



50 Broadway, 29th Floor
New York, NY 10004
T 212 631 0886
F 888 370 3085
www.ALIGNny.org

2022 Joint Legislative Budget Hearing Environmental Conservation

Hon. Liz Krueger, Chair
New York State Senate Finance Committee
416 Capitol, Albany, NY 12247

Hon. Helene E. Weinstein, Chair
New York State Assembly Ways & Means Committee
LOB 923, Albany, NY 12248

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

Hon. Steve Englebright, Chair
New York State Assembly Committee on Environmental Conservation
LOB 621, Albany, NY 12248

Hon. Kevin Parker, Chair
New York State Senate Energy & Telecommunications Committee
Room 504C, Albany, NY 12248

Hon. Michael Cusick, Chair
New York State Assembly Energy Committee
LOB 724, Albany, NY 12248

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Maritza Silva-Farrell
Executive Director,
ALIGN

Cynthia Travieso
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Community Voices Heard

Jonathan Westin
Director
New York Communities
for Change

Dear Chairs,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the Executive Budget today. My name is Maritza Silva-Farrell and I am the Executive Director of ALIGN-NY. ALIGN organizes labor and community for a just and sustainable New York. ALIGN is also a founding partner and Steering Committee member of NY Renews, a coalition of over 300 environmental, justice, faith, labor and community groups that was instrumental in the passage of the landmark Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) in 2019 and continues the fight for good jobs and climate justice.

The CLCPA is the most ambitious climate legislation in the country, promising a 40% reduction in emissions by 2030, a 70% renewable electricity grid by 2035, and a just transition for disadvantaged communities. Yet with less than a decade left to achieve these goals, total statewide gross emissions are only 6% lower than 1990 levels;¹

¹ Hochul, Kathy and Seggos, Basil. (December 30, 2021). *2021 Statewide GHG Emissions Summary Report*. New York State DEpartment of Environmental Conservation. Retrieved from https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/administration_pdf/ghgsumrpt21.pdf

renewable resources account for less than 30% of the state’s electrical grid;² and the twin public health and economic crises of the COVID-19 pandemic have only amplified disproportionately negative outcomes driven by climate change, environmental racism, and structural inequalities in disadvantaged communities.³

Moreover, in the three years since the passage of this bill, the climate emergency has only worsened. In 2021 alone, climate change-induced extreme weather patterns drove excessive heat waves across New York⁴ followed by Tropical Storm Henri and Hurricane Ida,⁵ threatening the wellbeing of our communities by exacerbating chronic diseases, compounding COVID-19 risks, and claiming lives – especially in our black, brown, low-income, and houseless communities.⁶ ⁷ These climate change impacts equally threatened our infrastructure, straining our electrical grid⁸ while flooding our roads and public transportation.⁹

The costs of climate inaction are clear. The time for New York to deliver on its climate goals is now.

Funding for Climate Change

We join fellow members of New York Renews in calling for **New York State to invest \$15 billion in the FY-2022/23 budget in order to achieve the goals outlined in the CLCPA** to address climate change, support prevailing-wage green jobs, and ensure a just transition to a carbon-free economy. This \$15 billion investment – which represents only 6.8% of the State’s \$219 billion budget – should be allocated across four key funds tackling different pillars of the climate crisis:

² Howe, Cullen. (October 15, 2020). “New York Gives Big Boost to Renewable Energy.” National Resources Defense Council. Retrieved from <https://www.nrdc.org/experts/cullen-howe/new-york-lays-down-gauntlet-renewable-energy#:~:text=Currently%2C%20New%20York%20gets%20about.the%20New%20York%20Power%20Authority>.

