

# GIVE. ADVOCATE. VOLUNTEER. LIVE UNITED



April 14, 2022

Climate Action Council  
Draft Scoping Plan Comments  
NYSERDA, 17 Columbia Circle  
Albany, NY 12203-6399

Dear Climate Action Council:

Families and seniors across Long Island are being negatively impacted by the cost-of-living-crisis due to the recent spikes in food and gas. Surging inflation is costing the average household more than \$250 extra a month. More than 1 out of 3 families on Long Island are now struggling to make ends meet.

United Way of Long Island's 2-1-1 Call Center has unsurprisingly seen a 16% uptick in requests for emergency financial assistance for basic needs.

At greater rates, households are now being forced into dangerous dilemmas and must make difficult choices whether to pay the utility bill, purchase medications, food or rent. These trade-offs are at the detriment to the family.

Who are these households?

- Your child care worker, the cashier at your supermarket, a home health aide, an office clerk, a senior citizen on a fixed income.
- They are in perpetual danger of falling into homelessness.

One solution to address the cost-of-living-crisis is to ensure a diverse energy supply to decrease the risk of supply shortfalls. This can avoid price spikes, outages at the worst times like the depth of winter or the hottest days of summer. We need to make sure that we are using all the clean technologies at our disposal – especially renewable natural gas and green hydrogen – rather than relying solely on renewable sources of electricity.

United Way of Long Island is acutely aware of energy challenges on Long Island. Our organization runs Project Warmth. This is Long Island's only non-governmental, island-wide emergency fuel fund. It is a safety net for financially struggling individuals and families who are unable to pay their heating bill.

Since 1994, United Way of Long Island has helped area residents in need of home heating to keep warm by joining hands with individual donors, nonprofit, corporate and union partners in support of Project Warmth. Project Warmth began operation in 1994 to help Long Islanders who did not qualify for Federal assistance programs due to income guidelines. Emergency assistance programs

that were already in place to address year-long needs were often depleted by the end of the year, leaving many with nowhere to turn for help. Since its inception, Project Warmth has helped to fill the need for emergency heating assistance on Long Island, raising more than \$11 million to help 30,000 families.

This past winter, Project Warmth served 1,108 families on Long Island.

- 81% of households served required emergency assistance because of a medical emergency, illness or disability
- 19% needed help because of a loss of job or loss of a loved one
- 76% of households served had either a child or a shut-in senior in the home. These populations are especially vulnerable to the cold weather
- All households reported that without Project Warmth assistance they would be forced to put off basic needs like medicine, food or car repair

Our understanding of the work the Climate Action Council has done to date does not include a study of the costs of the Draft Scoping Plan to homeowners, and especially low and moderate income families. We urge the CAC to fully study and publish the cost of the proposed Plan and its impacts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Craig Fligstein', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Craig Fligstein  
Chief Grant Officer