

October 4, 2023

Hon. Kathy Hochul  
New York State Governor  
Executive Chamber  
New York State Capitol  
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul:

We write to urge your administration to commit to transitioning the State Capitol complex (Capitol, Empire State Plaza, and other nearby state buildings) to 100% renewable energy as soon as possible (i.e., three years) by supporting the Renewable Capitol Act (RCA). We also encourage you to include the Act in your 2024-25 Executive Budget.

The RCA (S2689/A5633) mandates the conversion of the State Capitol complex to renewable energy. We urge you to embrace this important legislation, which would signal New York's commitment to addressing the climate crisis and the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act. Furthermore, decarbonizing state facilities in downtown Albany would set an important example for local government and private business.

The extreme weather that has hammered New York and much of the world this summer makes it clear that we are running out of time to keep global warming below the target of a 1.5 degree C rise. Each rise in temperature brings us closer to a climate catastrophe. We have seen once-in-a-thousand-year floods in the Hudson Valley and poor air quality statewide from wildfires from Canada. Much of the country has experienced repeated heat waves. New York must move much faster in its efforts to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions and transition to clean energy.

The Capitol complex should be a top priority in the effort to decarbonize state buildings. This year's budget included funding to conduct studies of how to decarbonize 15 of the state's facilities with the largest carbon footprints, and data collected by the state puts the Capitol complex among the top three carbon emitters. The state needs to lead by example to show other governments, businesses, and homeowners the feasibility and benefits of decarbonization. This will also be a source of good paying jobs.

The Capitol complex analysis can be done faster than the timeline laid out in the budget since the New York Power Authority (NYPA) is now wrapping up a two-year development of an energy master plan for the Empire State Plaza.

There are several reasons to make the Capitol complex a focal point of such decarbonization efforts. The Capitol is an important icon. Work on the Capitol will provide state policymakers with the ability to see for themselves how such efforts can be done.

Importantly, decarbonizing the Capitol complex is also a critical environmental justice issue. For more than a century, the low-income Sheridan Hollow community of color has been subjected to pollution in order to power the Capitol complex. Coal, oil, gas, and even garbage have all been burned at the Sheridan Avenue Steam Plant (SASP) and the ANSWERS building, with negative health impacts for local residents such as asthma and cancer.

Continued operation of the SASP is contrary to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Environmental Justice Policy (DEC Commissioner Policy 29),

which provides that: “No group of people, including a racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic group, should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations.”

Four years ago, due to the actions of community residents and climate groups, the state legislature rejected a proposed \$88 million appropriation to add two fracked gas turbines to the present state facility on Sheridan Avenue. Lawmakers instead redirected those funds for renewable energy and efficiency projects at the Plaza. However, there are still six gas boilers at the SASP that create steam to heat and cool the Capitol complex.

Oklahoma, Michigan and Colorado heat and cool their state capitol buildings with geothermal energy. Even St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York City uses geothermal energy. Renewable options are available now. If we are to transition our state to renewable energy, we must show how it is done. NYPA can use the Plaza as a training center for future projects. A renewable energy solution incorporating geothermal technology for the Plaza would showcase New York as a climate leader and serve as a model for the nation.

We look forward to discussing this proposal with you at your earliest convenience. If your staff wishes to discuss this further, please contact Merton Simpson (robcor295@cs.com) and Ruth Foster (rmfosterny@gmail.com), Sheridan Hollow Alliance for Renewable Energy Co-chairs.

Sincerely,

**Albany Organizations and Elected Officials**

Sheridan Hollow Alliance for Renewable Energy (SHARE), Hon. Merton Simpson, Co-Chair  
Albany County Central Federation of Labor, Rev. Ibrahim Pedriñán, President  
Albany Green Party, Peter A. LaVenia, Jr., Co-Chair  
Albany NAACP, Debora Brown, President  
Arbor Hill Development Corporation, Arlene C Way, Executive Director  
Arbor Hill Neighborhood Association, Dr. Brenda Robinson, President  
Building Blocks Together, Virginia Rawlins, President  
Capital Region Interfaith Creation Care Coalition, Barry Pendergrass, Co-chairperson  
Capital Region Mothers Out Front, Alÿcia Bacon, Organizer  
Center for Law & Justice, Colin E. McNamara, Deputy Director  
Hon. Norma Chapman, Albany County Legislator  
Citizen Action of New York, Capitol District Chapter, Greg Campbell-Cohen, Lead Organizer  
The Climate Reality Project: Capital Region Chapter, Maura McNulty, Chair

