



January 28, 2026

Joint Legislative Public Hearing on FY2027 Executive Budget Proposal: Environmental Conservation/Energy

Written Testimony

Thank you to the Committees on Environmental Conservation and Energy for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Allison Considine, and I am the New York Director for the Building Decarbonization Coalition (BDC).

Over the past two years, New York State has advanced nation-leading efforts to decarbonize New York's buildings, which are the largest source of climate pollution in our state. We have also, importantly, recognized that actions to reduce reliance on fossil fuels in buildings makes the state more affordable for working families.

- The passage of 100-foot rule repeal last session marked a significant step forward in aligning New York's utility incentives and regulation with common-sense climate and affordability policy, and it will save New Yorkers over \$600 million annually when it is implemented in 2027.
- The nation-leading All-Electric Buildings Act, while currently paused pending litigation, will ensure new homes are more efficient and affordable by requiring most new buildings to use electric heating and appliances.
- The Utility Thermal Energy Networks and Jobs Act of 2022 has sparked innovation, with eight utility thermal energy network projects awaiting approval to construction by the Public Service Commission. These groundbreaking projects have the potential to decarbonize whole neighborhoods at once, using zero-emission networks built by union workers.
- Recognizing the importance of state leadership in this transition, as part of New York's 2023-2024 Enacted State Budget, the New York Power Authority (NYPA) was authorized and directed to develop decarbonization action plans using thermal energy networks for 15 of the highest emitting State facilities, including seven SUNY campuses and three CUNY campuses, referred to as the Decarbonization Leadership Program.
 - Last session, you ensured that SUNY Purchase had the resources to decarbonize their campus with a thermal energy network; this \$50 million investment should break ground this year. At the University at Buffalo, both the South and North campus are charging forward to get off fossil fuels, and to leverage the waste heat from the new Empire AI center.
 - Their thermal energy network projects will demonstrate that by using waste heat, we can avoid increasing demand on the electric grid, while still electrifying buildings.

We thank the Legislature for this tremendous leadership in advancing a clean, affordable future for New Yorkers.

The State can continue to make meaningful progress to usher in an equitable clean energy transition through neighborhood-scale building decarbonization solutions that retain and expand family-sustaining union careers. This can be accomplished while also lowering energy costs for families and making New York a healthier, and greener place to live and work.

The Legislature should continue the commitment to thermal energy networks with \$200 million in new bonded funding for thermal energy networks in this year's budget. This investment will help the state reduce emissions, and build resilient, energy-efficient infrastructure. Decarbonizing entire campuses requires a generational investment — but like an education, where the upfront cost is an investment in higher earnings and more opportunity, the upfront capital costs required to retire fossil-fuel fired equipment, and make buildings comfortable, modern, and efficient, will pay dividends in lower energy bills, reduce demand on the electric grid and avoided electric-side upgrades. Allocating \$120 million to advance thermal energy networks at University at Buffalo, University at Albany, Farmingdale State College, SUNY Purchase and SUNY Binghamton will get shovels in the ground and provide union jobs across the state in anchor institutions for communities.

The \$200 million could further support **Affordable Housing & Municipal Upgrades within Utility Thermal Energy Network Pilots**. There are eight Utility Thermal Energy Network projects awaiting Public Service Commission approval to move to construction. Providing funding for upgrades that benefit publicly owned buildings could help advance these critical projects. UTENJA, which passed with near-unanimous, bipartisan support, required the PSC to approve and modify projects and implement them within 6 months of the law's passage. Three and a half years later, there are strong proposals which have gone through a rigorous review process ready to move to construction, with the backing of the environmental movement, labor unions, utilities, and building stakeholders. It is critical the PSC authorize projects to move to construction as soon as possible.

The Budget must include a renewed commitment of \$200 million to continue to fund the EmPower+ low-income home retrofits program and support its growth, and an additional \$200 million in funding for pre-electrification measures in the Green Affordable Pre-Electrification (GAP) program. This funding helps low-income households access energy efficiency and electrification with technical assistance and funding for the remediation of lead, mold, asbestos and other code violations, getting their homes ready for the efficiency and electrification investments that will reduce their energy costs. These affordability measures would save New Yorkers billions of dollars over the coming decades and help the switch to clean heating technologies.

Additionally, New York can upgrade to clean heat for whole communities, not just house by house, by amending its outdated, pro-gas "obligation to serve" requirement. The Customer Savings and Reliability Act, or similar legislation, would reform the obligation to provide gas service to enable customer savings and neighborhood-scale clean energy upgrades like thermal energy networks and other non-gas pipeline alternatives.

We support proposals in the Governor's Executive Budget, including to improve the Green Jobs, Green New York program to facilitate access and program design for heat pump installation financing for New Yorkers. We also support the proposal to mitigate energy cost burden by improving tracking and monitoring of energy burden within utilities and empowering the PSC to install an independent affordability monitor within a utility.

The Building Decarbonization Coalition looks forward to continued collaboration with the legislature to transform how we heat and cool our buildings. We must advance policies that decarbonize our built environment at scale, make energy bills more affordable, fortify a truly clean heating and cooling infrastructure with union jobs, and create nationally-recognized models for advancing the clean heat market.

Sincerely,

Allison Considine
New York Director
Building Decarbonization Coalition

The Building Decarbonization Coalition (BDC) unites critical stakeholders on a path to transform the nation's buildings through clean energy, using policy, research, market development and public engagement. The BDC and its members are charting the course to eliminate fossil fuels in buildings to improve people's health, cut climate and air pollution, prioritize high-road jobs, and ensure that our communities are more resilient to the impacts of climate change.