



NY RENEWS

April 13, 2021

Hon. Kevin Parker, Chair
New York State Senate Energy and
Telecommunications Committee
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. Todd Kaminsky, Chair
New York State Senate Environmental
Conservation Committee
LOB 307, Albany, NY 12247

**TESTIMONY OF THE NEW YORK RENEWS COALITION APPEARING BEFORE THE
JOINT NEW YORK STATE SENATE HEARINGS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION AND THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENERGY
ON THE CLIMATE AND COMMUNITY INVESTMENT ACT.**

Senator Parker, Senator Kaminsky

Thank you for this opportunity to testify today in favor of the Climate and Community Investment Act (CCIA). This testimony is presented on behalf of NY RENEWS, a multi-sector coalition of over 275 member organizations, representing tens of thousands of New Yorkers across the state. We include community groups, environmental justice groups, environmental organizations, labor unions, faith communities, youth, businesses, agriculture and food systems organizations, public health advocates, educators, policy experts, and social and economic justice organizations. Together, we advocate for good jobs and climate justice.

NY Renews was a lead proponent of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA), the State's landmark climate law, which established a framework for just climate action. We thank you for your critical leadership in passing the CLCPA, which is already influencing policy nationally and in states across the country. With the CLCPA, the state took national leadership on climate action.

The CCIA is the CLCPA's companion bill. Enacted in 2019, the CLCPA created a comprehensive regulatory program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from all anthropogenic sources by the year 2050, and requires investment in and protection of disadvantaged and Environmental Justice communities. To meet the goals of the CLCPA, the state will need to transform its energy infrastructure and invest in community-based climate solutions, including the rapid and significant deployment of clean and renewable energy. It is in the interest of the state of New York to promote and provide resources towards the development and maintenance of a clean energy infrastructure.

The CCIA is the people's plan for the bottom-up and community-led just transition called for in the CLCPA. It was developed by the NY Renews coalition with diverse stakeholders from all across New York State and was recently revised to ensure it remains the gold standard of climate justice legislation in the country.

By putting a penalty on pollution, the CCIA would raise up to \$15 billion per year to create hundreds of thousands of good jobs, transition every sector of our economy off of fossil fuels, and invest in communities across the state, especially communities of color and low-income communities who are bearing bearing the brunt of environmental injustice and climate change. This includes deep investments in both school infrastructure and the care economy. It would also protect workers and communities impacted by that transition. We urge the legislature, which led the charge to pass the CLCPA, to continue to lead on climate and justice by passing the CCIA.

This is the time to advance and pass the CCIA. In the past year, hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers have lost their jobs, become ill, or died because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The impacts on New York's Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and low income communities have been particularly

pronounced. And the same policies and factors that put these communities most at risk from Covid-19 are those that create the greatest risk from climate change, and are often at the root of broader race and class inequities.

The CCIA is part of what NY needs to make sure that the recovery from the Covid crisis is a just recovery. We cannot wait for the federal government, or the governor. New Yorkers need more than a short term stimulus- the state needs dedicated funding and programs to strengthen our communities. Importantly, this includes an immediate need to invest in our school infrastructure and our child and dependent care infrastructure. We must center our investments in ways that tackle environmental injustice for communities that are hurting in New York — including communities of color - Black, Latinx, Asian American, immigrant, indigenous, people of color, low-income communities, women, youth, and children. These investments would build on other efforts to provide near term relief for frontline communities and pave the way for further State and federal action by leading on what a fundamentally just and community driven climate policy can look like.

But the impact of passing the CCIA will be felt far beyond New York. It will have a big impact on federal policy and in other states. New York has already shown it can be the nation's climate leader: parts of the CLCPA, which we passed in 2019, have already shown up in and influence federal policymaking. The policies developed by frontline communities here in New York are in the US Senate Democrats' climate plan and in President Biden's Justice 40 initiative.

Now coalitions across the country and our Federal legislators are watching what happens here to see how this transition will be advanced. There is no question that we need to and will decarbonize and get off fossil fuels, however New York's leadership can help ensure that the transition is just. Just to communities of color, just to environmental justice communities, just to communities that have suffered economic or environmental harms as host communities or fenceline communities, just for workers building our clean renewable energy future.

The CCIA is Climate Justice. The CCIA establishes an annually escalating price on greenhouse gases *and* a surcharge on health impacting co-pollutants. Co-pollutants are released with the

burning of fossil fuels and contribute to negative health effects such as asthma and premature death.

Revenues generated would support large- and small-scale renewable energy projects as well as wide-scale building upgrades and retrofits, increase resilience among at-risk communities, support workers and communities impacted by the transition, and provide energy rebates for low-income and moderate-income households.

It is important to note that while the CCIA puts a price on greenhouse gas emissions, the market alone is not the way New York will meet levels of emission reductions we need. Instead we need a combination of enforceable limits, which we already won with the CLCPA in 2019, and huge public investment, which gets us to our investment plan.

The investment plan is what makes the CCIA a stronger response to the climate crisis than other proposals and will lead the nation. The CCIA approach is predicated on several key features:

- Mandate emission reductions and environmental justice first. The CCIA only exists in combination with the previous CLCPA mandate victory.
- The revenue is used primarily for investments, not dividends, because we know these investments will lead to lower costs and better outcomes in the long run and are needed to provide our communities a just path to an equitable renewable energy future.
- Investments must be developed with input and direction from the communities that will benefit from those investments. The CCIA prioritizes community-based investments focused on placing community needs and decision making at the center of the process.
- The CCIA aims beyond energy efficiency and renewable energy incentives, because we need to broadly and intentionally invest to restructure the economy.
- People have to trust the implementation will be effective and the money will go where promised. To that end the CCIA creates a transparent Climate Authority structure that locks in this spending, and has community accountability throughout.

