

# SFY 2024-25 BUDGET PRIORITIES RECOMMENDED BY CLEAN+HEALTHY

## Testimony to the Joint Senate and Assembly Environmental Conservation Committees

February 7, 2024

Submitted by **Bobbi Wilding, Executive Director**

[Clean+Healthy](#) is an environmental health advocacy organization that focuses on building a just and healthy society where toxic chemicals are unthinkable. This work is done through policy changes, market shifting, and empowerment of people to advance innovative solutions to create a sustainable economy. Our work is also done in collaboration with dozens of environmental organizations across the state within two of the coalitions that we co-lead, the [Lead Free Kids New York](#) coalition which works toward ending lead poisoning in children, and the [JustGreen Partnership](#) which promotes environmental health and justice for New York's people and communities.

Today we are providing testimony in support of key investments by New York State to advance environmental health and justice in the SFY 2024-25 budget.

We are disappointed to see Governor Hochul propose cuts to essential programs that would help improve New Yorkers' health by addressing harmful chemicals in their daily environments. We urge the Senate and Assembly to reject these cuts and instead include the following in their one-house budgets. There was overwhelming support from the Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic, Asian Caucus' FY 2024-25 budget recommendations for the priorities we have listed below, and we are hopeful that both houses will restore these cuts in their one-house bills.<sup>1</sup>

### **SUPPORT FOR A \$400M ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION FUND**

The Environmental Protection Fund continues to be an integral source of funding for projects across the state, and we urge that this Fund be maintained with an appropriation of \$400 million for another year. There are many programs that rely on the Fund not only for the preservation of clean air and water, but also environmental justice programs and programs to protect the health of our most vulnerable populations.

- **Support increased funding for the Children's Environmental Health Centers at \$5M.** The NYS Children's Environmental Health Centers ([NYSCHECK](#)) provides support

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<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5bccab7094d71a4228c5edef/t/657ca7033a861912e507a55a/1702668044694/2024+People%27s+Budget+Framework+.pdf>

to pediatric centers that identify, treat, and prevent diseases with environmental origins from pregnancy to adolescence. This seven center network provides care to children in Albany, Buffalo, Syracuse, Rochester, Westchester, New York City, and Long Island. They foster the next generation of Environmental Health-educated pediatricians and other clinicians, engage current pediatricians in understanding environmental health contributors to their patients' health, and offer solutions to these issues, especially through resources like the Prescriptions for Prevention. Each center works with community partners to expand their reach and impact, and as the state continues this investment, the power of these Centers' work deepens and grows. These centers are integral to the health of New York's children, serving over 150 thousand families in 62 counties, educating over 32 thousand health care workers, and training over 1700 health professionals, college and high school students between the years 2017-2022.<sup>2</sup>

Long funded at the level of \$2M/year, in the past two years the State has allocated \$4M annually for this important work. Due to COVID, contracting for this additional level of funding moved slower than anyone would like, but the Centers have ramped up their efforts and will have even more impact with this essential higher level of funding. Unfortunately, the Governor's draft budget proposed to cut this funding back to \$2M, which would significantly hamper the reach of the Centers and their ability to connect with pediatricians statewide. **Clean+Healthy, as well as the Lead Free Kids New York coalition and the JustGreen Partnership, urge increasing the Environmental Protection Fund line for these centers from \$4M to \$5M. We urge the Senate and Assembly to include this higher level of funding in their one-house budgets.**

- **Support for increased funding for the Pollution Prevention Institute (P2I) and Interstate Chemicals Clearinghouse (IC2).** Turning off the tap on pollutants and toxic chemicals is of great importance to our organization, and we recognize that the Pollution Prevention Institute (P2I) and Interstate Chemicals Clearinghouse (IC2) play a vital role in supporting such these goals. The P2I works to help companies prevent pollution beyond regulatory requirements, researches new solutions, and supports communities through grants. The P2I also implements critical environmental health and justice policies like the Toxic Chemicals in Children's Products law, the Family and Fire Fighter Protection Act, and other laws requiring regulation of toxic chemicals in products sold in NYS. The IC2 invites a database of toxic chemicals in products so companies can meet multiple state requirements by filing in one place. It also allows state agency staff to coordinate and learn from one another about toxics in products, green purchasing, and alternatives assessment. Because of the crucial services they provide, we encourage that **funding for both the P2I and IC2 is maintained for another year.**
- **Invest in DEC agency capacity.** The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is integral to the enforcement and implementation of many environmental laws, however, the lack of financial and human resources have hindered its ability to carry out these

