



February 10, 2023

Written Testimony of LIPC Joint Budget Hearing on Environmental Conservation

The Long Island Progressive Coalition (LIPC) is a grassroots community-based organization founded in 1979. We fight for structural change at the local, state, and national levels to attain racial justice, build community wealth, and realize a just transition to a 100% renewable energy future. We have a long history of combating the expansion of dangerous and harmful environmental projects. Along with stopping the bad, we also have a long history of building a better future, as in 2011/2012 when we passed and implemented Green Jobs Green New York. We are also a leading member of NY Renews, the unprecedented coalition responsible for passing the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA), and helping to shape the Climate Action Council Final Scoping Plan, the subject of our comments today.

We are just one organization among many in NYS already leading the transition to a 100% renewable energy economy by shifting policies and building renewable energy solutions on the ground. From PUSH Buffalo's School 77 project to Uprose's management of the first cooperatively-owned solar garden in NYS to the Long Island Progressive Coalition's nonprofit solar program, community organizations are already building alternative models that will guide our future energy system.

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, asthma, and heart disease. We need to meet the mandates of CLCPA for the health and safety of our Island.

It is with this background, ideology, and vision for Long Island, the surrounding region, and New York State, that the Long Island Progressive Coalition, in solidarity with partners from labor, faith, immigrant, and environmental justice communities offer the following comments for the 2023 Joint Budget Hearing on Environmental Conservation.

As a member of NY Renews, we are calling for the passage of the bills in the Climate, Jobs & Justice Package (CJJP), as well as to include \$10 billion in climate justice funding in the 2023/2024 NYS budget to launch the process of funding and implementing CLCPA. The CCJP is made up of three components:



1) Fully Fund and Implement New York's Climate Act

- **Climate and Community Protection Fund** (new legislation) creates a pool of money to fund and implement our landmark Climate Act. Its core investments include community benefits and broad labor, procurement, and responsible contracting standards.

2) Build Renewable Energy for All and Create Good, Green Union Jobs

- **Build Public Renewables Act** (A.279 / S.4134) would allow the New York Power Authority (NYPA)—the largest public power provider in the country—to build new large-scale renewables more quickly, effectively, and democratically than private developers, empowering NYPA to meet the Climate Act's mandate of 70% renewable energy by 2030.
 - With the announcement of Governor Hochul's proposal for NYPA reform in her Executive Budget, it is vital that we hold to the robust labor standards, democratization provisions, and aggressive decarbonization mandates in BPRA that are currently absent in her version.
- **Climate Accountability Act** (new legislation) gives state agencies the power and guidance they need to effectively implement the Climate Act, ensuring that the energy system is accountable and transparent to the public while paving the way to full decarbonization.
- **NY Home Energy Affordable Transition Act** (S.2016) will give the Public Service Commission (PSC) the authority and direction to align gas utility regulations and system planning with the Climate Act's emission reduction and climate justice mandates.
- **Blueprint Bill** (S.2935) provides a plan to guide the replacement and redevelopment of New York State's fossil fuel facilities and sites by 2030. It lays out clear, mandatory direction for moving forward with the transition off fossil fuels per the Climate Act.

3) Make Polluters and the Ultra-Rich Pay What They Owe

- **Climate Change Superfund Act** (S.2129 / A.3351) makes the state's worst polluters, major oil companies, pay for the harm they've caused. The bill assesses and collects a fee representing a company's share of the cost of damages that the state's ten *worst* climate polluters caused through harmful climate pollution.



