



January 25th, 2025

**Written Testimony**  
**Public Budget Hearing on Environment Conservation / Energy**

Dear Senator Liz Krueger, Assemblymember J. Gary Pretlow, and members of the New York State Legislature,

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on the 2026 New York State Budget. My name is Helen Mancini, and I am a 17-year-old climate justice organizer with Fridays For Future NYC. Our organization was born out of the international youth-led movement that began in 2018 when 15-year-old Greta Thunberg sat outside the Swedish parliament to protest the lack of government action on the climate crisis. In 2019, Fridays For Future NYC organizers led a city-wide strike where over 300,000 people, including my 11-year-old self, took to the streets of New York City to demand the same in the United States. New York heard our call, passing the landmark Climate Leadership & Communities Protection Act (CLCPA) that same year. Since then, we've continued to mobilize students and young people across the city to implore our leaders to uphold our state law and take robust action on the climate crisis. We've planned many marches, including the 2023 March To End Fossil Fuels which mobilized 75,000 people and advocated for policy on the city and state level, traveling to Albany countless times to meet with members of this legislature, all while continuing to strike outside City Hall every Friday.

The same year that Greta Thunberg first sat outside parliament, the IPCC report declared that to avoid dangerous global warming over 1.5 degrees, global greenhouse gas emissions had to peak by 2025. Out of all the target dates and predictions, I've always remembered this year, not just because it's my graduation year, but because it's motivated me to fight for my future throughout my time in high school. Now that we've reached 2025, with peak emissions nowhere in sight and a new presidential administration that will do everything in its power to thwart and reverse climate progress, I've been thinking about what this year means.

2025 will come with disappointments. We've already seen this, as in his first days in office, President Trump has already cut red tape for the fossil fuel industry's profiteering, moved to open protected lands and wildlife reserves for oil drilling, and halted the Inflation Reduction Act's funding for renewable energy projects. 2025 will also be a year of disaster. In 2024, we experienced the hottest summer on record and a devastating hurricane season that we felt here in New York through the flooding of our homes and public infrastructure. Wildfires will continue to

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burn in 2025 like they did during the drought this past fall, from Orange County to Brooklyn's Prospect Park.

But 2025 will also be a year of new beginnings. My peers and I will graduate high school and take the first steps into our adult lives. My little sister will start second grade. Across New York, more children will be born and communities will continue to grow and change. Every New Yorker, young and old, deserves a future of clean air and water where they'll be safe from climate disaster. It is still more urgent than ever that we continue to fight for this future, and that we do it here, in New York State, so we can be a leader for the rest of the country to follow.

New York already has the playbook to achieve these goals. The Climate Leadership & Community Protection Act (CLCPA) commits New York State to achieve 100% zero-emission electricity by 2040 and includes binding emissions reduction standards to require New York to fully transition off of fossil fuels by 2050. The Build Public Renewables Act (BPRA), another landmark piece of legislation, paves the way to achieve our clean energy goals by mandating that the New York Power Authority step in where the private market fails. Both the CLCPA and the BPRA match calls from scientists, young people, and communities across the state, and it is crucial that we implement them.

This begins with the budget. Our current climate law does not have the funds to back it up. NYPA's current draft strategic plan falls short of the BPRA's mandate of 15 gigawatts of publicly owned renewable energy by 2030, proposing merely 3.5 gigawatts. Additionally, climate disasters are expected to cost over half a trillion dollars statewide by 2050; this price will only rise if we do not start investing in sustainable energy systems and climate-resilient infrastructure now. **The state must take the action necessary in the FY 2026 Budget and in this session to fulfill the mandates described in the CLCPA and protect our communities.**

The state has chosen the **Cap-Trade-and-Invest (CTI)** program to fund our climate law, but the Governor's current budget proposal delays it. We demand an immediate, justice-based implementation of the CTI that focuses on both decreasing emissions and saving money for working-class New Yorkers as they electrify their homes and transportation. By creating an "on budget" revenue stream from the CTI to the Climate Action Fund (CAF), New York will have the funds to meet the appropriations of the "**Fund Climate**" spending plan. This will allow New York to fund climate, jobs, and justice all in one, with projects and programs that will tackle pollution and build climate resilience, while giving us the means to achieve our climate law.

