

**Testimony by the New York State Nurses Association
(Part of NY Renews, Climate Works for All and Climate Jobs New York)**

The Senate Committees on Finance, Environmental Conservation, and Energy and
Telecommunications
Hearing On Legislative And Budgetary Actions Needed To Implement The Scoping Plan And
CLCPA

Flandersia Jones, RN, MPH
BronxCare Health System
Director at Large

My name is Flandersia Jones and I work as a nurse at BronxCare Health System. I am also a proud union member and serve as a Director at Large of the New York State Nurses Association. NYSNA is the largest nurses union in NY state representing 43,000 nurses. We are also affiliated with National Nurses United which is comprised of 225,000 nurses across the country.

As nurses on the frontlines of patient care we have seen up close the horrors of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have seen the deep impact that the pandemic has had on low income communities of color. The disparities are all encompassing, affecting marginalized communities physically, mentally and economically. We know that this is just a preview of what lay ahead if we do not take climate change seriously. It is critical that we heed the warning.

In fact, we have already seen the destruction that climate change and environmental degradation has had on the health of our patients. Increases in heat have contributed to an increase in hypertension. Pollutants are being discharged into our city air, causing a steady increase in chronic asthma conditions in our most vulnerable communities. In addition, these communities also face environmental injustices like contaminated water supplies and tainted soil. They are also the ones that are usually hit the hardest by catastrophic events such as Superstorm Sandy.

The Bronx, where I work and live, has the highest child asthma rates in New York City. In fact, emergency departments in Hunts Point and Longwood, are double the citywide rates. When discussing environmental racism it is important to point out that there are 16 school bus depots in the Bronx. 3 in Hunts Point alone! There is a direct correlation between high asthma rates within these environmental justice communities and the high prevalence of bus depots. 75% of the MTA operated depots across the five boroughs are within communities where the majority of residents are people of color.

Let me be clear, the New York State Nurses Association is 100% in support of a fossil fuel free economy. We should be doing everything that we can do to speed this reality along. We also need to make sure that we are doing this in an equitable way. This includes giving special attention to the fact that environmental justice communities must be prioritized. Additionally, workers must be transitioned into good, green jobs. We commend the vision laid out in the Scoping Plan concerning these matters.

The CLCPA which we fought so hard for in 2019 must be adequately funded in order to fulfill its promise. This must be done in an equitable and transparent way. We must figure out how to get a good funding mechanism in place so that we can fully do the work that the CLCPA prescribes. The roadmap that the Scoping Plan provides must be fully funded in a meaningful and intentional way. New York can actually set the stage for other states to follow!