

My name is Barbara Luka and I am a citizen who is deeply concerned that New York State is not moving our economy quickly enough to protect ourselves from economic losses our citizens will suffer due to climate change.

First and foremost, I would urge the Council to immediately fund and start a sustained statewide education and awareness campaign on the benefits of a clean energy economy. This education campaign is necessary to counter the relentless and massive disinformation crusades by fossil-fuel interests and status-quo forces who've spent decades perfecting their chicanery, first to deny climate science, and now to cast doubt on the solutions. Given their long and expansive track record of weaponizing disinformation to sustain the extraction and burning fossil fuels, the absence of a public information component in the scoping plan is a surprising, but grave oversight.

What do we need?

We are in a critical stage of the climate crisis driven by continued greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and must start reducing emissions dramatically in order to avert the worst effects of climate change.

Electricity generation currently accounts for about 13% of New York's GHG emissions. However, by 2050, our electricity needs in New York will double, as we electrify our buildings and transportation sectors. Therefore, we not only need to decarbonize our generation capacity, but we also need to add significant amounts of new carbon-free generation capacity.

How do we get there?

Decarbonizing and expanding electricity generation in NY is critical to decarbonizing the buildings, transportation and industrial sectors. As we transition our homes, businesses, and private and public transportation to electrical power, affordable, reliable and clean electricity is essential for achieving our net-zero goal.

The recent events in Ukraine underscore the need for energy independence and fossil fuel independence. We must do our part to remove fossil fuels from the international geopolitical equation, and at the same time provide reliable, clean and affordable energy throughout New York State.

I wholeheartedly support the plan to zero out emissions from electricity generation by 2040 and the use of regulatory options and market mechanisms to carry out this plan while maintaining reliability and affordability. I am concerned that some proposals to address long-term storage and peak demand involve using processes that emit GHG's or are produced with significant embedded carbon.

I strongly support NYSERDA's renewable energy procurement targets, and we need targets for siting of renewables. I strongly support building renewable energy capacity and shutting down gas-fired power plants while maintaining reliability and affordability. I believe in easing opposition to siting of renewables through public education and other methods. We must have targets to expand roof top and parking lot solar, and pair solar with electrification of low-income housing and opportunities for low-income participation in community renewable energy. The plan should also consider otherwise unusable areas (e.g., highway rights of way and brownfields) for siting of renewables, grid enhancements, and related infrastructure. It is important that local governments have more control through the use of siting tools. Innovative siting such as agrovoltatics should be encouraged.

New York should set a year-by-year target for permitting new wind, solar, and battery storage. State agencies should fully leverage tools like community workforce agreements, community benefit agreements, first-source hiring, and project labor agreements to increase access to construction jobs and permanent jobs for disadvantaged communities; work with the capacity of people and develop agreements in partnership with

frontline communities, industry, and organized labor; and further emphasize green worker-owned cooperatives. It is crucial that this point is stressed to continually call attention to the state to address barriers to renewable energy siting. All work to this end requires full staffing of relevant state agencies, including the Office of Renewable Energy Siting, engagement with Indigenous Nations in NY, and a comprehensive public education and information push on the benefits and opportunities of clean energy

Since New York State is situated near two of the Great Lakes, pumped storage hydropower should be considered in addition to battery storage technology. I support investment in R&D for long-term energy storage, grid technology, and novel zero-emissions electricity sources.

Misinformation and False Solutions

I strongly oppose blending “green hydrogen” and “renewable natural gas” for wintertime use. Such alternatives are entirely unacceptable because they serve mainly as an excuse for fossil fuel interests to maintain their pipeline infrastructure. This is the reason why despite their gross inadequacies, these are being heavily promoted by the fossil-fuel industry.

Hydrogen combustion emits nitrogen oxides (NO_x), a precursor to ozone, particulate matter, and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) at levels that may be higher than those from natural gas combustion because of hydrogen’s high combustion temperature. RNG combustion also results in pollutant emissions similar to fossil gas combustion. The scoping plan must hold firm to the commitment for zero emissions in the electric sector by 2040, and account for the cumulative impact of pollutants on disadvantaged communities.

Concluding Remarks

The Climate Action Council put forth three scenarios for our

climate future. I am advocating for Scenario #3, which includes low-to-no bioenergy and hydrogen and the simultaneous acceleration of electrification of both buildings and transportation to ensure clean air and a healthy environment.

I thank the Climate Action Council for their hard work. Thank you for attending to comments from concerned voters.