
From: Francesca Rheannon [PERSONAL EMAIL REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, January 7, 2026 5:37 PM
To: erda.sm.rggiprograms
Subject: Support EmPower+ to Lower Energy Bills for New Yorkers

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To NYSERDA Board and RGGI Program Team,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on the amended 2026 RGGI Operating Plan. I write in strong support of the proposal to significantly increase funding for the EmPower+ program. Expanding EmPower+ is one of the most cost-effective, equitable, and climate-forward investments New York can make right now to lower energy bills, improve public health, and accelerate our clean energy transition.

EmPower+ delivers real, immediate relief to New Yorkers

Families across New York are struggling with high utility costs driven by inefficient housing, aging heating systems, and rising fossil fuel prices. EmPower+ directly addresses these burdens by funding weatherization, electrification, and high-efficiency upgrades that permanently reduce household energy bills. These improvements create long-term savings, not one-time assistance — allowing families to keep money in their pockets for food, medicine, childcare, and other basic needs.

EmPower+ advances equity and environmental justice

Energy burden is highest in low-income households, renters, seniors, communities of color, and environmental justice neighborhoods — the very communities New York has committed to protect through the CLCPA. Expanding RGGI investment in EmPower+ ensures these households gain priority access to modern, efficient, safe home energy systems and weatherization, rather than being left behind in the fossil-fuel economy. This program is a powerful mechanism for closing inequities in housing quality, energy affordability, and health outcomes.

EmPower+ protects health and reduces pollution

By replacing fossil-fuel heating and appliances and tightening leaky buildings, EmPower+ reduces indoor air pollution, lowers climate emissions, decreases reliance on volatile gas markets, and cuts harmful particulate pollution that damages lungs and cardiovascular health. Families benefit from warmer homes in winter, safer cooling in summer, improved indoor air quality, and reduced asthma and respiratory risk.

EmPower+ strengthens New York's clean energy economy

Expanding funding supports good local jobs in weatherization, HVAC installation, heat pump deployment, and building services. It grows a skilled workforce, supports small businesses and contractors, and helps build a stable and scalable market for clean energy upgrades — exactly the kind of economic engine New York needs.

EmPower+ is a smart use of RGGI funds

RGGI dollars are intended to reduce climate pollution while helping New Yorkers adapt to the clean-energy future. EmPower+ does both, simultaneously delivering:

- verified emissions reductions
- energy affordability and bill stability
- measurable health benefits
- workforce and economic development
- resilience in the face of climate and energy volatility

One final reason is a personal one. I have close members of my family who cannot afford to put in clean energy in their own house and are unable to use much of their house in winter, because they have to close it off to afford heat. They are eligible for EmPower+. Saving this program would be a live saver for them.

For all of these reasons, I strongly urge NYSERDA to adopt the amended RGGI spending plan and significantly increase funding for EmPower+. This investment will pay dividends for New Yorkers for decades to come.

Thank you for your leadership and your commitment to ensuring every New Yorker can participate in — and benefit from — the clean-energy transition.

Sincerely,
Francesca Rheannon
New York State Resident

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[Francesca Rheannon, Journalist](#)

[Writer's Voice with Francesca Rheannon](#), Producer and Host

The home station of Writer's Voice is WPKN 89.5 FM, which the [New Yorker called the "greatest radio station in the world."](#)

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Note! I receive many emails daily and some may get missed.

"We know from a recent study that every tenth of a degree in temperature rise that we prevent keeps 140 million of our brothers and sisters in habitable zones on this planet. And nothing has changed my basic conviction about the key: we need to keep building huge movements to finally break the political power of the fossil fuel industry and force the emergency conversion to clean energy." —Bill McKibben

But man is a part of nature, and his war against nature is inevitably a war against himself.

—Rachel Carson

"Our civilization is being sacrificed for the opportunity of a very small number of people to continue to make enormous amounts of money...You say you love your children

above all else, and yet you are stealing their future in front of their very eyes.' - Greta Thunberg at the UN Climate Talks 2018, age 15