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Testimony of Green Ossining on the Proposed 2023-2024 NYS Budget

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Founded in 2009 as an outcome of the Village and Town of Ossining's joint Climate Action Plan, Green Ossining is a community-based environmental organization dedicated to promoting environmental sustainability and developing practical methods to protect our natural resources. We curate environmental programming that serves to educate and provide tools to help residents live more sustainable lives. Further, we collaborate with our municipalities and other organizations across Westchester County to amplify our interests.

We believe we must keep up any momentum of prioritizing the urgency of addressing the drivers, impacts and outcomes of climate change, acknowledge it as the existential threat that it is, and double-down on any commitment to moving bold and ambitious climate policies forward. Including decarbonization policies that support The Climate Act with leading decarbonization policies, but also those that place a high value on nature and nature-based solutions to help us mitigate the looming toll on both New York's residents and our physical assets.

It is no doubt a challenge to determine what to prioritize during the budget process but investing in environmental conservation programs provides significant opportunities to positively affect quality of life, public health and safety, and our economy. Further, it will cost less to invest in and protect our natural resources now— particularly with regard to nature-based solutions to climate change— than it will to deal with the loss of irreplaceable ecosystem services. The following programs would not only provide benefits to communities across New York today, but for future generations to come.

The Environmental Protection Fund (EPF)

The Governor's Hochul's landmark proposal of \$400 million will CONTINUE to advance work to protect our environment, improve quality of life, support jobs and our economy in every county in New York State. Not only does the EPF support jobs and our economy, but the return-on-investment should not be ignored: according to a study by The Trust for Public Land¹, every \$1 invested in land and water conservation through the EPF returns \$7 to the state. The EPF supports 350,000 jobs across New York in a broad spectrum of industries including construction, agriculture, recreation, tourism, forestry, recycling, and recreational fishing, adding \$40 billion to the state's economy every year. We applaud the Governor's proposal, and **So we urge this legislature to support \$400 million in the EPF during budget negotiations, however - echoing what has been said here just before -- we oppose the provision within it to offload agency staff costs and believe that the Fund should be used entirely for the project grants themselves.**

The Clean Water Infrastructure Act (CWIA)

Over the next 20 years, \$80 billion will be needed for water infrastructure upgrades because our water and sewer systems are old, failing, or inadequate. The executive budget proposal includes \$500 million for clean water projects. Our needs tremendously exceed the allocation. We ask the Legislature to propose \$1 billion for the Clean Water Infrastructure Act. We support a \$1 billion investment in the CWIA in this year's budget. This would be an increase of \$500 million from Governor Hochul's proposed level of investment. According to a recent report² by Environmental Advocates NY, one of the CWIA's programs, the Water Infrastructure Improvement Act, could alone award \$500 million in grants each year to shovel-ready projects: the demonstrated need across the state already far exceeds the amount allocated. **We urge the legislature to support an increase of \$500 million to the CWIA to bring it to a \$1 billion investment.**

State Agency Capital Funding

We support the proposed increases in capital funding of \$90 million for the DEC, but ask the legislature to consider increasing the allocation for State Parks by \$50 million to match last year's budget of \$250 million. Increasing capital funding for these agencies is important to ensuring they can do their jobs by providing safe access to public lands and parks, ensure protection of our natural resources, and undertake projects that increase tourism and job opportunities.

Staff Additions to Agencies to implement the Bond Act

We support the Governor's proposal to add new state agency staff needed to administer the Environmental Bond Act. The proposed staff additions will help move toward restoring staff levels so that these agencies can more effectively deploy current and new programs to municipalities across the State. Efficient access to the Bond Act funding will allow more communities to benefit from projects that will improve air and water quality, mitigate climate change, increase resilience to flooding and deadly heat, conserve wildlife habitat and family farms, and provide new access to outdoor recreation, all while leveraging will allow federal, local, and private funding to improve quality of life for New Yorkers.

Stop Climate Polluter Handouts Act (Krueger S3389 | Kelles)

Formerly the *Fossil Fuel Subsidies Elimination Act*, this bill was just reintroduced in the Senate and we await a new Assembly Bill #. its reintroduction with Assemblymember Kelles as sponsor. New York State delivers over \$1.6 B annually in taxpayer funded subsidies offered to the climate-destroying fossil fuel industry, all while they reap massive profits by charging consumers more. This bill would repeal \$334 M annually reflecting the most egregious GHG emitting subsidies. These subsidies contradict the intentions of the CLCPA and encourage business-as-usual According to the Yale Climate Opinion Maps³, on average. In support of this, nearly eight of ten Westchester County constituents believe fossil fuel companies should be required to pay a carbon tax, and that we should regulate CO2 as a pollutant. **REPEAL THIS!** Yet \$89 million of the \$334 million in this bill goes to the fossil fuel industry as a subsidy for research and development for fossil fuel production. The Stop Climate Polluters Act is a critical step to protect the climate, makes big industry pay its fair share, and raises revenue for our state. **We ask that you support this bill in your one-house budget and consider co-sponsorship when the Bill is re-issued in the Assembly.**

The All-Electric Building Act (S562A | A920A)

This bill will modernize building codes to require new buildings under seven stories be all-electric starting in 2024 and larger buildings by 2027. The average new single-family home built in New York under this bill would cost less to [construct](#) and [power](#) when compared to a fossil-fueled home. The Governor's budget proposal includes the provisions of this bill (Part WW of TED) in a significantly weakened form, with an unwarranted two-year delay and at least a year later than what the Climate Action Council (CAC) calls for, a reduced scope of the buildings covered, and process loopholes. **The legislature should include the process, building scope, and timeline provisions in their one-house budgets**

The NY Home Energy Equitable Transition (HEAT) Act (S2016 | Axxxx)

This bill will reform the Public Service Law to provide ratepayers relief from the burgeoning costs of subsidizing the gas infrastructure to the tune of \$200 million per year (unconscionable in its own right) and to enable the state legislated [neighborhood-scale building decarbonization](#) by eliminating the costly "obligation to serve" gas. It also helps limit households' energy burden to under 6% of their income. Eliminating gas hookup subsidies was part of the Governor's FY 2022-2023 executive budget proposal. **We ask that the legislature include this bill in their respective one-house budget proposals.**

The Energy Efficiency, Equity, and Jobs Act (S2469 | A2655)

This bill will deploy funding for cost-saving energy-efficiency retrofits where they are most needed, helps remove health hazards from homes so they can undergo energy-efficiency retrofits, and helps ensure that the workers hired for energy efficiency upgrades include members of disadvantaged communities. **We ask that the legislature include this bill in their respective one-house budget proposals.**

Citations:

1. Trust for Public Land (2012). https://cleanwaterandjobs.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/2012_TPL_report_ny_econ_benefits_epf.pdf
2. Environmental Advocates of NY. (2021). Untapped Potential: Building the Next Generation of Water Infrastructure. <https://eany.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/EANY-water-report-Nov-2021-Final-1.pdf>