainly plays a role in the intensity and impact of this kind of storm. Big storms like Sandy are predicted to be the new norm and cost the Commonwealth billions of dollars, according to government reports. Boston youth are working to prevent this from being the case.

The petition, filed by several hundred students from Boston high schools as well as Boston College Law School, acknowledges that Massachusetts is a national leader in taking the initiative to reduce greenhouse emissions, but urges further steps to constrain greenhouse gas emissions, requesting that the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection declare a rule that would require the Department to take the following steps:

- Prepare and implement a plan to ensure that, starting in 2013, statewide fossil fuel carbon dioxide emissions are reduced by 6 percent per year;
- Publish annual progress reports on statewide greenhouse gas emissions on the Department's website for public review;
- Consider ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by more than 25% by 2020; and
- Adopt any necessary policies or regulations to implement the greenhouse gas constraints.

Choosing to use the procedure of filing a citizens petition formally requesting issuance of a specific state regulation is part of one of the most remarkable legal strategies on climate crisis to date. The strategy was launched on May 4, 2011 as part of the TRUST Campaign, in which youth filed legal actions in 49 states and against the federal government. The filing of the Massachusetts petition will be the most recent legal action filed in the international TRUST Campaign.

Today also marks the release of the film [TRUST Massachusetts](#), telling the story of the lead Massachusetts petitioner, Eshe Sherley. Eshe's short documentary is the ninth film in the series [Stories of TRUST: Calling for Climate Recovery](#), which captures the stories of some of the energized youth who are asking their government to protect them and future generations. Right before this important election, the TRUST youth—many of whom cannot vote—are calling on their leaders and adult voters to be, in Eshe Sherley's words, "upstanders, not bystanders" on climate crisis.

“People across the country are acting with urgency, conviction, and dedication, but our legislature has not followed suit,” said Eshe. “We need more than individual action; we need our governmental systems to act now for my future, and the future of every other American.”

Our Children's Trust is a nonprofit focused on protecting earth's natural systems for current and future generations. We are supporting youth in the coordinated Atmospheric Trust Litigation effort. We are here to empower youth as they stand up for their lawful inheritance: a healthy planet. We are mothers, fathers, grandparents, aunts, uncles, teachers. We are adults, part of the ruling generation, and we care about the future of our children—and their children's children. www.ourchildrenstrust.org/

iMatter is a youth-led campaign of the nonprofit group, Kids vs Global Warming, that is focused on mobilizing and empowering youth to lead the way to a sustainable and just world. Using multiple platforms at the local, state, and national level, we are committed to raising the voices of the youngest generation to issue a wake-up call to live, lead and govern as if our future matters. www.imattermarch.org/

WITNESS is the global pioneer in the use of video to promote human rights. We empower people to transform personal stories of abuse into powerful tools for justice, promoting public engagement and policy change. In partnership with the TRUST Campaign we seek to bring visibility to the challenges our youth already face because of the changing climate and call for a massive assault on fossil fuel emissions. Without an all-out assault, effects will range from drought to disease; from food shortages to tainted water supplies; from the loss of homes due to floods, erosion and fire to massive relocations. The human rights challenge is most succinctly summarized by Mary Robinson, “Climate change will, in short, have immense human consequences.” WITNESS partnered on this campaign in hopes that predictions will not become realities. To view the stories from our youth included in the TRUST Series go to www.witness.org/campaigns/all-campaigns/imatter or www.ourchildrenstrust.org/trust-films.

Youth CAN was founded in January of 2007 by students at the Boston Latin School as a network of school-based, youth-led, extra-curricular climate actions clubs. <http://www.blsyouthcan.org/>

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