

Comments on Economy-Wide Strategies (Chapter 17)

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My name is Suzie Ross and I am a long-time homeowner and resident from Ossining, NY in Westchester County. I am co-Founder and Chairperson of a grassroots environmental advocacy group (Green Ossining), co-Founder and co-Chair of the Westchester County Chapter of The Climate Reality Project, and a recent graduate with my Masters in Climate Science & Policy.

First and foremost, I would urge the Council to immediately fund and start a sustained statewide education and awareness campaign on the benefits of a clean energy economy as well as on the economic, health, security, and climate risks of reliance on fossil fuels. This education campaign is necessary to counter the relentless and massive disinformation crusades by fossil-fuel interests and status-quo forces who've spent decades perfecting their chicanery, first to deny climate science, and now to cast doubt on the solutions. Given their long and expansive track record of weaponizing disinformation to sustain the extraction and burning fossil fuels, the absence of a public information component in the scoping plan is a surprising, but grave oversight.

I commend the Climate Action Council, associated working groups, advisory panels, and all agency staff who contributed to the development of this impressive plan.

Thank you for the inclusion of Economy-wide Strategies as an important addition to the draft plan, because even full implementation of all initial sector-specific Advisory Panel recommendations would not achieve the CLCPA goals. Economy-wide carbon pricing would help ensure that we do meet those goals.

I strongly urge the council to recommend adopting a price on carbon in its final plan. Countless economists and scientists say that it is the single most effective policy to quickly reduce emissions of greenhouse gasses. Carbon pricing would also complement or increase the effectiveness of many other recommended policies and programs.

I support a carbon fee and dividend program as the framework for an economy-wide strategy, where a fee or tax is imposed at the source of any fossil fuel generated or imported into the state, with most of the revenue returned to low- and middle-income households, and perhaps certain businesses, to offset higher energy costs.

I also recommend that the carbon price start low and rise gradually each year. This, along with returning revenue to households, is necessary to provide people and businesses reasonable time to transition to cleaner energy sources in response to clear, predictable pricing signals.

Please note that carbon pricing is preferred over many other alternatives because it is straightforward, non-regulatory, and more price-certain, which is better for businesses and individual consumers.

I strongly recommend that carbon pricing in NY must apply to more than the electricity sector through RGGI. Absent a price on carbon in other sectors, electricity costs would be higher relative to fossil energy costs. This will have the undesirable impact of actually discouraging other key CAC recommendations on the electrification of New York's building and transportation sectors, resulting in slower adoption of sector-based recommendations for accelerated electrification of buildings and transportation.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment. As well, I am very appreciative of the huge and dedicated time investment to this important endeavor.