We are at a crossroad in our journey to net zero. The Climate Action Council’s (CAC) plan will lay out not just the pathway to net zero for New York state but also set a blueprint for the rest of the country. New York is the leader in the fight against climate change and CAC’s plan will have a profound impact on the lives of millions of New Yorkers and Americans across the country. Thus, we must take this responsibility seriously and ensure that the plan utilizes the best tools we have in our arsenal to fight climate change. New York’s decarbonization plan must bring all New Yorkers along by ensuring there is an equitable and just outcome for all and not restricting consumer choices. The plan must be based on foundational principles of affordability, reliability, and consumer choice.

Emissions from building heat, the largest contributors to emissions in New York, are also the hardest to reduce. CAC’s draft scoping plan to electrify all buildings unfortunately is a highly risky and expensive plan that does not provide the best outcome for New Yorkers in the long term. It puts all eggs in one basket by relying entirely on the electric infrastructure to decarbonize not just the electricity and transportation sectors but also heat. This plan would compromise reliability and jeopardize the safety and comfort of millions of New Yorkers during winter months unless massive investments are made in the electric infrastructure to meet peak winter load. An electric only plan would also put undue financial burden on many New Yorkers by forcing them to move to electric heating potentially prematurely before maximizing the useful life of their existing heating units. Electrification is also not a viable option in many buildings and communities and would unduly restrict choices for consumers.

Fortunately, we have solutions available to us which can form the basis of a credible plan to decarbonize heat. A plan that utilizes the best technologies available and uses an “all of the above” approach has the best chance of success. A plan that leverages fossil-free gas (RNG and Hydrogen) as well as targeted electrification, geothermal and energy efficiency would not put all eggs in one basket and enable us to reach our decarbonization goal in the most cost-effective manner. A plan that decarbonizes the gas network (like the decarbonization of the electric network) would utilize the existing underground pipeline network which we have invested in for many decades. By utilizing this network, we would ensure New Yorkers would get heat reliably and not add undue pressure on the electric network. Utilizing hybrid-heating solutions, targeted electrification, and geothermal heating would take advantage of all available technologies where they make sense and would give consumers the choice to take action that is best suited for their specific needs.

I urge the CAC to consider decarbonization plans that do not rely entirely on electrification for heat. A decarbonization plan that is more affordable, more reliable and offers more choices to consumers should be the CAC’s final recommendation. It should bring all New Yorkers along on the journey to decarbonization and minimize risks in getting there. Let us make the right decision at this momentous time in our history with a plan that gives us the best chance of success in fighting climate change, the defining issue of our generation.