



June 28, 2021

Commissioner Basil Seggos
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12233-1010

Acting President and Chief Executive Officer Doreen Harris
NYSERDA
17 Columbia Circle
Albany, NY 12203-6399

Re: Need for Clear and Accessible Public Reporting on Climate Progress

Dear Commissioner Seggos and Acting President Harris:

NYPIRG applauds New York for setting some of the most ambitious goals in the country for tackling the climate crisis through the 2019 Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA). *In order to ensure New York State meets these ambitious goals, it will be critical to issue an annual progress “Climate Report Card” to engage the public and assess whether the state is hitting the metrics set in the law. We urge the Council to include a robust public reporting component in the Climate Action Plan as described below.*

The Council is now creating a Climate Action Plan to achieve the standards established in CLCPA:

- net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050;
- 70% of electricity generated by renewable sources by 2030;
- new efficiency targets for reducing energy use in buildings; and
- massive increases in the generation of solar and wind power as well as a mandate to dramatically boost energy storage capacity.

At this time when the Climate Action Council is in the process of developing the Climate Action Plan, it is especially important for the Council to develop a baseline of where the state currently stands so as to measure progress against the CLCPA goals. The Council should set that benchmark and develop an easy-to-use, publicly accessible climate goals dashboard to ensure transparency and accountability of the progress the state is making. The “Climate Report Card” should be issued annually so New Yorkers can track key metrics tied to our climate goals. Educating the public on the Climate Action Plan is essential to building the support necessary to ensure the CLCPA meets its goals. If the public doesn’t know where the state stands now, there will be no way to determine whether the state is making progress in meeting these ambitious -- but absolutely necessary -- goals.

There is a history of the state's environmental rhetoric not meeting the environmental reality. For example, in 2009 New York set a goal of generating 45% of its power from solar and wind by the year 2015. In 2021, six years after that goal, New York only gets approximately 5% of its electricity from wind and solar.

To build public support and to hold officials accountable, a monitoring system must be developed. New York -- and every government -- should create an open, scientifically verifiable, "Climate Report Card" that allows the public to understand how well government is doing in moving toward its climate goals. For example, for the state to have 70% of its power generated by renewable sources in eight and a half years, it must show its annual movement in that direction. New York currently generates 27% of its power from renewable sources (if hydropower is considered renewable). Thus, the state must expand its reliance on alternative sources by approximately 5% annually. How will New Yorkers know if we're on track to meet these statutory goals?

In the two years since New York set its aggressive climate goals, it is still difficult for New Yorkers to discern what progress, if any, the state has made towards those goals, and how far it still needs to go. NYPIRG recently released a [review](#) of the state's goals and how far it has yet to go, but getting access to the data was difficult and incomplete.

Failure to achieve the CLCPA goals could result in a more devastating future for the people of the world. The Council should develop a dashboard so New Yorkers can monitor whether New York is meeting its mandate to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and transition to renewable energy. **Attached to this letter, you will find a scorecard NYPIRG has drafted that could be used as a model.**

Thank you for your consideration of our comments, and we look forward to working with you to help New York lead the nation in fighting the climate crisis.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Moran
Environmental Policy Director

cc: Members of the Climate Action Council
Honorable Steve Englebright, Chair, Environmental Conservation Committee
Honorable Todd Kaminsky, Chair, Environmental Conservation Committee
Honorable Kevin Parker, Chair, Energy Committee
Honorable Michael Cusick, Chair, Energy Committee

Enc. NYPIRG Model Climate Report Card