- **Stop Climate Polluter Handouts Act** (S.3389) will end the most egregious state subsidies of \$330 million to climate crisis contributors—the fossil fuel industry.
- **Invest in Our New York's Plan to Fund Our Future** is a revenue and spending package from the Invest in Our New York (IONY) coalition that will ensure that the state eliminates wasteful handouts to businesses and that the richest New Yorkers pay what they owe to fund our climate law. More details can be [found here](#).
 - **Corporate Tax** (S.1980 / A.3690)
 - **Progressive Income Tax** (S.2059 / A.3115)
 - **Capital Gains Tax** (S.2162 / A. 2576)
 - **Heirs Tax**: (S.2782 / A.3193)
 - **Mark-to-market Billionaires Tax** (S.1570 / A.3252)

A core part of the CJJP is the proposed **Climate and Community Protection Fund (CCPF)**, which would direct \$10 billion into four pools so that New York can start directing money for communities, workers, and small businesses to build out resiliency and jobs programs. The CCPF's four funds are:

1. **Climate, Jobs, and Infrastructure Fund**, which directs funding for increasing building efficiency, updating our energy infrastructure, expanding public transit upstate and in Long Island, and more.
2. **Community-Directed Climate Solutions Fund**, which directs grants to community organizations for grassroots-led energy planning, reducing local emissions, and more.
3. **Community and Worker Transition Assistance**, which provides direct support and job training to impacted workers, funds to replace lost tax revenue for municipalities and school districts, and expands economic development programs, among other things.
4. **Energy Affordability Account**, which assists low and moderate-income families reduce the burden of energy costs while lowering emissions.

Examples of CCPF programs supported by these funds include:

1. **Community-Directed Climate Solutions Grants – \$2 billion**
Community-Directed Climate Solution Fund
This would fund the creation of the Community-Directed Climate Solutions Grant



Program at NYSERDA, providing opportunities for community-level organizations, projects, and initiatives that may not otherwise meet application criteria for some of the state's existing climate programs. At its heart, the Community Directed Climate Solutions Grant Program is designed to support local and communally developed climate projects. The Office of Energy and Climate Equity at NYSERDA (created in the CCPF authorizing language as well as the Climate Accountability Act) is to oversee the grant program in a manner that implements progressive and equitable grant opportunities which support disadvantaged communities.

2. Green Affordable Pre-Electrification (GAP) Fund – \$2 billion

Energy Affordability Account

This program would assist low-to-medium income households (renters or homeowners) in undertaking deferred maintenance and pre-electrification work, including, but not limited to: lead, mold and asbestos remediation, electric panel and wiring upgrades, and energy efficiency and weatherization that isn't funded through other programs.

3. Utility Debt Relief – \$1 billion

Energy Affordability Account

The Energy Affordability fund programs include a variety of efforts to ensure that people's bills go down, rather than up, as part of the transition. The economic and energy system that we currently have saddled at least 1.4 million households with electric and gas bills that they can't pay—to the tune of \$1.8 billion that they didn't have to pay for a basic need—while businesses owe another \$600 million. In addition to efforts to reduce costs and rates, the Climate, Jobs & Justice Package budget appropriations proposal directs \$1 billion of additional funding to help eliminate existing utility debt, while the CCPF allows future funding to prevent high energy bills from becoming a burden in the future.

4. 0% Interest Green Jobs Green New York Loans (GJGNY) – \$900 million

Climate, Jobs, and Infrastructure Fund

This program would add funding to the existing GJGNY loan fund and dedicate it to zero-interest loans through the NYSERDA/New York Green Bank to establish affordable financing for solar panels, weatherization, pre-electrification, and electrification of buildings. This can build on past efforts such as GNGNY/Home Performance with Energy Star and should include an expanded zero-interest on-bill recovery loan, modeled on the NYSERDA COVID-19 relief efforts.

5. Individual Worker Assurance Pilot – \$125 million

Community and Worker Transition Assistance

This would fund grants, income support, or programs administered by a labor union or



the NYS Department of Labor. These investments will provide direct support for workers adversely affected or displaced by fossil fuel facility closures and fund a program for individual worker assurance. The funds will also support a program for wage guarantees for displaced workers via expanded unemployment benefits and develop a program to support early retirement.

