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Testimony to
The Senate Joint Environmental Conservation and Energy
Committee Hearing on The Climate and Community
Investment Act “CCIA” (S4264-A)

The Honorable Todd Kaminsky, Chair, Senate Environmental Conservation Committee
And
The Honorable Kevin Parker, Chair, Senate Energy and Telecommunications Committee

Submitted by:
The Honorable Merton Simpson, Albany County Legislature, District 2

As the Albany County Legislator, District 2 (representing Arbor Hill, Sheridan Hollow, Washington Park and West Hill), I would just like to thank Senators Kaminsky and Parker for this opportunity to testify.

On reading the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) I was pleased to see that under the definitions of “Renewable Energy Systems” “Geothermal ground source heat was included. I had the opportunity to testify at the January 27, 2021 Environmental Conservation Budget Hearing on Executive Budget Appropriations for 2021-2022. I watched the entire hearing from beginning to the end at near 9:00 PM and I believe I was the only person to raise the need for Geothermal Energy although there was a supportive follow up comment. I think this is a reflection of how little understanding there is on the viability of Geothermal Energy.

As a County Legislator the need to address the Crisis of Climate Change has become one of my main priorities. It was only a few months ago when over 130,000 residents of the

Capital Region lost power for up to 7 days. The recent major snow event in Texas and the record breaking fires in California makes it clear that the Climate challenge is real and getting more serious everyday.

In 2017 I was made aware that there was a project proposed by the New York Power Authority (NYPA) to install Fracked natural gas turbines at facilities owned and operated by the Office of General Services (OGS) at 79 Sheridan Avenue to provide heating, cooling and electricity to the Capital and Empire State Plaza. The Fracked natural gas was piped in from Pennsylvania. I live at 295 Sheridan Avenue, less than 7 blocks away from the 79 Sheridan Avenue Power Plant. Since 1911 this plant has been the source of Environmental Racism for residents of Sheridan Hollow Arbor Hill and communities nearby. Over the years the plant burned coal, oil, trash and Fracked natural gas.

The period from 1981 to 1994 was particularly devastating when residents were subjected to the ANSWERS Plant which under the Erastus Corning Administration garbage was burned on a daily basis subjecting the residents to very high levels of cancer. My sister-in-law died of Multiple Myeloma and her husband also died of cancer. It was only after soot from the plant landed on the front lawn of the Governor that the plant was closed.

The early interaction with NYPA and OGS was relevant to today's hearings. Initially NYPA and OGS argued that wind, solar and geothermal options were not viable. It is likely that there was a lack of understanding of what Geothermal Energy could do. Fortunately, from 2017 to today a strong advocacy effort has convinced the State to abandon the initial Fracked gas proposal and move to a process of transforming the Capital and Empire State Plaza to renewable energy.

It is of particular relevance for the Climate Community Investment Act to note the changes that NYPA and OGS have made to the Sheridan Avenue Microgrid Proposal. The State moved from the initial position that Fracked natural gas was the most viable option to a position where it was recognized that the initial proposal was not the most cost effective but also was in fact not the most effective. Among the changes that are being implemented are: demolition of the old out-of-use steel smoke stack at the former ANSWERS plant; the development of a remote-solar array in Oneida County to power up to half of the plaza's energy needs; a \$50 million project to replace the existing on-site emergency generators with state of the art efficient, low emission and low noise units; a nearly \$30 million electrification upgrade to one of the on site steam driven chillers to reduce local gas use and emissions by 18 percent; a \$16 million initiative to install LED lighting technology throughout the entire 98 acre plaza complex to reduce energy use and statewide greenhouse gas emissions; and augment the large scale remote solar array with on site solar panels and electrical energy storage to further reduce fossil fuel dependency.

The initiatives listed above focus mostly on conservation and transitioning some of the cooling from steam to electric generation. However, there is still no plan to convert the heating systems for the plaza to renewables.

There needs to be a study to convert the Capital and the Empire State Plaza Complex (Plaza) to renewable energy. The study should emphasize Geothermal and building efficiency measures and involve experts with demonstrated experience in Geothermal and Thermal Load Share technology for large scale systems. NYPA should replace all the chillers that are powered by the Sheridan Avenue Steam Plant to chillers run on electric power by renewable sources.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify.