

Joint NYS Senate Hearing of the Standing Committee on Environmental
Conservation & the Standing Committee on Energy and Telecommunications on
the Climate And Community Investment Act
S4264A (Parker)
4/13/21

Hon. Kevin Parker, Chair
New York State Senate Energy and
Telecommunications Committee
Albany, NY 12247

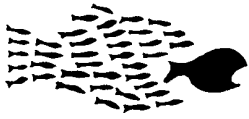
Hon. Todd Kaminsky, Chair
New York State Senate Environmental
Conservation Committee
Albany, NY 12247

Dear Senator Parker, Senator Kaminsky:

The Long Island Progressive Coalition (LIPC) is a grassroots community-based organization founded in 1979. We fight for structural change at the local, state, and national levels to attain racial justice, build community wealth, and realize a just transition to a 100% renewable energy future. We have a long history of combating the expansion of dangerous and harmful environmental projects. Along with stopping the bad, we also have a long history of building a better future, as in 2011/2012 when we passed and implemented Green Jobs Green New York. We are also a leading member of NY Renews, the unprecedented statewide coalition responsible for passing New York State's landmark climate bill, the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA), in partnership with your offices.

We are just one organization among many in NYS already leading the transition to a 100% renewable energy economy by shifting policies and building renewable energy solutions on the ground. From PUSH Buffalo's School 77 project to Uprose's management of the first cooperatively-owned solar garden in NYS to the Long Island Progressive Coalition's nonprofit solar program, community organizations are already building alternative models that will guide our future energy system. Now we need the NYS legislature to take on its full mantle of leadership to help more communities achieve what is already underway.

LIPC began its solar campaign, PowerUp Solar Long Island, in 2017, which is designed to reduce the cost of solar for nonprofits and houses of worship by bundling multiple projects to bid them out collectively, making use of tax credits through third-party financing, and offering loan options to avoid upfront costs. While residential solar has provided a low cost solution to high electric rates for 40,000 homes across Long Island, religious institutions and other nonprofits have been left behind due to high upfront costs and their inability to take advantage of tax credits. As a result, these institutions have been unable to realize the environmental benefits of solar, the perks of energy independence, and the associated cost savings. PowerUp Solar Long Island serves to address this. By



combining our strategies, we can and have reduced the cost of solar for nonprofits by up to 40%. With the continued need for society to transition to renewable energy, and the more immediate economic impacts from COVID-19, it's particularly imperative that these types of organizations are able to benefit from low-cost, sustainable energy. The campaign is also committed to expanding solar access to communities of color and low-income communities and is now working to explore solar at dozens of affordable housing developments in the region. Of particular note is our current work to explore solar with Channel Park Homes in Long Beach, the focus of this [North Park Study by Erase Racism](#) which demonstrated the inequitable recovery efforts this low-income public housing community faced in the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy. As of April 2021, we have built 180 KW DC working with congregations. We currently have several projects in the planning phase that we hope to complete over the next year that could include well over 500 KW DC. Increased funding through policies of NYS could significantly expand the capacity, reach, and impact of this grassroots solar initiative, which is undertaking work that would largely not be happening otherwise.

It is with this background, ideology, and vision for Long Island, the surrounding region, and New York State, that the Long Island Progressive Coalition, in solidarity with partners from labor, faith, immigrant, and environmental justice communities stand in unequivocal support of the legislation at the center of this hearing, the Climate and Community Investment Act (CCIA), which will provide the dedicated revenue necessary to meet the goals of the CLCPA. The CCIA will put a fee on pollution, raising \$15 billion per year, and use it to create good, green jobs, invest in frontline communities, and build a renewable economy for New York State.

This is the year to pass the CCIA. The need for massive investments in frontline communities and in creating hundreds of thousands of good, green jobs has never been more clear in the aftermath of COVID-19 and the ongoing impacts from climate change.