Hon. Sam Fein, Albany County Legislator  
Foodscraps360, LLC, Diana Wright, Owner  
Green Sanctuary Team -- Albany UU, Charles Manning, Chair  
Hon. Joyce Love, Member, Albany Common Council  
Hon. Matthew Miller, Albany County Legislator  
News from the Neighborhood, Paul Tick, Editor  
PAUSE (People of Albany United for Safe Energy), Sandy Steubing, Member  
The Radix Ecological Sustainability Center, Stacy Pettigrew, PhD, MS, Executive Director  
Save the Pine Bush, Lynne Jackson, Volunteer  
Hon. Merton Simpson, Albany County Legislator  
Solarize Albany, William Reinhardt, Director  
Solidarity Committee, Capital District, Doug Bullock, Founding Member  
South End Improvement Corporation, Laura Trivison, Executive Director  
Trinity Alliance of the Capital Region, Harris Oberlander, CEO  
United Tenants of Albany, Canyon Ryan, Executive Director  
Women Against War, Catherine Cavanaugh

## **Statewide Organizations**

All Our Energy, George Povall, Executive Director

Alliance for a Green Economy (AGREE), Andra Leimanis, Program Director

Big Reuse, Justin Green, Executive Director

Church Women United in New York State, Mary Smith, Communications Director

Citizen Action of New York, Rosemary Rivera, Executive Director

Climate Crisis Working Group (IMV), Maggie Reilly, Co-leader

The Climate Reality Project: New York State Coalition, Laura Faulk, Co-Chair

Environmental Advocates NY, Conor Bambrick, Director of Policy

Environmental Justice Initiative, Joel Kupferman, Executive Director

Food & Water Watch, Alex Beauchamp, Northeast Region Director

Green Education and Legal Fund, Mark Dunlea, Chair

Green Party of New York, Cassandra Lems, Executive Committee Member at Large

GreeningUSA, Peter J. Arsenault, FAIA, 12 Traits Program Director

Mothers Out Front NY, Annabella Cockerell, NY State Organizing Manager

New York Climate Action Group, Judith Canepa, Co-Founder

New York Climate Advocacy Project, Ruth Foster, Director

New York Geothermal Energy Organization (NY-GEO), Christine Hoffer, Executive Director

New York Progressive Action Network, Cari Gardner, Vice-Chair

New York Youth Climate Leaders, Sophie Campbell, Executive Director

New Yorkers for Clean Power, Anshul Gupta, Senior Policy Analyst

Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York (NOFA-NY), Katie Baildon, Policy Manager

NY Renews, Stephan Edel, Coalition Coordinator

NYPIRG, Anne Rabe, Environmental Policy Director

Rivers & Mountains GreenFaith, Michael Richardson, Convener

Sane Energy Project, Kim Fraczek, Director

## **Local and Regional NYS Organizations**

350Brooklyn, Mimi Bluestone and Sara Gronim, Co-Leaders

350NYC, Dorian Fulvio, Steering Committee Member

Bethlehem Morning Voice Huddle, Thomas Goodfellow, Huddle Member

Bronx Jews for Climate Action, Elliott Rabin, Organizer

Campaign for Renewable Energy, Brian Eden, Policy Coordinator

Catskill Mountainkeeper, Wes Gillingham, Associate Director

Citizens' Climate Lobby, Brooklyn, Taylor Plante, Organizer

Clean Air Action Network of Glens Falls, Tracy Frisch, Chair

Clean Air Coalition of Greater Ravena-Coeymans, Barbara Heinzen, Member

Clean Air Coalition of Western New York, Chris Murawski, Executive Director

Climate Reality Finger Lakes Greater Region NY Chapter, Thomas Hirasuna, Co-Chair

