



New York City Environmental Justice Alliance testimony to the New York State Senate Committee on Energy and Telecommunications and the New York State Senate Environmental Conservation Committee in support of the New York State Climate and Community Investment Act (S.4264A)

April 13, 2021

Good morning Senator Parker, Senator Kaminsky, and Members of the New York State Senate Committee on Energy and Telecommunication and Environmental Conservation Committee. My name is Annel Hernandez and I am here to testify on behalf of the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance (NYC-EJA) in support of the New York State Climate and Community Investment Act (S.4264A).

Founded in 1991, NYC-EJA is a nonprofit citywide membership network linking grassroots organizations from low-income neighborhoods and communities of color in their struggle for environmental justice. Through our efforts, member organizations coalesce around issues that threaten the ability of low-income communities of color to thrive, and coordinate campaigns designed to restructure City and State policies to move us toward a just future. Our alliance is a key advocate of strong and equitable renewable energy targets, because many of the communities we represent are overburdened by the clustering of power plants and other polluting infrastructure in their neighborhoods.

In 2019, the New York City Panel on Climate Change (NPCC) issued its latest report, projecting that sea-level rise, tidal patterns, flooding, and storm surge will increasingly threaten NYC's coastlines. Globally and locally, we continue to experience record-breaking years in terms of extreme heat, with 2020 being the hottest year on record according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Furthermore, community-led air monitoring efforts also demonstrate the continued air quality and pollution burdens faced by environmental justice communities. These are communities where climate vulnerabilities intersect with historic patterns of environmental burdens that disproportionately affect the ability of low-income communities and communities of color to thrive.

New York State will require rapid system transitions in energy, urban infrastructure, transportation, and industrial systems – and an unwavering commitment from NYS government. As the years progress and the threats of climate change loom larger, the need for rapid, bold, and holistic approaches to climate and energy policy becomes increasingly essential.

While New York State has passed the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA), the most aggressive and equitable climate law in the nation, we have a long way to go to ensure that the benefits of this transition reach those that need it most. Low-income communities and communities of color still face many obstacles in participating in the clean energy economy.

Climate justice is based on the principle that frontline communities are most vulnerable to climate change, and therefore, must play an integral role in planning for the renewable and regenerative energy economy. As climate change advances, leadership from the frontlines of the crisis becomes increasingly important to shape policies, programs, and initiatives needed to ensure the equitable transformation of our energy and economic systems

The Climate and Community Investment Act (CCIA) includes several key provisions to support a Just Transition to a clean and renewable energy economy. These provisions were developed by groups in the NY Renews coalition that represent communities around the state from Brooklyn to the Bronx to Buffalo, with input from national experts and broader New York stakeholders. The CCIA build on the transformative CLCPA. The CCIA aims to raise at least \$15 billion per year from corporate polluters, and invest the funds into disadvantaged communities that are most vulnerable, by placing a fee on greenhouse gases and toxic co-pollutants. The CCIA would be transformative by creating healthier communities and creating 150,000 jobs in the transition to a just and renewable economy.

A vital pillar of the CCIA is that it directs funds towards vulnerable, impacted, historically disadvantaged, and frontline communities. By prioritizing disadvantaged and environmental justice communities at the center of the policy, the CCIA ensures that those communities hit first and worst by the climate crisis are where New York invests so that no one is left behind. The CCIA will provide funding for frontline communities to help them prepare for the climate crisis ahead and empower them to lead in the local solutions that New York needs. The CCIA will help fund our transition including community energy planning, energy efficiency, community-owned solar, distributed energy resources, clean public transportation, utility bill savings, and more.

We've seen the devastation that worsening Superstorms have brought to Houston, Florida, Puerto Rico, and here in New York City – and we cannot wait any longer to fund the Just Transition. Our health, our economy, and our communities are at risk. We commend the State Senate for elevating and prioritizing the Climate and Community Investment Act **(S.4264A)**. New York State must support and invest in clean, renewable energy that protects the health of our families and creates new jobs. We need to put the health of our communities – and our State – ahead of polluters' profits and our outdated and dangerous dependency on fossil fuels.