Links to the CCPF spending plan can be found here:

- **Climate and Community Protection Fund by dollar amount, visit: bit.ly/CCPFamt**
- **Climate and Community Protection Fund by accounts, visit: bit.ly/CCPFAccts**

The primary revenue generator posed in the CLCPA Final Scoping Plan is the creation of a cap and invest system, portions of which have been included in Governor Hochul's Executive Budget. If it is done right, it means cleaner air, healthier more thriving communities, and more revenue to spend on infrastructure and climate transition. Getting it right will take time, and there are complementary revenue sources that we can and should explore this session as mentioned above - including closing tax loopholes, raising revenue from the very rich, and creation of a climate superfund.

The New York State legislature must lead in the development of a cap and invest program by addressing the vagueness and shortcomings in the Governor's Executive budget proposal. Centrally, it must ensure that the final program protects Disadvantaged and Environmental Justice Communities and creates visible benefits for their constituencies. Establishing a transparent and accountable process around climate spending and economic development is vital, as is ramping up spending and creating programs now before the cap and invest system is in place.

While there are a number of concerns about the Governor's proposed cap and invest system, passing the proposed Climate and Community Protection Fund (CCPF) this budget cycle is an opportunity to set up key statewide and community benefits programs as soon as possible. This would give the State an opportunity to start building a constituency now, before cap and invest gets up and running. The CCPF's spending framework will allow you to make sure that funds from a variety of sources are directed to the right people and the right places in the right ways. Whether the funding comes from the Environmental Bond Act, a cap and invest system, or federal funding like the Inflation Reduction Act, directing money through a Climate and Communities Protection Fund ensures transparency, an on-budget discussion of appropriations within legally constructed direction, and the attachment of community benefit standards.

Another area for the NYS legislature to take leadership in the cap and invest program is in response to the Governor's proposed rebates. The concept of a universal rebate sounds good in theory, but the premise of a full cap and dividend approach is flawed both politically and in

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terms of equity. While the creation of a rebate is a great talking point, turning that into the complex policy that will serve all New Yorkers best is an area of policy development that NY Renewables has been actively engaged in with national, state, and local partners for the past four years. We support focusing the rebate on low- and moderate-income households, and ensuring that is paired with visible rapid infrastructure investments that will benefit all New Yorkers, such as expanding subway service to meet the six-minute service goal, adding service to regional transit, building solar power plants, providing energy upgrades for homes.

Relatedly, the form of a rebate is complex. Politically, a check from New York State is great, but it won't work for everyone. Low-income households can lose public benefits or not receive any benefits from a cash equivalent rebate. These households receiving food stamps, disability, and other means-tested programs can receive rebates as vouchers for transit, energy costs, or other benefits that have the equivalence to cash but don't jeopardize their public assistance.

In addition to the Climate, Jobs, and Justice Package, the Long Island Progressive Coalition supports the passage of the following bills to ensure the successful implementation of CLCPA, which are important to implement as soon as possible :

1. **All-Electric Building Act** (S.6843C / A.8431B) which would end the use of fossil fuels for heating in new buildings in New York State, starting with applications for permits for buildings under 7 stories at the beginning of 2024.
2. **Energy Efficiency Equity and Jobs Act** (S. 3126 / A3996A) which would create more equitable standards for how the state and utilities fund energy efficiency measures for low-income communities of color. It would also create jobs in environmental justice communities and allow funding to go toward mold and lead treatment as part of an energy efficiency retrofit.

We also support the calls to transition the Albany Capitol and Plaza to renewables. Currently, the New York State Capitol and Empire State Plaza, the very buildings that house our state government, are heated and cooled by the burning of fossil fuels in the environmental justice community of Sheridan Hollow just blocks from the Capitol. The legislature must include a \$1.5 million dollar appropriation in the budget this year to develop a plan on how to transition the New York State Capitol and Empire State Plaza to renewables and must pass the Renewable Capitol Act (S. 2689) to require that that plan be completed within three years.

Finally, though off-budget at the moment, when the Commission on the Future of the Long Island Power Authority (LIPA) delivers its legislative vehicles to enact a fully public model for LIPA after April of this year, it is important that the entire legislature support this process in order to

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build a more democratic, affordable, and renewable electric utility for Long Island and Rockaway ratepayers.

Sincerely,

Lisa Tyson

Director