The Climate Action Council proposal is a blueprint for failure. The Climate Action Plan, one of “the most ambitious in the world”, fails to realize that New York is not the world, and we cannot alone fix the world’s problems. It is one state, made up of one of the largest, most powerful cities in the world, but also made up of some of the most picturesque, rural counties, towns, and villages that could be found anywhere in the United States. It is the people in New York that count, but who increasingly are left out of the goals constructed by ambitious politicians.

The Climate Plan seeks to address carbon emissions, which is an altruistic and healthy goal overall. But the plan is far too aggressive and overlooks the consequences of the heavy-handed, swift implementation of these goals. It also serves to make New York a police state, which is ironic since the police have been victimized, and crime is not punished under the Bail Reform Law.

New Yorkers are leaving in droves because of these policies. If you are looking to lower carbon emissions in New York, your climate plan, as structured, may do it – if only because there will be another mass exodus of its citizens.

 “Active transportation” is cited as something that will save billions in terms of health, when people walk or bike to work, and sounds healthy enough. Is the state ready to handle the masses of people on bicycles in major cities? Are the sidewalks in good repair to handle pedestrian traffic? (I live where there are no sidewalks. I live in Western New York, near Lake Ontario (remember us?). So for about six months of the year, there is rain, sleet, or snow and freezing temperatures. Try riding a bike on your way to work in that weather. Public transportation is not an option in many communities. Where it is, as in NYC, it has become so crime ridden that many are afraid every day during their commute.

There is a typical naiveté in the plan about who can afford all-electric vehicles, or household appliances, or geothermal heat pumps. I can bet that the government would love to help out with extra money for those people, and that means more of the government controlling ordinary citizens’ lives. And more taxes. And more mandates. All of which will keep most of us poor.

We’ve been watching to see if solar farms will be installed in some of the best soil in the state around our home. This is good, always-farmed agricultural land which happens to be near the power grid (which, as you have found out, cannot handle extra electrical load in many places). The idea of taking prime Western New York agricultural land in rural communities (often deemed ideal because of low density population, as though that population won’t see the destruction so they won’t mind that the reason they live in the country is to not see or hear an industrial park) so power can be shipped to NYC is appalling, especially at the same time you are planning to maintain healthy environments that filter out toxicity in the air. At this time, all solicitations from 2021 are still on hold, awaiting the news of whether there is more money coming from the Federal government. So, once again, you are putting the horse before the cart, proposing demands, and offers, without concrete knowledge of how you’re going to pay for it or manage it.

I have never been aware of a government-run program or agency that has been constructed efficiently enough that it doesn’t someday need a task force or commission to investigate fraud, mismanagement, or crashed websites. My experience is that they are full of red-tape, political manipulation, and ill-thought-out processes that can’t keep up with the pace of life, and often forget that there are people, not numbers, that are impacted with every decision.

Seven years ago we had a home energy assessment by a NYSERDA-approved company, and installed a new propane furnace, among other improvements. It is almost paid for. What will be available in seven more years? Instead of mandating what you believe is state-of-the-art technology on all new buildings, let people and businesses have some choices, and see what is possible in just a few years. This is not going to be solved overnight, and a state’s Climate Plan should have flexibility to it.

Additionally, if you want to ensure climate justice, begin by getting other states on board (there are some states who don’t even have recycling laws) and encouraging President Biden to make America energy independent again, instead of purchasing oil from countries that have lesser standards for drilling/exporting. The hypocrisy here alone is incredible. We need to move to more renewable energy solutions, so how is the simple act of shipping oil in from anywhere else helping the environment? Please slow down and get all the facts, and give New Yorkers a breather. We have enough to deal with and pay for now, without you dumping the responsibility of fixing the entire world’s climate crises on the shoulders of this one state. Let’s look forward and find ways to do this together, one step at a time, with reasonable, affordable, and common-sense policies.