

My name is Sara Culotta. I chair the Tompkins County Climate and Sustainable Energy Advisory Board. We are 11 County residents appointed by the County Legislature to provide information and guidance. Each of us work, professionally or as dedicated community volunteers to advance energy efficiency, renewable energy, clean energy finance, carbon markets, climate justice, climate communications, and community engagement.

We have dedicated hours to reading and discussing the key strategies laid out in the draft Climate Plan. We believe it's an excellent road map to achieve our climate goals and navigate New York through the next 3 decades of necessary transformative change. Our Board will be submitting detailed comments online.

Speaking broadly today, we applaud the collective work of the Council, Advisory Boards, and Working Groups. The process has been rigorous, comprehensive and realistic. It's clear that the cost of implementing the plan is far less than the economic, social and ecological cost of business as usual. The strategies within each sector address many of the opportunities and barriers that Tompkins County has encountered in our 20-plus years of climate action, and those we see ahead.

Global climate targets, including NY's, might seem almost impossibly ambitious – but with the right technologies, community engagement and strong partnerships, we can bring them within reach. The plan is a roadmap, now we need drivers. People who understand it, are motivated by enlightened self-interest and are empowered to drive forward on the strategies that most impact them.

We recommend:

First, Public awareness and community engagement are absolutely key. NY needs big, bold, creative campaigns, funded and sustained over the long-haul. Communication has to be targeted to get the right message to the right audience to drive specific program participation and policy compliance. K12 and college students are an important audience as our future entrepreneurs, workers, consumers, and early adopters of new technologies.

Second, All programs should be designed or revamped for ease of access. Processes need to be standardized and streamlined across government agencies. People need guidance and support to participate. This is especially true of disadvantaged community members.

Third, let's not reinvent the wheel or go it alone. We can leverage the tremendous amount of good work being done across the US and across sectors. For every strategy in the plan there are all kinds of partnership and peer learning-and-doing opportunities available. Let us connect and collaborate to be aspirational, aggressive and move with velocity.

I shared these comments at the Syracuse Public Hearing, but 2-minutes was up before I finished, so submitting now!