



42 Broadway, Suite 2160  
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January 28, 2026

*Board of  
Directors*

## **ALIGN Testimony for Joint Legislative Budget Hearing, Environmental Conservation and Energy Committees**

Stuart  
Appelbaum  
*President,*  
Retail  
Wholesale  
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Store Union

Thank you Chair Krueger, Chair Pretlow and all the members of the Senate Finance and Assembly Ways and Means Committees for the opportunity to submit written testimony on the SFY 26-27 State Budget. ALIGN is a longstanding alliance of labor and community organizations united for a just and sustainable New York. We work at the intersection of economy, environment and equity to bring together labor, climate, and community for a more just and sustainable New York.

Henry Garrido  
*Executive  
Director,*  
AFSCME  
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ALIGN was pleased to see the inclusion of various climate, energy, and environmental initiatives in the executive budget, including \$50 million for EmPower+ Program to help homeowners save money on energy efficiency upgrades to their homes, \$33 million for the new Excelsior Power Program, and additional funding for the Environmental Protection Fund. These initiatives, however, do not go far enough in ensuring a greener, cleaner, and environmentally just future for New Yorkers. Given this, we recommend the following considerations for the Fiscal Year 2026 - 2027 budget:

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*Political  
Director,*  
NYC Central  
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### **Implement and Fund the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act**

Bernadette  
Kelly,  
Consortium for  
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At a time when the federal administration is actively removing environmental protections on a daily basis and putting fossil fuel interests over community needs and the climate crisis continues to ravage communities across New York state, the executive budget fails to take meaningful steps to advance the targets of the state's landmark climate law, the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA of 2019). In 2023, research found that New York state tax payers were burdened by \$2.2 billion in climate cost or \$300 per household with projected increase to \$562 per household in 2024<sup>1</sup>. A report by New York State Energy Research and Development Authority's (NYSERDA) "ClimAID" report (Integrated Assessment for Effective Climate Change Adaptation Strategies in New York State) estimated that climate change costs for New York state could approach \$10 billion by mid century<sup>2</sup>. Affordability has become a major concern in New York and it is clear that the state's lack of climate preparedness and reluctance to adequately support climate programs further contributes to this unaffordability through unwanted costs being borne by everyday New Yorkers. Regardless of these mounting costs and deepened financial burden, we

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<sup>1</sup>On the Backs of New York State Households: The Extreme Costs of Climate Change Impacts Families in Every Region of the State. (March 2024) <https://www.nyrenews.org/climate-superfund-report>

<sup>2</sup> Office of State Comptroller. (2023). New York's Local Governments Adapting to Climate Change: Challenges, Solutions and Costs <https://www.osc.ny.gov/files/local-government/publications/pdf/climate-change-2023.pdf>



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Director  
Community  
Voices Heard

have not seen the necessary investments towards climate in the FY26-FY27 proposed budget.

Jose Lopez  
Co-Executive  
Director, Make  
the Road NY

The CLCPA incorporates strong, science-based standards and definitions, including rigorous accounting for methane emissions and clear processes for identifying Disadvantaged Communities (DACs) across the state. It also includes legal mandates to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 with intermittent goals of having seventy percent of New York’s electricity being provided from renewable energy sources by 2030 and one-hundred percent zero-emissions energy by 2040. Unfortunately, New York is behind on achieving these mandates and it is to the detriment of New Yorkers’ health and safety.

Investing in our state’s climate law is intertwined with the focus on affordability and should it be viewed as an additional financial burden, as the cost of inaction is much greater—more than \$115 billion according to the Climate Action Council’s Final Scoping plan<sup>3</sup>. However, investing in climate and meeting the CLCPA mandates could create net benefits that range from \$80 billion - \$150 billion with additional health benefits ranging \$160 billion - \$170 billion<sup>4</sup>. **The legislature must resist any attempts to undermine or rewrite this landmark law and take action to advance clean energy and implement the CLCPA as it is written** to realize the full public health benefits, green jobs creation and unlock cost saving for communities across New York state.

