



Climate and Resilience  
Education Task Force

## **P-12 Climate Education in New York: One-House Budget Request**

To the Joint Legislative Budget Committees

*Delivered via email February 1, 2024 to [wamchair@nyassembly.gov](mailto:wamchair@nyassembly.gov) and  
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For the Following Committee Hearings:

Elementary & Secondary Education (February 1, 2024)

Environmental Conservation (February 7, 2024)

Higher Education (February 8, 2024)

**The Climate and Resilience Education Task Force – an intergenerational coalition of educators, students, NGOs, parents and community members managed by the National Wildlife Federation and WE ACT for Environmental Justice – asks for the addition of \$20 million towards a comprehensive, interdisciplinary P-12 climate education program for New York State. Page 427 of the CLCPA explicitly calls for climate education in order for New York to meet its decarbonization goals by 2040 under the law, but climate education currently remains unfunded.**

These critical funds will help us catch up with New Jersey, which is already funding climate education programs for its students.

The funding request would be allocated as follows:

- **\$5 million** for an Office of Climate Education and Workforce Development (like New Jersey's), to provide coordination and oversight for P-12 climate education and workforce development programs in New York State. The Office will undertake the important task of conducting a gap analysis to determine needs and opportunities in the P-12 education, CTE, and workforce development sectors that are necessary to provide New York's students with a modern climate education and create a blueprint for a statewide program. The Office will also develop key recommendations, focusing on areas of professional learning, curricular resources, learning assessments, community engagement, and the role of school boards. The Office will ensure that there is consistent oversight and management of these programs, as well as collaboration between internal government agencies and external partners and communities.
- **\$5 million:** to develop Green Career & Technical Education programs for New York State in clean energy, energy efficiency, and other emerging sectors focused on decarbonization and climate solutions that would create a pipeline to aligned college programs and jobs required to decarbonize our economy as per the CLCPA. There are currently no renewable energy CTE programs in New York State for example (see <https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/current-nysed-approved-cte-programs.pdf>)
- **\$8 million** to develop Professional Learning Modules and subject guides for teachers. A Sunday, Jan 28 *New York Times* article about climate education, stated that “there should be more teacher training and instructional resources.”
- **\$500K** for the creation and maintenance of a climate education resource hub, like New Jersey's (<https://njclimateeducation.org/>) for educators across New York state.



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- **\$1 million** in partnership with SUNY and CUNY, for the development of a framework for climate education pre-service programs for teachers.

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### **Justification**

In November 2023, scientists in Europe reported that Earth’s global average temperature was briefly two degrees Celsius hotter than pre-industrial [levels](#). NOAA and NASA— U.S. federal agencies—both confirmed that 2023 was Earth’s hottest year on record since global records began in [1880](#).

New York is the fourth most populous state in the U.S. and has the largest school district in the country. The climate crisis represents a significant threat to the state’s 19.5 million inhabitants, including its more than **2.5 million K-12 public school students and 212,000 teachers and their families**. In the coming decades, more frequent extreme weather events, rising temperatures and extreme heat, changing precipitation, sea level rise, and the loss of land, homes, businesses, and lives will impact New York.

Young people are already experiencing climate extremes and life disruptions first hand. This past June, New Yorkers experienced dystopian orange skies and smoke from Canadian wildfires. On September 29, 2023, a record-setting rain [event](#) dumped 7.25 inches of rain in New York City’s residential neighborhoods in just a few hours, shutting down mass transit, flooding 150 public schools, stranding hundreds of thousands of students and their families, and leading New York City’s Mayor to declare a state of emergency. A majority of young people are understandably feeling scared and anxious, and believe that adults and governments have failed them by not taking action to stop the climate [crisis](#).

Despite this, New York City students barely learn about the causes of climate change in school, including its far-reaching systemic impacts, or potential solutions. According to a 2021 survey of 1,516 NYC public school teachers conducted by the Climate and Resilience Education Task Force in partnership with the United Federation of [Teachers](#), 52% of educators said they teach about climate change but the majority only do so for one to two hours per school year; and 68% said they don’t have time to teach about it. This lack of climate education sadly mirrors the national [average](#).

In order for New York to achieve its ambitions for 100% zero-emission electricity by 2040, as outlined in the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA)—now state law—robust K-12 climate education curricula, professional learning opportunities for teachers, and green Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs are required. Research by Yale shows that **a majority of New Yorkers (84%) support students learning about global warming in [school](#)**.

States like New Jersey, which has implemented a climate education mandate across all grades and content areas, and Washington, whose ClimeTime program has made climate science a priority since 2018, are demonstrating the educational leadership that it takes to bolster the climate preparedness and economic competitiveness of current and future generations of young people.



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Increasing access to climate education in New York is also a matter of both generational and racial justice. The climate crisis, caused by previous generations, will have detrimental impacts on future generations. According to data from the Department of Environmental Conservation ([DEC](#)), New York State has a large number of Potential Environmental Justice Areas (PEJA) and New York City has the highest concentration in the state. These communities will experience the first and worst climate impacts. New York has an obligation to ensure that its youngest and most vulnerable citizens gain the critical knowledge and skills they need to advocate for change and transform their communities.

[S.278A/A.1559A](#), drafted by CRETF’s intergenerational Policy Committee and introduced by Senator Gounardes and Assemblywoman JoAnne Simon respectively in late November 2023, is aligned to CRETF’s New York State [Climate Education Platform](#) and “establishes a course of instruction and learning expectations on climate education in all public pre-kindergarten, elementary and secondary schools.” **The bill is not a mandate or a curriculum bill.** It provides a framework for teacher training and – in technical terms - asks for updated exemplars for current standards.

Some 60 organizations, 30 individuals with institutional affiliations, and 180+ educators have signed on in support of climate education bill S278A/A1559A as of January 31, 2024.

New York’s youngest citizens deserve a comprehensive education that equips them with the understanding and skills needed to navigate the complex challenges of our time. S.278A/A.1559A will deliver.