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CHAIR, MAJORITY MEMBER
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January 9, 2026

Board of Directors
NYSERDA
17 Columbia Circle
Albany, NY 12203

Submitted via email to rggiprograms@nyserdera.ny.gov

RE: Comments on the Draft 2026 RGGI Operating Plan Amendment in Support of Increased Funding Levels for the EmPower+ Program

Dear Board Members,

I write to heartily support NYSERDA's proposed Draft 2026 RGGI Operating Plan Amendment that provides increased funding levels for the EmPower+ program.

I am the Chair of the Senate Finance Committee. The Finance Committee has oversight over all Senate bills involving expenditure of state funds including the 2025-2026 Capital Budget, which included the Sustainable Future Fund with a minimum allocation of \$50M for the EmPower+ program. The Senate Finance Committee is responsible for oversight of the State budget and is charged with investigating any governmental activity that involves the expenditure of public funds, such as the Empower+ program.

New York State is undertaking the most ambitious effort in the nation to meet the challenge of climate change. New York's Climate Law recognizes that climate change doesn't affect all communities equally.¹ It is a threat that exacerbates existing burdens, vulnerabilities, and stressors in certain communities statewide. For this reason, the climate law required the identification and consideration of disadvantaged communities (DACs) in implementing the climate act and other state-led actions.² All state agencies are required to consider the impacts on

¹<https://climate.ny.gov/Our-Impact/Ensuring-Equity-Inclusion#:~:text=Ensuring%20equity%20and%20inclusion%20in,new%20jobs%20and%20economic%20opportunities.>

²<https://climate.ny.gov/Resources/Disadvantaged-Communities-Criteria#:~:text=Frequently%20Asked%20Questions%20%5BPDF%5D>

DACs in their decision making.³

New York uses RGGI proceeds to promote and implement programs for electrification, energy efficiency and renewable energy development in compliance with the Climate Law. RGGI programs contribute to economy-wide greenhouse gas emissions reductions and provide benefits to New York’s historically overburdened and underserved communities. Proceeds from the RGGI CO₂ auction must support the statewide goal of the Climate Law that 40%, and not less than 35%, of overall benefits from the investment of RGGI proceeds will be spent in DACs.⁴

The EmPower+ program helps low-to-moderate income (LMI) households to save energy and money toward energy improvements made to their primary residence. The program focuses on one-to-four family households.⁵ Through EmPower+, eligible New Yorkers can receive a no-cost home energy audit, a customized plan for electrification and energy efficiency measures and no cost direct install of improvements identified during the home energy audit. EmPower+ participants can receive funding toward the cost of the energy efficiency and electrification improvements, including air sealing, insulation, heat pumps, heat pump water heaters, and electrical service and wiring upgrades.

The draft 2026 RGGI Operating Plan amendment proposes a significant increase in funding for the EmPower+ program for the next three years with a new total of 240.9M.⁶ The plan estimates that 90% of EmPower+ allocations will directly benefit LMI and disadvantaged communities.⁷

As Chair of the Senate Finance Committee, I strongly support this proposed amendment to the RGGI spending plan which increases funding for the EmPower+ program. About half of New York households are low-to-moderate income households.⁸ Nearly 60 percent of LMI households live in one-to-four family homes, and over 40 percent of these households are renters.⁹ Reducing energy consumption through EmPower+’s electrification, energy efficiency and weatherization measures will bring down energy costs for these LMI households during times of high inflation.¹⁰

³ Section 7(3) of Chapter 106 of the laws of 2019

⁴ NY Environmental Conservation Law § 75-0117: “Investment of Funds: State ... authorities ... shall, to the extent practicable, invest or direct available and relevant programmatic resources in a manner designed to achieve a goal for disadvantaged communities to receive forty percent of overall benefits of spending on clean energy and energy efficiency programs, projects or investments in the areas of housing, workforce development, pollution reduction, low income energy assistance, energy, transportation and economic development, provided however, that disadvantaged communities shall receive no less than thirty-five percent of the overall benefits of spending on clean energy and energy efficiency programs, projects or investments...”

⁵ <https://www.nyscrda.ny.gov/All-Programs/EmPower-New-York-Program>

⁶ [2026 Draft Draft RGGI Operating Plan Amendment](#), Appendix 2, page 10

⁷ [2026 Draft Draft RGGI Operating Plan Amendment](#), Appendix 2, page 10

⁸ New York State Climate Action Council Scoping Plan, Chapter 12 Buildings, Page 175.: “In addition, nearly half (48%) of households statewide are low-to-moderate income households, underscoring the importance of careful attention to housing and energy affordability.”

⁹ NYSERDA, New York State Low- to Moderate-Income Census Population Analysis Tool, <https://www.nyscrda.ny.gov/About/Publications/Evaluation-Reports/Low--to-Moderate-Income>

¹⁰ Public Service Commission, Order authorizing Low-to-moderate income energy efficiency and building electrification portfolio for 2026-2030, Issued and Effective: May 15, 2025, Case 25-M-0249, Page 54: “The focus on reducing energy consumption by prioritizing energy efficiency and weatherization will help to advance the

Not only does the EmPower+ program help the participants of the program, but it is also important to note that many of the high-paying electrification contractor jobs created through State electrification incentive programs, like the EmPower+ program, are hired from DACs.¹¹

In conclusion, I fully support the new funding levels proposed for the EmPower+ program in the Draft 2026 RGGI Operating Plan Amendment and respectfully recommend that the NYSERDA Board of Directors approve those funding levels at the Board meeting on January 26, 2026.

Sincerely,



Liz Krueger
28th Senate District

CC: Doreen Harris, President and CEO, NYSERDA

Commission's Energy Affordability Policy, which sets a goal for low-income customers to pay no more than six percent of their annual income towards utility costs. Energy Efficiency and weatherization are no-regrets investments and the logical first step to decarbonize a home."

¹¹ 2025 New York Clean Energy Industry Report, Page 42: "As the clean energy economy expands, a central focus is ensuring that this growth leads to job creation and greater economic opportunity within disadvantaged communities....Across the State, DACs account for nearly 60,000 clean energy jobs, or about one-third (33%) of the statewide total. This share is nearly in line with the 35% of New Yorkers who live in DACs."