³ “Coronavirus and Climate Change.” Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Retrieved January 28, 2022 from <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/c-change/subtopics/coronavirus-and-climate-change/>

⁴ New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. “Impacts of Climate Change in New York.” Retrieved January 26, 2022 from <https://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/94702.html>

⁵ Plummer, Brad. (September 2, 2021). “New Yorkers Got Record Rain, and a Warning: Storms Are Packing More Punch.” The New York Times. Retrieved January 24, 2022 from <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/02/climate/new-york-rain-climate-change.html>

⁶ Delet-Barreto, Juan; Herrera, Cynthia; Huang, Al; and Corbin-Mark, Cecil. (July 20, 2021). *Summer In The City: Improving Community Resilience To Extreme Summertime Heat In Northern Manhattan*. National Resources Defense Council. Retrieved from <https://www.nrdc.org/sites/default/files/community-resilience-summertime-heat-nomanhattan-report.pdf>

⁷ The New York Times. (October 13, 2021). “Flooding from Ida Kills Dozens of People in Four States.” Retrieved January 24, 2022 from <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/09/02/nyregion/nyc-storm>

⁸ Saul, Josh and Woodhouse, Skylar. (August 12, 2021). “New York Sizzles as Excessive-Heat Warnings Swamp Northeast.” Bloomberg Green. Retrieved January 24, 2022 from <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-08-12/heat-bearing-down-on-new-york-set-to-break-records-strain-grid>

⁹ The New York Times. (October 13, 2021). “Flooding from Ida Kills Dozens of People in Four States.” Retrieved January 24, 2022 from <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/09/02/nyregion/nyc-storm>

- **The Climate Jobs and Infrastructure Fund**, putting a down payment on our renewable energy future through expanding offshore wind and solar, electrifying our buildings and our transportation, and investing in grid resilience;
- **The Community Just Transition Fund**, investing in community-centered climate planning through adaptation and resilience, energy democracy, and food sovereignty projects;
- **The Workers and Community Assurance Fund**, supporting the 13,000-22,000^{10 11} displaced fossil fuel workers and impacted communities with job retraining, income and pension support as well as economic development programs respectively; and
- **The Household Climate Stimulus Fund**, directing stimulus funds to low-income communities, households, and families to support affordable housing development as well as access to transportation, clean energy, and energy efficiency measures.

The need for robust climate funding is well-supported by research. New York’s own Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) estimates that **New York must invest a minimum of \$10 billion every year** in order to achieve its ambitious decarbonization goals and defray the worst effects of the climate crisis. Other sources **recommend New York invest as much as \$31 billion annually** to meet its climate goals.¹² While the proposed Executive Budget promises investments that will help to deliver on climate action and community protection – funding offshore wind, home weatherization and electrification, climate-resilient farming, fleet electrification, and staff to enforce CLCPA standards – these **proposed climate investments total less than \$1 billion**, falling far short of the resources required to meet the need of the climate crisis. Additional funding proposals including a \$1 billion increase in funding to the now \$4 billion Environmental Bond Act are integral; yet, as these monies must be approved by voters in 2022 and are set to be disbursed over 5 years, they still fail to account for our current climate funding needs. **Promising a fraction of the resources the State’s own research has deemed necessary to fight climate change and leaving our climate mandates unfunded threatens to put our communities and our workers further at risk.**

Moreover, **early investments in decarbonization and emissions reduction will return dividends in the long run.** Health benefits derived from improvements in air quality and low-income housing among other interventions generate **\$160-170 billion in savings**, while avoided economic damages will **save approximately \$260 billion**. By contrast, the **cost of**

¹⁰ Pollin, Robert; Garrett-Peltier, Heidi; Wicks-Lim, Jeanette. (November 2017). *Clean Energy Investments for New York State: An Economic Framework for Promoting Climate Stabilization and Expanding Good Job Opportunities*. University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

¹¹ Just Transition Working Group. (December 2021). *2021 Jobs Study*. New York State.

