

Environmental Conservation Committee Budget Testimony - 1/23/19

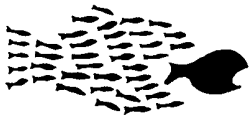
Testimony for Ryan Madden Sustainability Organizer at the Long Island Progressive Coalition

The Long Island Progressive Coalition is a grassroots community-based organization founded in 1979 dedicated to promoting sustainable development, revitalizing local communities, enhancing human dignity, creating effective democracy, and achieving social, economic, and racial justice. Because our Island is facing the brunt of climate impacts, we work to both transform statewide policy to address climate change and to implement solutions on the ground to meet the needs of communities most impacted by environmental burdens, as in 2011/2012 when we passed and implemented Green Jobs Green New York legislation and on-bill financing to provide low-to-moderate income homeowners with energy efficiency services. We are now involved in developing community solar projects with houses of worship and other nonprofit organizations on Long Island. This work is part of a larger movement to democratize our energy systems. Energy democracy centers community ownership, decision-making, and equity at the heart of a renewable energy economy.

Given our orientation in this work, for the past several years we have been active members of NY Renews, an unprecedented statewide coalition of 150+ organizations fighting for climate policies grounded in equity and justice for communities and working people. We are fighting for a 100% clean, renewable NYS that invests in those who are most impacted by environmental degradation and the impacts of climate change. Our statewide coalition represents thousands of New Yorkers through these organizations, including environmental justice and labor leaders.

Long Island is on the frontline of climate change. Our coastal communities are threatened by sea-level rise causing flooding and home damage; families are still recovering from the devastation of Superstorm Sandy; and our neighborhoods are overburdened with air pollution from fossil fuels, causing cancers and heart disease. On Long Island Superstorm Sandy brought with it record storm surges, pummeling winds, and heavy rains. 13 Long Islanders were killed. It damaged 95,000 homes, businesses and government buildings; put communities such as Freeport, Long Beach and Lindenhurst underwater; obliterated boardwalks; knocked out power to refineries, schools, waste-treatment plants and electrical substations; altered the dunes at Fire Island; and washed more than 10 billion gallons of garbage, oil and sewage into people's basements and lawns.

It is with these direct experiences of climate impacts, organizing background, ideology, and vision for Long Island and NYS that the Long Island Progressive Coalition, in solidarity with partners from labor, faith, immigrant, and environmental justice communities, is calling for the inclusion of the Climate and Community Protection Act (CCPA) in both the Assembly and Senate 2019 budget proposals. The Climate and Community Protection Act is the legislative solution to tackling the climate crisis with the urgency and justice it demands. The CCPA would commit New York to reaching 100% renewable energy economy-wide by 2050, attach fair labor standards to clean energy jobs, and ensure adequate resiliency resources get to those communities most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Government agencies, administrative bodies, and bureaucratic entities from local to state must align with the necessity of moving towards 100% clean renewable energy in all sectors of the economy. The CCPA is the policy vehicle that will allow us to do this in NYS.



We applaud Governor Andrew Cuomo for saying we will fight climate change and move NY off fossil fuels in his State of the State address this year. His stated commitment is a result of the tireless efforts of grassroots organizing in NYS. To turn those goals into reality, we believe NYS must pass the Climate and Community Protection Act (CCPA). Truly equitable climate policy must come from the communities with the most at stake and must outline a clear path to an economy-wide renewable energy future. The Climate and Community Protection Act was developed through a process deeply grounded in the needs of communities on the frontlines of climate change, from Brentwood to Buffalo. There is no need to reinvent the wheel when a diverse, broad base constituency of environmental justice organizations, labor unions, and community groups have spent years intentionally crafting CCPA in partnership with the NYS Assembly and Senate.

Additionally, there are specific policy concerns we have with the climate proposals offered in the 2019 Executive Budget that inform our continued support for the passage of the Climate and Community Protection Act as the means for addressing climate change in NYS.

In the Climate Leadership Act of the executive budget, we are pleased to see aggressive goals for moving the electricity sector to clean and renewable energy. However, any truly comprehensive plan to tackle climate change needs more specific deadlines, planning processes, and accountability for moving our whole economy off of fossil fuels than are currently included. We are also concerned about provisions related to the consideration of market-based mechanisms that may include cap-and-trade agreements. We strongly believe the state must aim for true emissions reduction goals that transition New York to being powered by safe, sustainable energy.

The Climate and Community Protection Act has the level of comprehensive planning that NY needs, including prioritized investment for communities of color and workers:

- The CCPA sets a specific timeline for eliminating greenhouse gas emissions economy-wide.
- The CCPA mandates that 40% of state energy funds are invested to benefit environmental justice communities, to lower emissions, create jobs, and lead to better health outcomes for low-income communities and communities of color that currently bear disproportionate health burdens from burning fossil fuels.
- The CCPA mandates that state-supported green jobs have fair wages and are accessible to women and people of color.

It is for all these reasons that the Long Island Progressive Coalition is steadfast in its support for the inclusion of the Climate and Community Protection Act in both the Assembly and Senate 2019 budget proposals. This includes support for the passage of the Climate and Community Protection Act during the legislative cycle if it is not passed through the budget. We want the Assembly and Senate to do all it can to ensure CCPA is passed in 2019.

We look forward to working with the Assembly and Senate leadership to make sure that New York's climate and energy agenda addresses the needs and input of frontline communities and workers, by passing the Climate and Community Protection Act.