The CCIA will create good jobs and strong communities across New York State. If passed, the Climate and Community Investment Act would create and sustain over 160,000 jobs and support the transition of our industries and workplaces to a clean energy future. It's critical that we create good jobs with family sustaining wages, meaningful benefits, and strong safety and health standards. It's also vital that these jobs are made available to communities most impacted by pollution and climate change, and to people who have been excluded from economic opportunity.

The CCIA sets a price on pollution and then directly invests the proceeds from the polluter penalty back into New York's communities. The CCIA will mean massive investments in:

- **Energy Efficiency:** Dramatically improving energy efficiency standards in New York's buildings, automobiles and public transportation systems, and industrial production will help New York get on track with the climate stabilization goals set out by the CLCPA and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) of reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 45% by 2030 and to reach net zero emissions by 2050.
- **Clean Renewable Energy:** Dramatically expanding the supply of clean renewable energy sources—primarily wind, solar, and geothermal power—available at competitive prices to all sectors of New York State's economy.
- **Infrastructure investments:** To expand access to affordable transportation, high-speed broadband, clean water, upgrade parks and other public amenities, reduce pollution, and strengthen the public resources needed to undergird a manufacturing revival.
- **Agriculture and land restoration:** To expand opportunities for family farmers, including younger farmers and people of color, and to support regenerative agriculture, local and regional food systems, and climate resilience.
- **The care economy and public health:** Investments in energy efficiency and health and safety upgrades schools, day cares, and non-profit sites that both improve both community health and educational outcomes. Thanks to investments in efficiency and green energy, schools and day cares will pay less for energy, meaning that more of their budget can support their core mission.

There are immediate and concrete examples of what these types of investments will mean in communities across the state, projects like:

- Manufacturing off-shore wind turbines in Schenectady and reinvigorating a manufacturing community;
- Green manufacturing and renewable energy jobs on the waterfront in Sunset Park Brooklyn;
- Installing solar panels and making improvements to Churches, Schools, and child care centers all across the state to make them more resilient, healthier, and centers for greening our state;
- Supporting the businesses, and setting up the infrastructure to provide energy efficiency and 100% renewable energy to every home and business in New York State from the North Country to Long Island;
- Massively expanding transit options across the state, using electric buses built here in New York State; and
- Providing billions for investment in rural communities to improve infrastructure, support agriculture, and improve connectivity.

Overall, the CCIA will dramatically improve the employment opportunities, public health, and energy transition, but it will also provide a foundation for a broader improvement in living conditions for the people of New York.

The CCIA Protects Consumers and Businesses From Cost Increases. The CCIA was developed with community voices at the table and with equity and justice at the center. In addition to investing billions of dollars directly into renewables, energy efficiency, and resiliency and adaptation programs in frontline communities, the legislation includes several mechanisms to make sure low and moderate income New Yorkers won't bear any increased cost, and that the people impacted first and worst by climate change and pollution will benefit most from this new revenue. As a result and according to multiple economic analyses, the CCIA will clearly be one of the most progressive sources of public revenue in NYS.

Most of the remaining funds raised through the polluter penalty (30%, or around \$4 - \$5 billion per year over the first ten years) will go towards massively expanding public transit, building up large scale renewables and investing in grid stability. These investments will create tens of thousands of good green jobs with high-road workforce standards, and members of frontline communities, current and formerly incarcerated New Yorkers, people coming off of unemployment, and women in non-traditional trades will be prioritized for these jobs. Many of these programs will additionally decrease utility costs.

Recognizing that polluters will try to pass some of the cost on to consumers, the CCIA includes a rebate program that allocates 30% of the funds raised to a low- and moderate-income and small business rebate program. Modeling from the University of Massachusetts Political Economy Research Institute shows that the lowest-earning 60% of New York households will receive a rebate payment equal to or greater than the increased costs they will bear. New Yorkers will generally be automatically opted in to the program, including non-citizens and non-tax filers.

Additionally, in the key area of utility price impacts the CCIA directs the Public Service Commission to keep costs down. The Public Service Commission (PSC) regulates the electric and gas utilities in New York State. Their oversight powers include approving or denying requests from utility companies to increase the rates we pay for gas and electricity, and thus, the PSC is a critical player in protecting New Yorkers from cost increases.

Within six months of the CCIA's passage, the Public Service Commission will be required to start a process to identify and mitigate any increase in utility prices as a result of the CCIA, with a focus on avoiding price increases for the lowest-earning 60% of New Yorkers (essentially, anyone eligible for the rebate).

The CCIA is the revenue and investment plan that New York needs now to build our communities, our economy, and avert climate crisis. The CCIA will create tens of thousands of good jobs at a moment that they are vitally needed, reduce the pollution that exacerbates

COVID, and make our state more resilient as we face the worsening climate crises and the intersecting crises facing all our communities.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on the CCIA. NY Renews is excited to work with the Senate to make this bill law.

Sincerely,

The NYRenews Steering Committee:

- 32BJ SEIU
- ALIGN - Alliance for a Greater New York
- Catskill Mountainkeeper
- Center For Working Families
- Citizen Action of New York
- Communications Workers of America District 1
- Environmental Advocates of NY
- GreenFaith
- Long Island Progressive Coalition
- NYC Environmental Justice Alliance
- NYSNA
- Our Climate
- People's Climate Movement NY
- The Point CDC
- PUSH Buffalo
- Sierra Club
- Teamsters Joint Council 16
- UPROSE