NY Renews, the driving force behind CLCPA, helped write this bill through years of dialogue with stakeholders across NYS including environmental justice organizations, labor unions, policy experts, business groups, scientists, economists, student groups, and grassroots organizers. The coalition did this in an attempt to address all aspects of achieving our renewable energy economy in NYS. It is a thoughtful, detailed, and carefully planned piece of legislation supported by over 280 organizations across the State representing hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers.

Here on Long Island, 55 additional groups have come together to call for the Climate and Community Investment Act in a package of priorities to address the devastation of COVID-19 through a document called [Reimagine Long Island](#). This moment speaks to the profound need to reimagine everything and forward a future where communities are in democratic control over all their needs, from housing, energy, food and more - making communities more resilient and sustainable. Reimagine Long Island: Roadmap For A People's Economy is a call to realize this future. It is both a values statement about where we need to go post-COVID and a list of specific policies and programs to, among other things, forward Indigenous sovereignty, climate justice, and economic democracy. CCIA is a pillar of this document. It was signed by major Long Island community organizations, reproductive healthcare providers, Indigenous Nations & societies, and faith based organizations. It is clear that Long Island is



hungry for this policy and is ready to benefit from it. Listed below is just a snapshot of what CCIA funding could be put towards to support climate, jobs, and justice in our region:

- Expanding PowerUp Solar LI, a campaign of the Long Island Progressive Coalition to equip nonprofits, houses of worship, and affordable housing developments with low-cost solar, along with providing education around the energy system to members of these institutions.
- Ensuring Long Island becomes a major hub to the Regional Offshore Wind Energy Industry as noted in this report by Workforce Development Institute: [OSW MOU - Orsted NJ and NY](#).
- Resourcing cooperative ownership models for community solar and establishing participatory processes for renewable energy planning, along with other priorities detailed in the [Long Island Solar Roadmap](#).
- Supporting the housing and energy priorities of the Shinnecock Nation who are exploring energy efficiency retrofits for their building stock, community solar for all members of the Tribe, and battery storage for resiliency due to increasing storms off their coast.

Millions of people have lost work and income as a result of the Covid-19 crisis. We need unprecedented levels of investment in a long-term, just, and equitable recovery. We need jobs programs to put people back to work. These programs must prioritize climate solutions such as building renewable energy, expanding public transit, and energy efficiency retrofits. Jobs created in our economic recovery must adhere to strong labor standards, including prevailing wages, rights to unionize, utilization of apprenticeship programs and MWBE programs. These jobs and projects must prioritize and target investments in communities most impacted by COVID-19, pollution, and the climate crisis. This is our best shot at creating a sustainable economic recovery and the CCIA provides us with the means to do so.

Long Island is on the frontline of climate change. Our coastal communities are threatened by sea-level rise, families are still recovering from the devastation of Superstorm Sandy, and our neighborhoods are overburdened with air pollution from fossil fuels. Our region demands a just transition off of fossil fuels. We began that undertaking when we helped pass the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act. Now it's time to fund our climate and equity mandates with the Climate and Community Investment Act. It's past time to make polluters pay and invest in communities most harmed by the climate crisis.

Our policy decisions and choices at all levels of the public sector must reckon with the sobering facts about the state of our climate system and act accordingly. Government agencies, administrative bodies, and bureaucratic entities from local to state to federal must align with the necessity of moving towards 100% clean renewable energy in all sectors of the economy. We must respect and internalize the limitations of our global ecosystem. We must have sound public policies that recognize that business as usual is a recipe for further displacement, drought, malnutrition, the inundation of Island nations, and more. We must push back against the extractive logic of our economic system that decimates the vital life support systems of earth and promote alternative modes of being that are based on reciprocity and mutual respect for the ecosystems that maintain life on this planet.

