



April 13, 2021

On behalf of the Sustainability Department of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Brentwood, I am writing in strong support of the Climate and Community Investment Act (CCIA) as the moral standard of a national climate justice policy. The CCIA will create the necessary infrastructure and investment to make the mandates outlined by 2019's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act a reality. The Sisters of St. Joseph call upon our elected officials to place investment in disadvantaged and environmental justice communities at its center while funding the just transition to renewable energy that New York State needs and deserves.

Located in Brentwood since 1896, the Sisters of St. Joseph are the largest order of Catholic women religious on Long Island with more than 350 members. Our Brentwood campus is a 212-acre parcel that contains significant natural and community resources and is located in this densely populated environmental justice community. Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Fair treatment means that no group of people, including racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic groups should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations. The CCIA is an opportunity to move toward supporting initiatives that represent renewal and life, and will bring hope and support for environmental justice communities.

All Long Islanders have the right to live in healthy communities, yet neighborhoods home to Black, Brown, and working-class people are disproportionately subject to serious pollution and environmentally destructive activities. Environmental justice is an important intersection between the fight for civil rights and environmental protection. It seeks to ensure marginalized communities do not become repositories for unhealthy activity that harms both the environment and public health. The CCIA puts 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 so that no one is left behind.

In 2015 the Sisters of St. Joseph affirmed a Land Ethic Statement and implemented new initiatives, and ecological projects to pursue. Our goal is to protect and enhance the unique features of the land that we hold in sacred trust so they may share its beauty and bounty with others for generations to come. Land preservation, green management practices, outreach, advocacy, and education are all part of our plan to ensure that people living in environmental justice communities have the opportunity to live in a healthy environment. Therefore, I am respectfully requesting that that all members of the NYS Senate and Assembly champion the CCIA: become a co-sponsor, raise the bill in conference, and vote yes when it comes before you.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Karen Burke, CSJ, EdD." The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

Sister Karen Burke, CSJ, EdD  
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