¹² Pollin, Robert; Garrett-Peltier, Heidi; Wicks-Lim, Jeanette. (November 2017). *Clean Energy Investments for New York State: An Economic Framework for Promoting Climate Stabilization and Expanding Good Job Opportunities*. University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

inaction threatens to exceed the cost of action by \$80 billion – over five times the cost of our \$15 billion dollar budget request.

Finally, not only must the State scale its investments in areas including clean energy and transportation, community planning, job training, and resiliency to meet its climate goals and the needs of the current crisis, it must also divest public funds from dirty fossil fuels. We are therefore calling for the **inclusion of S. 4816 (Krueger)/A. 6882 (Cahill) in the FY 2022/23 budget to repeal \$300 million in tax subsidies for the fossil fuel industry** – funds which can be redirected to support a just and equitable transition to a clean energy economy.

Ensuring Good Green Jobs

Within the next decade, New York State is expected to see a minimum net increase of 189,000 jobs¹³ – and up to 150,000 added jobs per year¹⁴ – across key climate-related economic sectors: electricity, fuels, buildings, and transportation. Not only does this represent a 38% increase in the workforce across these sectors, it also represents an opportunity to reprioritize New York's workers and create an equitable green energy economy that is accessible to all.

With Governor Hochul's announcement late last year to lower the threshold for prevailing wage requirements on solar projects from 5 megawatt installations to 1 megawatt installations, it is clear that good-paying green jobs are of high importance to the State. However, labor protections for New York's green energy economy should not stop there. The State should continue to leverage its power as a major funder to set industry standards which put the wellbeing of workers first on projects that receive State or municipal funding as well as projects that are on public property by:

- Guaranteeing workers receive **prevailing wage and benefits**,¹⁵
- Requiring **project labor agreements** to help protect workers' wages, benefits, and safe working conditions; and
- Utilizing **best value procurement** to consider community impacts (e.g. the creation of local jobs, job training for economically-excluded groups, worker safety) alongside cost efficiency when evaluating contracts and proposals.

Beyond ensuring that our green energy economy workers have family-sustaining wages, meaningful benefits, and strong safety and health standards, New York must take the necessary steps to ensure that its green workforce is equitable and accessible to all. Projects receiving

¹³ Just Transition Working Group. (December 2021). *2021 Jobs Study*. New York State.

¹⁴ Pollin, Robert; Garrett-Peltier, Heidi; Wicks-Lim, Jeanette. (November 2017). *Clean Energy Investments for New York State: An Economic Framework for Promoting Climate Stabilization and Expanding Good Job Opportunities*. University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

¹⁵ The Just Transition Working Group's *2021 Jobs Study* (p.122) cites sustaining wage as between \$28-37 per hour.

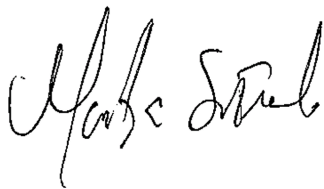
State funding or on State property must be obligated to:

- Leverage **apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs** when hiring workers in trades with apprenticeship programs to help provide a pipeline of talent for economically-excluded workers;
- Adopt **local hiring standards** to hire directly within communities where projects are sited, encouraging local economic development;
- Prioritize **Minority and Women-Owned Businesses**; and
- **Employ workers facing barriers to employment as well as those traditionally excluded from green jobs**, including: formerly incarcerated individuals, people with disabilities; workers transitioning from unemployment, women including women in non-traditional trades, and members of Black, Brown, and indigenous communities.

Finally, to further encourage in-state job creation, the State should employ policies to incentivize the creation of good-paying green jobs across the supply and distribution chain in these key sectors.¹⁶

ALIGN supports the call for \$15 billion in climate justice funding alongside labor standards for our climate projects as measures integral to our fight against the climate crisis. We encourage members of the New York State Senate and Assembly to continue their nation-leading climate advocacy and push to include these measures in their one-house budgets.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Maritza Silva-Farrell', written in a cursive style.

Maritza Silva-Farrell
Executive Director, ALIGN

¹⁶ IBID