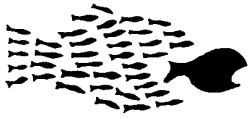


In NYS we have the solutions to reorient ourselves and to tackle this crisis with the urgency and justice it demands - solutions that have and will continue to serve as a model to other states. The first of those solutions was the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act. The second, to fully realize the goals of CLCPA must be the Climate and Community Investment Act. All communities should have access to safe, energy efficient housing and schools, public transportation that doesn't increase pollution, parks and green space, and renewable energy. The CCIA will invest in quality, energy efficient public housing, public schools, child care facilities, 21st-century public transportation, locally owned renewable energy, and community-led resiliency projects. The CCIA's plan for a just transition to a renewable economy would create over 150,000 jobs over the next 10 years. Communities most impacted by the climate crisis, and people who have been excluded from good paying jobs, would be first in line for good jobs to build renewable, resilient, thriving communities.

Fossil fuel companies and the government put power plants, landfills, highways, incinerators, and other toxic infrastructure in communities of color, creating sacrifice zones: areas impaired by pollution, toxic waste, environmental damage, and disinvestment. Whole communities were written off in the service of the fossil fuel economy. The CCIA seeks to redress these legacies of harm. Corporate polluters have extracted obscene wealth from our communities, leaving Black, Brown and low-income families to clean up the mess and suffer the devastating health consequences. They have treated our children and families as expendable in their push for bigger and bigger profits. Every year, hundreds of thousands of people get sick and even die because of pollution. We cannot let them off the hook. They've offloaded the real cost of their actions onto communities — billions and billions of dollars per year in poor health outcomes, early deaths, and climate disasters — and it's time for them to pay up.

You are going to hear a lot of things about this bill. Some may argue in good faith that there are potential impacts to ratepayers as a result of this bill. We have centered that reality in the policy. In addition to investing billions of dollars directly into renewables, energy efficiency, and resiliency and adaptation programs in frontline communities, the legislation includes several mechanisms to make sure low and moderate income New Yorkers won't bear any increased cost, and that the people impacted first and worst by climate change and pollution will benefit most from this new revenue. As a result and according to multiple economic analyses, the CCIA will clearly be one of the most progressive sources of public revenue in NYS.

Others will make similar arguments, including around impacts to businesses, largely in bad faith, like those who have a vested financial interest in the status quo and who want to ignore that fossil fuel companies pay millions to CEOs and make billions in profits and can choose to pay their fair share without raising prices on consumers (Exxon's CEO alone got a raise in 2019 to \$23.5 million). Renewable energy is cheap and abundant; any increase in gas prices will be the result of fossil fuel companies throwing a temper tantrum that they can no longer poison New Yorkers with impunity. It will also keep hundreds of billions of dollars in New York rather than in oil and gas company coffers.



[For more information on these points, see this NY Renews fact sheet on anti-regressive measures in the CCIA.](#)

It is naive to believe that we can go on with business as usual. It is too costly for us to continue on this path as we face billions of dollars in damages from superstorms, in lives lost to air pollution, in land stolen from people, in irreparable damage to the ecosystems that support our existence. The pursuit of endless growth, of ever-increasing profits at the expense of people and planet is not only fundamentally unsustainable but selfish, reckless, racist, sexist, and classist. We need a paradigm shift in how we relate to the economy, in how we relate to one another, and how we relate to our world. Addressing climate change necessitates we do this and provides us with the means to do so. Holding corporate polluters accountable to invest in our already established climate and equity goals is the most pragmatic approach for us to take right now in New York State.

As mentioned previously, this bill has come out of a deeply intentional process working with environmental justice communities, labor unions, and community organizations across the state in partnership with policy experts, scientists, and elected officials. It has come out of listening to the voices of people with the most at stake in tackling this crisis. This bill is ready to pass and we are ready to ensure its successful implementation. The Climate and Community Investment Act and the process that resulted in its formation is a framework for realizing a just transition for communities and workers most impacted by climate change. It is just the beginning of a series of intentional decision-making processes to reorient the way we think about and relate to this world. Following the leadership of communities on the frontline of this fight is the only way we will win.

Today, let us commit to passing the Climate and Community Investment Act so we can continue the process of addressing the multiple and intersecting crises of our times: climate change, wealth inequality, and the legacies of structural racism.

Sincerely,

Ryan Madden
Sustainability Organizer