



**New York City Environmental Justice Alliance testimony to the New York State Climate Action Council on improving the draft Scoping Plan in support of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (S.6599)**

April 4th, 2022

Good afternoon members of the Climate Action Council. My name is Celeste Perez and I am the Policy Organizer at the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance (NYC-EJA). While I am here to testify on behalf of the organization, I represent the perspective of the many victims of environmental racism who have developed Asthma growing up in the Bronx. I am here in an effort to address concerns within the draft scoping plan in pursuit of stronger implementation for the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (**S.6599**).

Founded in 1991, NYC-EJA is a nonprofit citywide membership network linking grassroots organizations from low-income neighborhoods and communities of color in their struggle for environmental justice. Through our efforts, member organizations coalesce around issues that threaten the ability of low-income communities of color to thrive, and coordinate campaigns designed to restructure City and State policies to move us toward a just future. Our alliance is a key advocate of strong and equitable renewable energy targets, because many of the communities we represent are overburdened by the clustering of power plants and other polluting infrastructure in their neighborhoods.

In February of this year, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released their sixth Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability Report, addressing how people and ecosystems contributing the least to the climate crisis are, and will continue to be, hit the hardest. With an increasing global temperature, it's imperative to reflect on the report's warning of irreversible impacts once the temperature rises beyond 2 degrees Celsius. Globally and locally, we continue to experience record-breaking years in terms of extreme heat, with 2021 ranking at the sixth hottest year on record according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Furthermore, community-led air monitoring efforts also demonstrate the continued air quality and pollution burdens faced by environmental justice communities. These are communities where climate vulnerabilities intersect with historic patterns of environmental burdens that disproportionately affect the ability of low-income communities and communities of color to prosper.

New York State requires rapid system transitions in energy, urban infrastructure, transportation, and industrial systems – and an unwavering commitment and funding from the NYS government to fix

these issues. As the years progress and the threats of climate change loom larger, the need for rapid, bold, and holistic approaches to climate and energy policy becomes increasingly essential.

It is imperative that the Climate Action Council listens to the voices of the community leaders, such as the Climate Justice Working Group (CJWG), who know the needs of their communities best. It's vital that the Final Scoping Plan rejects all false solutions that can only further hurt communities of color and do not truly combat the climate crisis. False narratives to push solutions such as biofuels, "renewable" natural gas, biomass, waste incineration, and "green" hydrogen ignore the proven technologies of renewable zero-emission technologies like solar and wind. For one or more pollutants, seven of New York State's waste incineration facilities are counted among the 12 most polluting such facilities across the United States. New York's waste incineration facilities perform significantly worse on cancer-causing hazardous air pollutants compared to other power plants in the state, only furthering the damages forced upon marginalized communities.

In addition to the extreme need for New York State to electrify, the Climate Action Council must ensure investments are getting to frontline communities. Here in the Bronx children under the age of 18 are at double the risk citywide to have an asthma related emergency department visit. Within the five boroughs, the MTA operates 28 depots of which nearly three quarters are sited in communities where the majority of residents are people of color. It's no surprise that higher deaths due to COVID-19 were in these same communities struggling with respiratory illnesses at the hands of discriminatory siting decisions. The current draft scoping plan does not adequately address our need to expand and improve public electrified and intercity rail transportation, which would improve transportation coverage and create good, green, unionized jobs in the process.

In order to do this, New York State should adopt incentive-based measures catered to energy efficiency workforce development to increase the chances of meeting our emissions goals by 2050. Additionally, the plan must include stronger public health guidelines and labor standards including prevailing wage, benefits, local hire and funding for workforce development. New York must establish a dedicated funding mechanism—by legislation if necessary—to ensure reductions of both greenhouse gas and co-pollutant emissions and to begin the state's large-scale transition to an equitable renewable energy economy. In order to reach a zero-emissions power sector by 2040, New York needs a quick, serious and large-scale transition away from fossil fuels.

We've seen the devastation that worsening Super Storms like Hurricane Sandy and Ida have brought to the state, and here in New York City – and we cannot afford to wait any longer to fund the Just Transition. Our health, our economy, and our communities are at grave risk. We commend the State on passing the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (**S.6599**), however we need dedicated funding and the rejection of false solutions to make this possible. New York State must not only support but actively invest in clean, renewable energy that protects the health and welfare of our families while creating new clean jobs. We need to put the health of our communities – and our State – ahead of polluters' profits and our outdated and dangerous dependency on fossil fuels.