



February 25, 2026

Subject: Housing Budget Hearings; need for energy affordability

Dear Senator Krueger, Assembly Member Pretlow, and members of the New York State Legislature,

I am writing on behalf of 350Brooklyn, a grassroots climate organization with over 4000 members. We promote solutions that both reduce climate pollution and ensure that low-income New Yorkers and environmental justice communities benefit from the shift to renewable energy. Right now, buildings contribute over a third of the state's climate-warming pollution for the same reason that utility bills represent a large and growing share of household expenses: the reliance on fossil fuels.

We urge you to make energy affordable in a durable way by helping families get their homes off fossil fuels, which are expensive and volatile, and onto clean electricity generated by cheap solar everywhere.

To help families get their homes off fossil fuels, 350Brooklyn calls for:

- **A \$3 billion investment in New York's Sustainable Future Program** representing the amount of money that would have been raised each year by the Clean Air Initiative (also known as Cap and Invest) if the program had been started on time.
- **\$200 million for a new fund to help oil customers save money with heat pumps** funded through the Sustainable Future Program. 1.5 million households in New York still use oil for heating and hot water systems, and would save nearly \$2000 per year (on average) by switching to efficient heat pumps, but the up-front cost of upgrading presents a high barrier. This program would enhance the state's Clean Heat program to further assist customers that use fuel oil and other delivered fuels.
- **\$200 million for Public Thermal Energy Networks** funded through the Sustainable Future Program. Further investment in Thermal energy networks (TENs) will help

complete publicly-owned TENS projects on SUNY campuses and local municipalities and will bring more of these highly-efficient systems to more regions of the state.

- **\$200 million for the Green Affordable Pre-Electrification (GAP) Fund, and inclusion of the GAP Fund legislation (S3315A / A2101A).** Many families eligible for the EmPower+ and Clean Heat Programs are unable to participate because their homes need costly pre-electrification and pre-efficiency upgrades like roof repair, mold mitigation, and electrical upgrades. When adequately funded, the GAP Fund will ensure that every New Yorker has the opportunity to participate in cost-saving energy efficiency and electrification programs.
- **\$200 million for the EmPower+ Program** to ensure that this highly successful program can continue to meet demand. This program currently provides insulation, air sealing, and energy efficient heating systems for 30,000 low- and moderate-income households each year, but it faces steep reductions in service in 2026 and 2027 if not adequately funded.
- **Continued funding for the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP).** We recommend specifying in the State Operations Bill that 10% of HEAP funding should continue to be allocated to the Weatherization Assistance Program, and opposing Governor Hochul's plan to redirect federal Home Energy Assistance Program funding away from WAP.
- **Extension of the J51 Property Tax Exemption and Abatement Program.** This critical tool funds the building improvements needed to comply with New York City's Local Law 97, such as heating improvements, structural and envelope repairs, and high-performance windows, but is set to expire on June 30, 2026. The Executive ELFA Part O would extend the program to 2036, and we recommend including ELFA Part O in the final budget.
- **Amending the Utility Obligation to Serve Gas in the Public Service Law.** One of the primary causes of rising gas bills is the gas utilities' wasteful spending on gas pipe replacement. Amending the obligation to serve gas would give utilities the option to better direct their spending towards clean alternatives like heat pumps and thermal energy networks. We recommend including §3 of S4158 / A4870 and its supporting sections in the final budget.

To help families afford clean electricity, we urge you to pass a budget that will enable deployment of cheap solar everywhere. To that end, we call for the following legislation to be included in the budget:

- **The Accelerate Solar for Affordable Power (ASAP) Act (S6570A / A8758A)** to raise New York's target for distributed solar energy from 10 gigawatts by 2030 to 20 gigawatts

by 2035, reform the utility interconnection process, and direct NYSERDA to develop an implementation plan for cost-effective rooftop and community solar deployment.

- **The Solar Up New York Now (SUNNY) Act (S8512A / A9111A)** to exempt small-scale plug-in solar systems from utility interconnection and net-metering requirements. These devices can be installed on a balcony or in a back yard, and can make solar energy accessible to households that do not own their own roof or cannot afford rooftop solar.
- **Automatic Solar Permitting (S5781A / A6270B)** to require municipalities with a population of 5000 or more to implement automatic online permitting for code-compliant permits for residential solar systems and residential paired solar and energy storage systems. Currently, the lack of consistent and timely permitting processes across local municipalities is driving up the cost of rooftop solar and causing projects to be canceled. This bill would encourage municipalities to use a streamlined online portal such as the free SolarAPP+ developed by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory to provide same-day permits to solar energy systems that are code-compliant.

Finally, we oppose any efforts to change the State's methane accounting rules, which would make it appear that New York is closer to reaching its climate goals than it is, would unfairly benefit the for-profit utilities that supply gas, and would deprioritize programs to help electrify buildings. We also oppose legislation that would further limit siting of battery energy storage systems, since NYSERDA's current standards for battery energy storage are sufficient to ensure safety.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Delia Kulukundis
On behalf of 350Brooklyn