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<sup>2</sup> [https://nyscheck.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/NYSHECK\\_Progress-Report\\_Y1-5\\_exec.pdf](https://nyscheck.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/NYSHECK_Progress-Report_Y1-5_exec.pdf)

functions. Clean+Healthy is again asking for a meaningful investment in this agency, specifically **\$300,000 for product testing for policies** like the Toxic Chemicals in Children's Products law, the Family and Fire Fighter Protection Act, and other laws requiring regulation of toxic chemicals in products sold in NYS; **six (6) new staff in the Pollution Prevention Unit** (P2 Unit) including to implement the aforementioned existing law; **increasing staff to manage new policies** that are anticipated, Packaging Reduction and Recycling Infrastructure Act (which will require at least another 15 staff people), Beauty Justice Act, and PFAS restrictions. The BPHRA Caucus has also recommended a total of 3,300 Full-time Employees (FTEs) at the DEC.

We are also asking for an additional **\$5 million for staffing, monitoring and work** to address cumulative impacts with priority given to identified environmental justice communities. In the recent audit of DEC's Air Pollution Control Permit Program by state comptroller Thomas DiNapoli, it was revealed that there has been an 18% reduction in staff at the DEC since 2013, even as more laws have been passed that require increased staff for implementation and enforcement.<sup>3</sup> Specifically, increased staffing is needed for the Air Pollution Control Permit Program, as the recently signed Cumulative Impacts law will be implemented, and the Enhanced Public Participation Act, S.2510A (Ramos)/ A.6584A (Gallagher), is expected to pass during this legislative session.

- **Return Clean Water and Infrastructure Funding to \$500M annually.** Lead pipe identification and removal is extremely important for the health of New Yorkers. We appreciate the work that has already been done identifying lead pipes within the state and removal that is already in queue, but there is still much more work to be done.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency estimates that there are 494,000 Lead service lines in NYS. According to the NYS Department of Health, lead service line replacement should cost at most \$10,000 per line. Therefore roughly \$5B will be needed to address this issue. \$500M has already been secured through the federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Fund, leaving a \$4.5B gap in funding.

The Lead Pipes Right to Know Act (S. 5512 (Rivera) / A. 6115 (Paulin)) was signed by the Governor in December 2023 and the next step of the process is to replace the lead pipes that are still providing water to so many homes. A 10-year phase-out of lead pipes across the whole state would be enough time to plan and execute the removal of all lead pipes around the state and have significant benefits. In order to do this, there would need to be an additional \$4.5B or \$450M over 10 years in the budget through a combination of existing state funding streams (i.e., 2022 Clean Water, Clean Air, and Green Jobs, Environmental Bond Act, Clean Water Infrastructure Act, Water Infrastructure Improvement Act, Drinking Water State Revolving Fund) as well as federal funding streams (i.e., American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), Water Infrastructure Finance & Innovation Act, Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation). The funding sources are there; what we need is the political will to make this happen. **We urge the Senate**

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<sup>3</sup> *Monitoring of Air Quality (Facility Permits and Registrations)*. Office of the New York State Comptroller, September 2023. <https://www.osc.state.ny.us/files/state-agencies/audits/pdf/sqa-2023-21s41.pdf>

**and Assembly to restore funding for these essential projects in their one-house budgets.**

We thank you for your continuous work toward protecting New York's environment, and thereby protecting all New Yorkers. We look forward to working with the Legislature and the Governor to ensure that the final SFY 2024-25 Budget includes the essential line items that protect New Yorker's health from environmentally-based sources of harm.