As a physician treating patients from disadvantaged communities, I have first-hand experience on how co-pollutants from fossil fuel combustion are wearing down peoples' health. I see asthma most often. But I also see the longer-term effects of pollution. I see the emphysema, the lung cancer, the heart attacks. In Rochester, where I work, too many asthmatic children wind up in the ER on a bad air day. Too many wage earners are forced by illness to take disability, pushing their families into poverty. And, yes, too many are needlessly dying.

But if we stop burning fossil fuels, it all goes away. Co-pollutants are not like greenhouse gases. Their damage is local. If we stop burning fossil fuels, they disappear rapidly, and the diseases they cause disappear rapidly as well. This means that getting rid of fossil fuel combustion will quickly and dramatically improve New York's health, and it will happen even if everyone else does nothing. In fact, a study done for the Climate Action Council estimated that it would save New York $170 billion by 2050. That's a good co-benefit. I think it's worth eliminating fossil fuel combustion for this reason alone.

Allen Blair