### **Release the Cap and Invest regulations**

Governor Hochul announced New York’s cap-and-invest program in 2023—a system to cap corporate pollution and raise money by making polluters pay that would then be spent on projects and programs that would make New York greener, safer, and more affordable. If done right, a cap and invest program would generate at least \$3 billion of revenue for New York while creating healthier and thriving communities. Cap-and-invest would lower energy bills, expand union jobs, and help to ensure households are safe, healthy, and affordable. Yet, in early 2025, the Governor halted the release of the cap and invest program and indefinitely paused its rollout. Cap-and-invest is essential to reducing New York’s greenhouse gas emissions and transitioning to a renewable energy economy while providing consistent funding for climate programs. NYSERDA’s proposed framework for the use of cap and invest funds shows a consideration for how this program can both center fossil fuel workers and expand work in a growing green sector to bring about the necessary facets to center a

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<sup>3</sup> New York State Climate Action Council, “Scoping Plan December 2022: Executive Summary,” page 5, accessed January 28, 2026, <https://climate.ny.gov/-/media/Project/Climate/Files/Chapter1ExecutiveSummary.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> New York State Climate Action Council, October 14, 2021 meeting presentation, page 34, <https://climate.ny.gov//media/Project/Climate/Files/2021-10-14-CAC-Meeting-presentation.pdf>



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worker transition that is truly just. Revenue can be used to support workforce training and retraining programs, provide direct capacity building support for programs in DACs and create direct pathways for recent graduates to access local and regional training programs in the growing green sector.

**We ask the Legislature to push for the immediate release of the cap-and-invest regulations and adopt a cap-trade-and-invest program with guardrails in their one-house budget resolutions.** We further ask for your support on Assemblymember Kelles' and Senator Parker's cap-and-invest with guardrails bill (A3975 / S4651). It is time that polluters pay for the harms caused and that this money be reinvested in cleaner air, lower energy bills, and tens of thousands of good-paying, family sustaining jobs in every region across the state.

### **Fully Implement the Sustainable Future Fund program**

The Sustainable Future Fund program must be implemented as intended using the current allocation of \$1 billion to fund climate mitigation and adaptation programs. The purpose of this program is to accelerate capital projects in New York's transition to a cleaner, greener future and to support long term investments in frontline and environmental justice communities that have been historically disinvested in. This historic investment will create good-paying, family sustaining jobs, lower energy costs for New Yorkers, and cut harmful greenhouse gas emissions.

Rather than reappropriating funds from the previous fiscal year, New York must maintain this commitment to climate action and funding. **We urge the Legislature and Governor Hochul to further build out the Sustainable Future Fund program by investing \$3 billion in general revenue in the 2026-2027 Budget** to support community-led resilience projects, invest in proven long term solutions that reduce greenhouse gas emissions rather than short term fixes, expand clean energy access for low income households and make New York more resilient in the face of the climate crisis. Given the previous commitment of \$1 billion to this program, any allocation less than this would be a direct cut to climate action and therefore should be the minimum investment made in the FY26-27 final budget.

### **Fund Thermal Energy Networks**

Over the past two years, the Legislature has made substantial efforts to decarbonize New York's building sector which is the largest source of pollution in New York state. The Utility Thermal Energy and Jobs Act of 2022 paved the way for the expansion of thermal energy network systems across New York state, requiring that the Public Service Commission (PSC) approve and implement projects within the first 6 months of



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the law's passage. Although this process has been significantly delayed, we have seen utilities make strong proposals leading to eight utility thermal energy network projects currently awaiting approval for construction by the PSC. These groundbreaking projects have the potential to provide neighborhood scale decarbonization that will be built by union labor and can significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In the FY 25 - 26 budget, as part of the Sustainable Future Fund program, \$200 million was allocated in the final budget to advance thermal energy networks which will jumpstart shovel-ready decarbonization projects at multiple SUNY campuses.

**The Legislature should continue its commitment to advance thermal energy networks by including an additional \$200 million in new bonded funding in this year's budget.** At scale decarbonization requires multi-year investments to support high upfront capital costs but, overtime these systems are aiding in the retiring of fossil fuel infrastructure, reducing the reliance on the electricity grid while making buildings more efficient. Of this \$200 million, \$120 million can be used to further push projects at University at Buffalo, University at Albany, Farmingdale State College, SUNY Purchase and SUNY Binghamton. This investment will also support the state in reaching its clean energy targets and CLCPA goal of ensuring at least 35% of clean energy investments are made in DACs. Many of these campuses are either in or in close proximity to DACs and further serve as anchor institutions for their communities.

The misdeeds of the federal government are a call to action and we need our state leaders to stand up and fight to protect New Yorkers and address the climate crisis. ALIGN looks forward to working with the legislature to ensure New York's final FY2026-27 budget truly meets the challenges New Yorkers are facing, adequately prepares us for the climate crisis and creates a more just and affordable New York.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Jenille Scott  
Climate Director