Crucial to this plan is passing the full **New York HEAT Act** (awaiting new bill numbers, 2024: S02016/A04592, Sen. Krueger/Am Fahy) this session. The HEAT Act already has significant statewide support and was included in last year's Executive Budget. From capping energy bills at

6% of a household income to transitioning buildings off of fossil fuels, this bill puts affordability and safety first for our communities.

We share these proposals and priorities with over 300 environmental, faith, labor, justice, and community groups with the statewide New York Renews coalition. In addition to these, we are advocating for the inclusion of the **Stop Climate Polluter Handouts Act** (awaiting new bill numbers, 2024: S03389/A07949A, Sen. Kruger/Am. Simon) in FY 2026. Fossil fuels are responsible for 92% of our GHG emissions in the US. Last year, we fought for and passed the Climate Change Superfund Act which established a model of holding these polluters accountable for climate damage, yet New York is still providing oil and gas companies with over \$1.6 billion in tax handouts every year, as they continue to profit off of poisoning our future. The Stop Climate Polluter Handouts Act would eliminate over \$330 of taxpayer-funded handouts that prop up the most egregious parts of the fossil fuel industry.

We are also strong advocates for the following legislation and hope to see them reflected in the Budget along with the rest of our demands:

- The **Invest In Our New York Package**, which would be the single largest measure taken to close New York's inequality gap, is critical to climate justice and achieving the investments we need in our communities, and must be reflected in the budget.
- The **New York Packaging Reduction and Recycling Infrastructure Act** (S01464 / A01749, Sen. Harckham/Am. Glick), which would reduce plastic packaging by 30% gradually over the next 12 years and require 70% of the remaining packaging to be reused or recycled. It will make our packaging less toxic, reduce the amount that ends up in landfills and incinerators, and, like many of the bills we've spoken about, shift the financial burden of managing packaging waste from taxpayers to the companies responsible.
- The **FY26 Appropriation Request for Climate Education in New York State**, which is a \$536,500 appropriation request for within the New York State Education Department (NYSED) in the FY26 budget for Climate Literacy & School Infrastructure Adaptation and represents just 0.001% of the total education budget.
- We also support the Bucks for Boilers (2024: S9099/A9990, Sen. Rivera/Am. Stripe) and the Renewable Capitol Act (2024: S2689/A5633 Breslin/Fahy), while we oppose the "Clean" Fuel Standard Bill (S1343/A472, Sen. Parker/Am. Woerner) and all attempts to weaken the Climate Leadership & Community Protection Act and greenhouse gas emissions accounting.

2025 is not the year we give up; it's a year we can change course and finally choose people over profits. The climate crisis is daunting, but each of the priorities we've expressed for FY 2026 will establish methods of mitigating and adapting to this crisis that support New Yorkers and hold polluters accountable. As I look ahead to my future, my 18th birthday tomorrow, I feel scared, but democratic processes like this one give me hope that we can craft a just and safe

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future for my generation and the ones to come. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of it today.

Please see our full testimonials of support for the priorities we've expressed today below. They are drawn from our memos of support of the bills and the work of our partners within NY Renews, Renewable Heat Now, and the Stop Climate Polluter Handouts Act Coalition.

### **Cap-Trade-and-Invest and Climate Action Fund Appropriations to “Fund Climate Now”**

We join New York Renews in calling on the Governor and legislature to **Fund Climate Now** and strictly implement the Cap-Trade-and-Invest (CTI) program. Done right, a strict CTI or Cap-and-Invest (C&I) program, with year-by-year greenhouse gas reductions and strong enforcement measures, ones that prohibit allowance trading, could decrease emissions in line with the Climate Leadership & Communities Protection Act and generate billions of dollars to fund climate mitigation and resilience projects. The program should be implemented as outlined in a 2024 bill sponsored by Assemblymember Kelles (2024: S9228/A8469, Sen. Parker/Am. Kelles). Research released by the NYC Environmental Justice Alliance (NYC-EJA) and Resources for the Future on CTI revenue and affordability, has found that a CTI program could save New Yorkers money, especially in low and middle-income households. By electrifying their transportation and home heating, some households could see savings projected for 2030 that range between \$492 and \$1,965.

