



April 12, 2021

MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT

Citizen Action of New York strongly supports passage of S4264 (Parker)/A_____ (Cahill), enacting the Climate and Community Investment Act

Citizen Action of New York, a membership organization dedicated to social, racial, economic and environmental justice with members in eight chapters and affiliates across New York State, strongly supports S4264/A_____, the Climate and Community Investment Act (CCIA), which establishes a “polluter fee” on greenhouse gases and dangerous toxic co-pollutants to generate an estimated \$15 billion each year and create 150,000 jobs in the transition to a just and renewable economy. The CCIA is the next step in New York’s climate policy, and creates the necessary infrastructure and investment to make the mandates outlined by the 2019 Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) a reality.

Specifically, the CCIA will: 1) invest in quality, energy efficient public housing, public schools, child care facilities, 21st-century public transportation, locally owned renewable energy, and community-led resiliency projects; 2) create programs to lower utility costs, particularly for low-income New Yorkers; 3) provide rebates to low and moderate income New Yorkers to ensure that they don’t bear the brunt of the costs of the state’s transition away from fossil fuels; 4) ensure that workers employed on projects, or in buildings, that receive state assistance from the law, receive prevailing wages and benefits and other protections; 5) create a Worker and Community Assurance Fund which would provide guaranteed economic support to displaced workers, and support to re-train and re-equip workers to prevent layoffs; and 6) put disadvantaged and environmental justice communities at the center of the policy -- ensuring that those communities hit first and worst by the climate crisis are where New York invests.

While the passage of the CLCPA was a major step forward, more work is needed to ensure its goals are achieved. First, New York needs massive coordinated public investments in the renewable energy economy in our state. A polluter fee is the right mechanism to generate this needed public investment. While renewables like wind and solar have become cost competitive, the massive transitions we must make still cannot happen without significant *public* investments. Government was central to so many other past major transformations of the U.S. economy, including the Internet and the interstate highway system. Addressing the climate crisis will be no different. The fossil fuel industry has routinely sacrificed the health of low income communities for profit for decades. It is simply the right thing to do to hold polluters accountable for the harm they have created.

Further, the bill rightly targets many of the systemic inequities in our state based on race and income. The bill rightly prioritizes the creation of jobs in communities most impacted by the climate crisis, and mandates that projects that receive state assistance create quality jobs, through requirements like prevailing wages and project labor agreements.

It is true that some New Yorkers are likely to be negatively impacted by higher energy bills in the short and medium term. This is addressed by a provision of the bill devoting 30% of the revenue generated by the polluter fee will be devoted to direct assistance to low and moderate income families, small businesses and non-profits to ease the anticipated increased energy burdens.

The CCIA correctly prioritizes investments where they are needed the most -- low income communities of color. The CCIA allocates one-third of the polluter fee revenue raised to community based organizations in or serving frontline communities, for local programs like community solar, energy efficient homes, and green infrastructure.

Finally, we are also encouraged that the bill builds in extremely strong processes for public participation and local control.

For the above stated reasons, Citizen Action strongly urges enactment of this critical climate and economic justice measure. Please contact Bob Cohen at bcohen@citizenactionny.org or at or (518) 265-6183 with any questions.