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June 8, 2017

Honorable John Flanagan
Temporary President and Majority Leader
New York Senate
Capital Room 330
Albany, New York 12247

Dear Senator Flanagan,

Last week, President Trump announced the withdrawal of the United States from the landmark Paris Climate Agreement. This withdrawal represents a step backwards in addressing the devastating impacts of climate change facing communities across the country and New York State. In light of this withdrawal, we urge you to consider moving bills codifying New York State's climate goals and action plans out of committee and bring them to the floor for a vote.

In an attempt to address President Trump's actions, Governor Cuomo announced an Executive Order highlighting state efforts to address climate change. This Executive Order announced a tri-state alliance with California and Washington to voluntarily abide by the goals of the Paris Agreement, calling the arrangement the U.S. Climate Alliance. Since the creation of the U.S. Climate Alliance, ten additional states have joined the coalition, demonstrating a desire by some states to take aggressive action on climate change. This Executive Order adds to the list of actions already taken by the Governor.

While we commend the actions taken by Governor Cuomo, it is now more critical than ever for the Legislature to fulfill its Constitutional obligation and establish standards in state law that will continue to govern the state's policies in the years to come. A number of bills introduced in the New York State Senate would move our state forward, but have yet to be considered in committee. These bills include: the New York State Climate Responsibility Act (S.5557) carried by Senator Latimer, which would codify a statewide greenhouse gas reduction plan and Climate Action Council; Senator Parker's bill (S.2429) codifying the Climate Action Council; Senator Addabbo's bill establishing a Climate Change Task Force (S.3682); and, Senator Hoylman's bill codifying state greenhouse gas limits and reporting requirements (S.35).

New York and other states have recently experienced increasingly unpredictable and severe weather events. Superstorm Sandy hit New York and more than a dozen other states hard in



2012, causing at least 159 deaths, \$65 billion in damage (\$32 billion was in New York State alone), and over 650,000 homes and 250,500 vehicles were destroyed or damaged. Superstorm Sandy was the second-costliest weather disaster in U.S. history after Hurricane Katrina.

These extreme weather events are predicted to increase in intensity and frequency in the future if climate change is not effectively addressed. New York City and Long Island are particularly vulnerable to severe flooding from rising sea levels and storms that are more powerful. Even upstate communities are increasingly dealing with the effects of lake and river floods caused by supercharged storms and unpredictable weather patterns. Similarly, the future of New York agriculture faces large-scale devastation from climate change.

In addition to protecting our environment, addressing climate change also creates jobs for New Yorkers including in research, construction, engineering, and manufacturing. Over 85,000 New Yorkers are already working in clean energy jobs. As the federal government cuts climate programs, strengthening New York's climate commitments would protect the environment and these critical New York jobs.

We as a legislative body must do more to protect New Yorkers. As proposed by the Senate Democratic Conference and our Conference Policy Group¹, a codified climate action plan will put in place accountability mechanisms to protect New York's commitments to protecting the environment while growing green jobs, improving public health, and increasing savings for the state. We respectfully ask you to bring these issues to the floor for a full vote of the Senate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrea Stewart-Cousins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Leader, Senate Democratic Conference

¹ See New York State Senate Democratic Policy Group, Report: A Legislative Climate Action Plan for New York State (June 1, 2016), available at <https://www.scribd.com/document/314475604/Report-A-Legislative-Climate-Action-Plan-for-New-York-State>