The Fund Climate Campaign outlines exactly how revenue from the CTI program could be spent through the Climate Action Fund (CAF) to ensure that New York state increases affordability, decreases pollution, and prioritizes communities that have suffered the most from pollution, disinvestment, and the burdens of burning fossil fuels. The Governor and legislature have historic tools at their disposal this year to roll out an effective climate agenda – from passing the full NY HEAT Act to directing the first “on-budget” revenue stream through the Climate Action Fund.

The NY Renews coalition members have compiled three main pillars of climate funding: an affordable climate-ready homes program, community-directed grants for frontline solutions, and spending criteria for state projects and programs. Please review the details for these critical proposals [here](#). These pillars will include urgently needed projects in every part of the state while cutting emissions and creating jobs.

### **NY HEAT Act**

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This legislation (awaiting new bill numbers, 2024: S.2016-A/A.4592-A, Sen. Krueger/Am. Fahy) is critical to obviating methane emissions that exacerbate the climate crisis in a way that centers environmental justice. Developed with the input and support of many communities, youth, labor unions, and businesses, the NY HEAT Act 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. In New York, about two-thirds of gas is delivered by gas utilities and used in buildings, making it one of the three greatest sector emitters of greenhouse gasses in the state. New York's Public Service Law includes several amendments that conflict with NY's Climate Act.

NY HEAT Act sets clear guidance for achieving the CLCPA mandates and ensuring workers are protected during the transition. Stopping multi-billion dollar annual investments in gas infrastructure will free up funds to support the transition to neighborhood decarbonization projects and make affordable electricity and heat a reality.

This bill provides state regulation and oversight of gas utilities to realize the climate justice and emission reduction mandates established by the CLCPA. It also resolves conflicts between Public Service Law and the CLCPA, ensuring that the greenhouse gas emissions and climate justice mandates—alongside reliability and safety—are core planning criteria at the Public Service Commission, and removes subsidies for new gas hookups to stop incentivizing gas expansion. It also enables the neighborhood-scale projects we'll need to meet the mandates of the CLCPA, transitions gas workers by reforming the obligation to serve gas, and protects energy affordability by managing the transition and codifying a no-more-than 6 percent energy burden.

### **Stop Climate Polluter Handouts Act**

While greenhouse gas emissions from the fossil fuel industry warm the planet and pollute communities, oil companies reap enormous profits – all while collecting financial support from government subsidies. In 2024, New York passed the Climate Change Superfund Act, which finally forces the fossil fuel industry to take accountability for climate disasters. Yet still, New York State provides oil and gas companies with over \$1.6 billion in tax handouts every year, distributed in the form of tax breaks, credits, subsidies, and refunds that support all stages of the oil and gas industry, from fuel production to transportation to storage. In light of the fossil-fuel-caused climate crisis threatening our communities and with New York State facing a multi-billion dollar budget gap this year, continuing to provide these subsidies is unjustifiable, and a betrayal of New Yorkers' future.

It's time we stop using taxpayer money to destroy the world. The Stop Climate Polluter Handouts Act (S02935C/A04866B) eliminates the taxpayer-funded handouts that prop up the most

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egregious parts of the fossil fuel industry, raising over \$330 million each year for New York State.

The Act makes polluters pay their fair share of taxes, and it stops New York's practice of incentivizing pollution and profiting off of the destruction of our climate. The fossil fuel industry made record-breaking profits last year, with several of its biggest players (ExxonMobil, Shell, BP) more than doubling their profits. Some tax handouts that the Act eliminates include incentives for research and development within the fossil fuel industry (\$89 million); the use of highly polluting airline fuel (\$117 million), commercial shipping "bunker" fuel (\$11 million), and liquid petroleum gasses (\$65 million); the operation of fracked gas infrastructure (\$4 million); and more. The Act also limits fossil fuel-related business participation in certain economic development programs. Importantly, the bill maintains the tax breaks that benefit low- and mid-income earners and small farmers.

This Act takes critical action to protect the climate while generating over \$330 million in revenue that will help close the budget gap and address far more important public priorities. The Act aligns tax policy and state spending with the nation-leading climate goals set by the 2019 Climate Leadership & Community Protection Act, which requires a 40% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, an 85% reduction by 2050, a 70% clean energy electricity sector by 2030, and a 100% clean energy sector by 2040.

The Stop Polluter Handouts Act is an essential step forward in the fight against devastating climate change and the fight for the future of New York's youth.

*I strongly urge you to reflect these priorities in the FY 2026 state budget.*

Thank you,  
Helen Mancini  
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