

Intro

My name is Arnav Sharma and I am from Delmar, New York. I am in 7th grade at Bethlehem Central Middle School. I am part of the Hotshot Hotwires, a non-partisan science-based climate advocacy group that has students from 15 different school districts.

Why I am Writing this Testimony

I have always advocated against climate change, but I have never done much action to stop it. Every time we meet for our meetings I always think of how much my generation could do to stop climate change. Stopping climate change is not only about my generation's future, but the generations ahead of us. The past generations were naive of what was going to come, but we are more knowledgeable than ever. Our generation can only make change when the government cooperates with us. Just Transition could keep the economy well while we move from gas to electricity.

New York State has an obligation to treat mandates put forth by the CLCPA and the Climate Action Council as legally enforceable. To support industry compliance and regulatory enforcement, the Final Scoping Plan should include sector-specific timelines for emissions reduction. Without these safeguards in place, we risk our climate legislation becoming meaningless. In order to reach our climate goals under the CLCPA, the State must ensure a just transition for our disadvantaged communities as well as workers, and it must adequately support those who are currently employed in carbon-intensive trades. To that end, the Final Scoping Plan must include protections for existing and new workers as well as pathways to support jobs growth and workforce development.

Our climate goals will not be achieved if we do not fund them or if we leave our disadvantaged communities or workers behind. Therefore, I strongly urge the Climate Action Council to include the following in the Final Scoping Plan:

Office of Just Transition

Establish an Office of Just Transition, controlled by the Governor, that would lead a multi-agency response to the challenge of climate change and transitioning to a decarbonized economy. NYSERDA's \$1.5 billion annual budget must be expanded by at least \$125 million for a Just Transition Fund that the Office of Just Transition would administer. The office would develop and deliver training and income support programs for workers impacted by the transition; provide technical assistance and economic development support for businesses and communities to retool for new clean energy activities, products and services; and effectively implement new federal infrastructure funding and incentives as well as state labor policies to ensure high-quality job creation and economic development efforts are maximized. The office could also administer a public sector loan facility to accelerate investment in clean energy activities. Climate change is a new type of crisis facing the state, and only the governor can provide the multi-agency coordination and direction that is needed to ensure this transition is managed well.

Worker and Community Assurance Fund

A Worker and Community Assurance Fund must be established within the New York State budget to provide direct support to workers in fossil fuel-dependent industries as well as communities home to fossil fuel infrastructure. This funding could provide pension support and wage replacement for displaced workers, tax base replacement for local governments and school districts, and energy transition and economic development planning grants for communities.

Labor Standards

The State must require strong labor standards on any projects that use State funds or take place on State property, including strengthening existing labor standards under §224-a of the New York Labor Law. Strong labor standards should include: prevailing wage and benefits, project labor agreements, community benefits agreements, local hiring, use of pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs, and, where applicable, labor neutrality agreements.

Buy NY and best value procurement provisions

Such provisions would (a) incentivize job creation through the bidding process along the clean energy, clean transportation, and low-carbon supply chains; and (b) encourage and prioritize high-roads employers to compete up through earning extra credit for good job creation and training commitments. These provisions should be recommended alongside additional policies and programs to incentivize employers to bring high-quality union jobs to New York.

Conclusion

The Climate Action Council put forth three scenarios for the implementation of the CLCPA. I am advocating the Council to reject Scenario #2 and to adopt Scenarios #3 or #4, which include low-to-no bioenergy and hydrogen, the simultaneous acceleration of electrification of both buildings and transportation, and limited use of low-carbon fuels with high quality offsets to render such use equivalent to zero emissions.

Thank you,
Climate Council for passing all the climate legislation you can and don't let the fossil fuel companies advise you in the wrong direction.