

To the members of the NYS Climate Action Council:

The once vibrant restaurant industry in New York is currently undergoing a daunting rebuilding process after being decimated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which did severe damage to an already low-margin industry. Prior to the pandemic, the restaurant industry was one of the largest private employer groups in the state, employing more than 650,000 New Yorkers. Countless communities rely on these businesses to provide jobs and serve as the economic engines of local downtowns.

The restaurant industry understands and supports the need to move the State towards greener energy solutions. However, we have concerns with parts of the scoping plan released by CLCPA, particularly as it relates to realistic time frames and the cost impact of these proposals on our industry.

NYSRA commends this group for taking the time to deliberate the challenges of transitioning away from natural gas but we would ask you to consider just a small sampling of questions on how some of these proposed changes may affect our already struggling industry:

* Will there be funding for restaurants to facilitate the transition from gas to electric when these laws are implemented?
* Has the state studied what the average transition to an all-electric restaurant would cost?
* As a result of these proposed changes, will restaurants see more increases in their utility costs beyond the huge spikes we’ve endured in 2022?
* Electric versions of some restaurant cooking equipment like large commercial stovetops and pizza ovens are simply not available in the commercial market. Does CLCPA make accommodations for this reality?
* Many restaurants do not own their very expensive commercial cooking equipment; it is leased. What happens if I want or need to move my very expensive or leased commercial cooking equipment to a new build space?
* Gas works during power outages and has allowed us to cook for communities in need. Will this impact our ability to feed hungry people in times of extended electric outages like Superstorm Sandy?
* The state, New York City, and other local governments have partnered with restaurants to ensure safe alternatives for outdoor dining, allowing for use of propane and natural gas. How would these policies impact outdoor dining that so many New Yorkers demand?

We believe is it worth noting that the cost of goods, produce, fuel, and utilities have skyrocketed over the last several months and have wrecked all previous food cost models. To say nothing of the fact our industry is in the midst of a significant labor shortage, forcing many restaurants to significantly reduce hours of operation. We ask the Council to consider caution in adding more cost and uncertain variables to an industry that is crying out for some stability.

Again, we understand the need to transition the State towards a green energy economy, but we ask that before we take drastic steps in such a compressed timeframe, we look at the unintended consequences this law could have on struggling businesses. This could dramatically alter an industry that is still struggling to get back on its feet after COVID-19**.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Melissa Fleischut**

**President and CEO**

**NY State Restaurant Association**