

## Billii Roberti Public Comment on the CAC Draft Scoping Plan

I am a homeowner in Huntington Station, and I am a member of Mothers Out Front. We advocate for a livable climate for our children. There are changes we *need to make* to ensure a viable future for the next generations.

It is clear our fossil fuel-powered economy is killing us. The Covid shutdown demonstrated it is man-made emissions that are polluting our air (with particulate matter, nitrogen and sulfur oxides, and greenhouse gases) by their reduction during that time and their resurgence once our consumptive economy resumed.

In 2010 my husband and I did a deep energy gut renovation on our house so that our comfort and energy costs would be manageable. By weatherizing, installing Energy Star® appliances, WaterSense® fixtures, solar panels and a geothermal heat pump system we have shown that it can be done as a practical investment. Our lower energy bills are like a dividend check that is guaranteed to come every month.

As a result of all I learned in this process, I formed my own Green Choices Consulting business. It does mostly pro bono work with several statewide climate and environmental groups, especially Mothers Out Front and Renewable Heat Now.

From my perspective, New York State has no time to lose in shifting to a clean energy economy. We KNOW what to do but are not acting. The most recent IPCC report makes it clear that we are not being good planetary stewards, but we can change that.

The CAC draft scoping plan is a good start. It is vital to get this plan RIGHT because it will be used for the foreseeable future by our state agencies and leaders to determine what actions to take. NYS *can* meet its climate mandate and these recommended actions will save NY and New Yorkers money.

The final scoping plan must come out more strongly against “natural” gas. It needs to align state laws governing utility service with the Climate Act. Decarbonization must be the watchword for all buildings.

The CAC scoping plan must stop the construction of new buildings that use fossil fuels PERIOD! It must come out strongly in support of the 2024 date for all-electric new construction, which is in the All-Electric Buildings Act (S6843B/A8431). We have the technology, and many developers are already building all-electric new buildings using heat pumps. Beach Green Dunes II in Far Rockaway is an example of an all-electric affordable housing project using geothermal heat pumps.

We must stop the expansion of gas pipes, which will not be paid off until the next century. The plan must immediately eliminate incentives for new gas service, including the gas utility obligation to serve and the 100-foot rule for new service. The plan must also stop state, utility and private HVAC installer marketing and advertising of heating oil to gas conversions that fuel gas expansion.

The plan must direct the Public Service Commission to begin a climate-focused gas planning proceeding to develop a coordinated and equitable strategy to wean the state from its present reliance on gas heating. This is part of the Gas Transition and Affordable Energy Act (S8198/A9329).

The CAC scoping plan should require the state to launch a major, sustained statewide public education and information campaign to support climate-friendly choices by consumers for

building improvements and equipment. Most people are unaware of the benefits of these improvements to their homes and buildings.

At the same time, to aid New Yorkers in the transition off fossil fuels, the scoping plan must insist the state incentivize retrofits that replace gas appliances in existing buildings with heat pumps for space and water heating and induction stoves for cooking. Retrofits will make our homes better and safer places to live (removing mold, lead, asbestos and gas leaks). It will protect our climate as well as *reduce our energy bills*.

The CAC plan should require a commitment and a clear pathway to 2 million retrofitted homes by 2030, prioritizing those in Disadvantaged Communities, and set a 2030 sunset date after which all appliance replacements must be zero emissions.

When dollars for fossil fuels stop leaving the state those now in-state funds can be used for many programs that provide a public good to New Yorkers. For instance, they can be used to supplement a new revolving loan fund for building decarbonization and the repurposing of buildings and building materials, modeled on the Clean Water State Revolving Fund.

It should also be used by the electric utilities, which will benefit from the switch to electrification, to make the electric grid more reliable, resilient, and accommodating to more renewable electric sources.

Especially important is to invest in heating affordability for low-income residents. The state needs to invest at least \$1 billion annually to support energy efficiency and electrification for Disadvantaged Communities and low- and moderate-income households. We CANNOT afford to leave anyone behind in our drive to decarbonize.

This will take a lot of work and a lot of workers, but New York State CAN do this! It needs to start NOW. The Jobs Study of the Just Transition Working Group estimates that meeting New York's climate goals will create 140,000 jobs related to buildings by 2030. Yet unless New York begins now to develop this workforce, trained workers will not exist to fill these jobs.

Lastly, the CAC scoping plan must avoid promoting false solutions to the climate emergency. Both renewable natural gas (RNG) and hydrogen have extremely limited applications. Neither are viable for piping any distance from their source. Hydrogen is too small a molecule to be contained by HDPE pipe. RNG transportation has the same drawbacks as natural gas from drilling. Both are false solutions to our climate emergency. We cannot afford to divert money from proven technologies that are truly renewable.

On the positive side, meeting New York's climate goals will not only dramatically reduce climate-damaging emissions but will also improve public health, create economic opportunities, and enhance the quality of life for New Yorkers. Implementing the CAC scoping plan recommendations is expected to save between \$50 billion and \$120 billion in public health costs alone, due to improvements in local air quality. It is also expected to create nearly 190,000 new jobs across the state by 2030 and close to 270,000 by 2050. Ten jobs will be created for every one that is lost.

Right now, well over half of what we spend on energy leaves the state. The clean energy transition will keep energy spending local, within the state and within our communities and this will be a boon to our economy. We CAN do this!