

April 2, 2014  
Dean Gamble  
ENERGY STAR® Certified Homes Program  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Mr. Gamble:

The Consortium for Energy Efficiency (CEE) respectfully submits the following comments in response to Draft ENERGY STAR® Certified Homes Version 3.1 National Program Requirements, released by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on November 20, 2013.

CEE is the binational organization of energy efficiency program administrators and a staunch supporter of the ENERGY STAR Program. CEE members are responsible for ratepayer-funded efficiency programs in 45 US states, the District of Columbia, and seven Canadian provinces. In 2012, CEE members directed nearly \$6.6 billion of the \$8 billion in energy efficiency and demand response program expenditures in the two countries. These comments are offered in support of the local activities CEE members carry out to actively leverage the ENERGY STAR brand. CEE consensus comments are offered in the spirit of strengthening ENERGY STAR so it may continue to serve as our national marketing platform for energy efficiency.

CEE highly values the role ENERGY STAR plays in differentiating energy efficient products and services that the CEE membership supports locally throughout the US and Canada. We appreciate the opportunity to provide these comments.

## Support for Overall Program Approach and Proposed Performance Path Levels

Within the performance-based pathway for ENERGY STAR® Certified Homes Version 3.1, we support EPA's approach to outline more stringent measures in order to achieve 15 percent above the 2012 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) being adopted by numerous states<sup>1</sup>. EPA's general strategy for identifying additional savings through Draft Version 3.1 is also in accord with increasing savings targets for many CEE members. Though these more rigorous criteria will impact builders, CEE members recognize that the proposed efficiency targets are a necessary component of demonstrating savings above code that can be attained using cost-effective techniques and technologies that are already available in the market. EPA's *Draft Version 3.1 Cost & Savings Estimates* document demonstrates positive cash flows<sup>2</sup> for Version 3.1 homes ranging from \$18-\$55 per month, and while these estimates are projected to be similar to, if not better than that being achieved under the Version 3.0 requirements, we note that the results from the thirteen typical homes used in the analysis should not be extrapolated to represent all homes, and CEE does not have any independent research or evidence to indicate the outlined criteria will prove cost effective for builders. Because the majority of program sponsors utilize the Performance Path, we believe it is important to demonstrate that the criteria remain attainable for contractors to reach, both technically and financially. Provided the Version 3.1 specification meets the projected energy savings, while remaining technologically feasible and cost-effective for contractors to implement, CEE offers its qualified support for the proposed Performance Path levels.

## Certain Requirements of the 2012 IECC Are Not Accounted for in the Current Version 3.0 Checklists

CEE is supportive of EPA retaining the basic structure and key components of the Version 3.0 program inspection checklists. Anecdotal evidence from three CEE members suggests that while the four checklists have represented a barrier to uptake of the Version 3.0 requirements, EPA's resolution to keep the checklists in Version 3.1 consistent with those developed for Version 3.0 should ease contractors' adoption of the new specification without creating further implementation costs.

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<sup>1</sup> According to EPA's Webinar presented to CEE members on December 9, 2013, nineteen states are expected to have adopted the 2012 IECC Code by 2015.

<sup>2</sup> This represents monthly net cash flow to the homeowner, calculated as the difference between monthly purchased energy savings and incremental mortgage costs for an ENERGY STAR Version 3.1 home relative to the same home built to the 2012 IECC code.

However, we do note that there are additional requirements in the Draft Version 3.1 specification that are not covered in the Version 3.0 Thermal Enclosure and HVAC System Inspection Checklists; for example, infiltration levels and duct leakage. Any discrepancy between the revised ENERGY STAR specification and previous checklist criteria could negatively impact the overall energy savings of a given project. More specifically, because certain installation measures are not explicitly checked during the post-construction process, programs could be challenged to demonstrate that the total projected savings for an individual home have indeed been realized. We recognize the tradeoffs that EPA considered during the development of the Draft Version 3.1 specification and would like to better understand the potential impact that these verification discrepancies may have on total savings available from a given home. EPA's research indicates that an average of 15 percent savings will be achieved from the proposed specification, however CEE lacks a firm basis upon which to assess whether this can be realized where verification for each measure is not codified in the checklists. We encourage EPA to consider potential solutions during the framing and subsequent development of Version 4.0. CEE offers its support and collaboration in this effort to address the importance of robust quality assurance.

## **Comments Will Not be Provided on Prescriptive Path**

Since the ENERGY STAR Prescriptive Path is specific to regional conditions, and criteria are designated according to a given climate zone, CEE is unable to provide comments that would appropriately represent the varying interests of its' binational constituency.

## **Proposed Implementation Timeline and Program Enforcement Strategy**

CEE commends EPA's proactive effort to address the challenges that its partners face in states that now have, or will adopt, the 2012 IECC. Under this more stringent building code, members are presented with a significantly more rigorous baseline against which they are required to measure incremental energy savings. For this reason, EPA's development of Version 3.1 is timely and is being well received by several CEE members.

While some programs are still working to ensure that partnering contractors are up to speed with the requirements from Version 3.0, others have reported that a subset of their builders are already performing at the proposed Version 3.1 levels. Based on prior work with builders operating in their service territories, CEE members believe that a one year window (between when a state begins to enforce the 2012 IECC and when Version 3.1 requirements will go into effect in that same jurisdiction) represents an appropriate amount of time for ENERGY STAR trade allies to plan and prepare for the implementation of the new criteria. However, we also recommend that EPA seek out and consider direct input from builders and other trade allies.

CEE would once again like to thank the EPA for the opportunity to provide feedback on the DRAFT ENERGY STAR® Certified Homes Version 3.1 National Program Requirements. Please contact CEE Program Manager Alice Rosenberg at 617-337-9287 with any questions about these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ed Wisniewski". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "E".

Ed Wisniewski  
Executive Director