Statement from the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance (NYC-EJA) in response to the 2019 NYS Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act

June 19th, 2019

As an alliance of 11 grassroots organizations in New York City's most environmentally and climate vulnerable communities, the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance (NYC-EJA) has long championed efforts to pass bold climate legislation that centers racial, economic, and environmental justice. Together with over 180 allies across the state in the NY Renews coalition, we have collectively pushed for the passage of the Climate and Community Protection Act (CCPA), a bill that would put New York on a path to 100% emissions reductions by 2050, and dedicate 40% of the State's clean energy funding to disadvantaged communities to catalyze a Just Transition to a regenerative energy economy.

This week, a revised version of the CCPA was put forward by Governor Cuomo, renamed as the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act. While the bill does set New York on a path to dramatically addressing climate pollution, the bill has more significant changes than just the name alone**.** As a result of last minute negotiations, Cuomo's bill now requires 85 percent greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) reductions by 2050, with the remaining 15 percent shifting to a "carbon neutral" approach**.** Given the Governor's reluctance to pass any climate legislation this session, we pushed our champions in the Assembly and Senate to ensure the most stringent guardrails around this compromise so that any polluters seeking to use problematic carbon offsets to reach climate goals must prove that it is technologically unfeasible to reduce emissions on site. We also ensured that electricity sector was excluded, and that environmentally unjust practices such as biofuels and waste incineration not be permitted. We view this as a missed opportunity to reach 100% emissions reductions, but we will continue to push for an equitable implementation that ensures our communities receive the environmental, health, and economic benefits of reductions in GHG and co-pollutant emissions.

Cuomo's bill also weakens the core provision of dedicating clean energy funds to disadvantaged communities, stating instead that these communities would receive 35% of the "overall benefits of funding" from clean energy statewide. In the original CCPA, this mandate aimed to address the systemic barriers that environmental justice and frontline communities face in their efforts to access clean and renewable energy to address high energy burden, local climate impacts, and public health issues. The ambiguous language in the new bill appears to make an empty promise with no legal consequences. We are disappointed that Governor Cuomo failed to commit to a real investment in low-income communities and communities of color, and is willing to leave our communities vulnerable to further air pollution and underinvestment. We cannot comprehensively address climate change without addressing racial and economic injustice.

Additionally, Cuomo's bill also eliminates important labor protections and job training provisions, which would have ensured that jobs created through the climate bill had high-road standards.

Despite these shortcomings on equity and labor, the fact that New York State will soon have a framework to significantly address GHG emissions is largely due to efforts by environmental justice advocates and our allies to build a powerful statewide movement. New York is now poised to pass a climate action bill, but we still have a long road ahead to ensure that climate *justice* is served. Ultimately, the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act is a partial victory for New Yorkers. The fight for true climate justice demands transformative change, and NYC-EJA alongside our allies in the NY Renews coalition will bring that fight until our communities win a Just Transition.

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