



New York State Senate

**Standing Committees on
Finance,
Energy and Telecommunications, and
Environmental Conservation**

**Joint Public Hearing on
Implementation of the Climate Action
Council Final Scoping Plan**

**Testimony of:
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Thank you, Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins and Chairs Krueger, Parker, and Harckham for holding this public hearing to examine how to best implement the recommendations contained in the Climate Action Council Scoping Plan and for the opportunity to present testimony.

Climate change is humanity's greatest threat and addressing it is our greatest challenge. We must face it directly and seize the opportunities it presents. Workers will perform the substantive work of achieving the State's emissions reduction goals and climate change mitigation efforts.

Protecting the rights and interests of workers and their unions must be a priority of the State.

It is imperative that the work to reduce emissions and combat climate change is performed by a highly skilled, well-trained workforce, so that it is completed on time and is done right the first time. Further, we cannot be replacing good middle-class jobs in legacy industries with poverty wages. The only way to achieve those goals is ensuring union labor from supply chain to construction to operations, maintenance and repair of completed projects. To that end, legislation to implement the recommendations in the Scoping Plan must include prevailing rate and project labor agreements for construction; labor peace agreements for supply chain, operations, maintenance, and repair; and preference for components manufactured in the United States and in New York. We must also require that these workers have the best possible training by using apprenticeships in construction and leveraging workforce development resources for operations, maintenance, repair, and supply chain workers.

We must ensure that these jobs are open and available to all New Yorkers. In addition to ensuring equal opportunity, we must ensure that those hired reflect the diversity of New York. Further, we must ensure that members of disadvantaged communities, those who have disproportionately suffered the negative impacts of pollution, have access to, and are actually employed in, these jobs. This can be achieved, in part, through the use of community benefit and community hire agreements that include minimum labor standards.

While the State's emission reduction and climate change mitigation efforts present great opportunities for workers and unions, we must remain cognizant that many good union jobs will be at risk of elimination. To minimize the number of jobs eliminated, the State must maintain

flexibility. This can be achieved by embracing alternative fuels that reduce emissions and by permitting alternative compliance for energy-intensive and trade-exposed industries. Any alternative compliance method must be geared toward reducing emissions while protecting good jobs. Further, there is no benefit to the State or the environment in catalyzing leakage by shuttering production facilities in New York, that will reopen in jurisdictions with less stringent labor and environmental standards.

The cap-and-invest proposal announced by Governor Hochul has the potential to achieve these goals. If done correctly, cap-and-invest will reduce emissions while preserving industries and jobs. Similarly, the revenue generated by cap-and-invest should be used to fund new clean energy projects that are manufactured, constructed, operated, maintained, and repaired by union workers.

For workers whose positions are eliminated, we must ensure that they are promptly reemployed with the same or better wages, benefits, and terms and conditions of employment, while maintaining their choice of collective bargaining representative. Workers whose positions are eliminated and do not pursue reemployment must have access to enhanced unemployment insurance benefits, COBRA payments, education stipends and grants, and financial bridges to retirement eligibility.

The State must prioritize near-term investment in clean energy development, including offshore wind, thermal energy networks at State facilities, electric vehicle charging stations and other energy generation projects that reduce emissions. To maintain the reliability and resiliency of the energy grid, the State must ensure that adequate clean energy generation is available before transitioning fossil-fuel-powered plants.

Mentioned briefly earlier, a cap-and-invest program has the potential to generate significant revenue to fund the development of renewable energy projects. However, that revenue will not be available for years and there are immediate needs. For example, work on thermal energy networks on State campuses has already begun. With modest investment, there are projects that can be shovel-ready by this summer. Early State investment in thermal energy networks and

other more recent technologies will create markets for those technologies and spur private sector investment.

With your leadership, New York can meet and exceed its emissions reduction goals while creating and preserving good union jobs.

Thank you for your time.

The New York State AFL-CIO is a federation of 3,000 unions, representing 2.5 million members, retirees, and their families, with one goal: to raise the standard of living and quality of life of all working people. We keep New York State Union Strong by fighting for better wages, better benefits and better working conditions. For more information on the Labor Movement in New York, visit www.nysaflcio.org.