Climate Reality Hudson Valley & Catskills Chapter, Tim Guinee, Co-Chair

Climate Reality Project Long Island Chapter, Francesca Rheannon, Chair

Climate Reality Project NYC Chapter, Paul Kiesler, Co-Chair

Climate Reality Project Westchester County Chapter, Suzie Ross, Co-Chair

The Climate Reality Project: Capital Region Chapter, Maura McNulty, Chair

The Climate Reality Project, Western New York Chapter, Lynn Saxton, Co-Chair

Coalition Against the Rockaway Pipeline, Judith Canepa, Coordinator

Community Advocates for a Sustainable Environment, Becky Meier, Co-Founder

Council on Intelligent Energy & Conservation Policy, Michel Lee, Chair

Dryden Resource Awareness Coalition, Marie McRae, Spokesperson  
Environmental Justice Ministry of First Unitarian Rochester, John Keevert, Co-chair  
Fellowship of the Sacred Earth, Rev. Mark Chaffin,  
For the Many, Daniel Atonna, Political Coordinator  
Fossil Free Tompkins, Irene Weiser, Coordinator  
FrackBustersNY, Mary T. Finneran, Co-Founder  
Grassroots Environmental Education, Patricia Wood, Executive Director  
Green Ossining, Suzie Ross, Co-Founder and Chairperson  
Green Party of Onondaga County, Howie Hawkins, Chair  
Indian Point Safe Energy Coalition, Marilyn Elie, Co Founder  
Long Island Progressive Coalition, Lisa Tyson, Executive Director  
Messiah Lutheran Church, Rev. Dustin G. Longmire, Pastor & Executive Director  
Metro Justice, Dr. Michelle Wenderlich, Organizer and Policy Specialist  
Mothers Out Front- Dutchess, Johanna Fallert, Co-Leader  
Mothers Out Front- Westchester Rivertowns, Amy Hill, Volunteer Co-Leader  
Network for a Sustainable Tomorrow, Adam Flint, Director of Clean Energy Programs  
North American Climate, Conservation and Environment (NACCE), Jerry Rivers, Environmental Scientist  
North Country Earth Action, Lisa Adamson, Partner  
NYC H2O, Matt Malina, Director & Founder  
NYCD16 Indivisible, Natalie Polvere, Co-chair, Environment Committee  
Peacemakers of Schoharie County, Wayne Stinson, Action Committee  
Peckham Action Group of KeepItGreene, Dr. David Walker,  
People for a Healthy Environment, Doug Couchon, President  
Peoples Climate Movement - NY, Laurel Tumarkin, Organizer

Progressive Schenectady, Vicki Michela, Steering Committee  
Putnam Progressives, B. R. Lemonik, Lead  
Queens Climate Project, Victoria Adler, Co-Founder  
Roctricity LLC, Susan Hughes-Smith, Partner  
Sacred River Healing, Alan Levin, Director  
Saratoga-Warren-Washington Progressive Action, Joe Seeman, Co-chair  
Seneca Lake Guardian, Yvonne Taylor, Vice President  
Sisters of St. Dominic of Blauvelt, Sr. Joan Agro, OP  
Skidmore College Environmental Action Club, Margot Kelly  
South Asian Fund For Education Scholarship and Training, Mazeda Uddin, CEO  
Stop NY Fracked Gas Pipeline, Robert Connors, Co-Founder  
Sustainable Finger Lakes, Gay Nicholson, President  
Sustainable Hudson Valley, Melissa Everett, Ph.D., Executive Director  
Sustainable Saratoga, Dianna Goodwin, Chair of the Board of Directors  
Sustainable Warwick, Mary Makofske, Action Committee  
Third Act NYC, Katherine Alford & Pat Almonrode, Co-facilitators  
TIAA-Divest!, Molly Ornati, Coordinating Committee Member  
Tompkins County Climate Protection Initiative, Peter Bardaglio, Coordinator  
United For Clean Energy, Tina Volz-Bongar, Co-organizer  
WE ACT for Environmental Justice, Sonal Jessel, Director of Policy  
WESPAC Foundation, Inc., Nada Khader, Executive Director  
Westchester for Change, Susan Van Dolsen, Co-organizer  
XR Mid-Hudson, Rev. Janet Apuzzo