

**Alliance for a Green Economy, Citizen Action of New York, Concerned Health Professionals of New York, Environmental Advocates NY, Indivisible Mohawk Valley - Climate Crisis Working Group, New York Civil Liberties Union, New Yorkers for Clean Power, NYPIRG, Third Act Upstate New York**

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## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **Advocates and Legislators Urge Lawmakers to Protect Historic NY Climate Law**

**NYSERDA memo's calculations are a political ploy by Gov. Hochul, don't accurately represent what the law would do**

**SYRACUSE** — A coalition of environmental and community leaders joined with elected officials to criticize Gov. Kathy Hochul's move to hijack the budget process in order to undermine New York's landmark 2019 climate law, the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA). They call on lawmakers to hold firm against allowing any changes to the CLCPA in the budget being negotiated this month.

Last week, the Hochul Administration unveiled a four-page memo alleging that implementing the Climate Law would add thousands of dollars to New Yorkers' energy bills. Its calculations were not explained, do not align with the implementation plans the Governor's own agencies issued in 2022, and vastly overstate the costs of the law for New Yorkers.

"Falling behind on CLCPA goals shouldn't be the reason to step back and abandon the law, but rather, to step up and take bolder action. It's no secret that New Yorkers are burdened with high utility bills and soaring energy costs, but reversing CLCPA initiatives won't solve the energy affordability crisis. The costly and unpredictable nature of fossil fuels, as well as the price tag it takes to maintain the infrastructure that delivers them, hurts New Yorkers' wallets more than forward-thinking climate laws. Delaying this essential transformation to greener energy and staying overly dependent on fossil fuels achieves nothing, except to hurt New Yorkers in the long run," said **Assemblymember Al Stirpe**.

"I remain committed to defending and fully implementing the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act because our future depends on it," said **Senator Lea Webb**. "This landmark law protects public health and ensures frontline communities are not left behind. We cannot afford to delay action on the climate crisis, and I will continue fighting to keep New York a national leader in building a cleaner, more just future."

"As New Yorkers get crushed by energy bills thanks to spiking fossil fuel prices, Governor Hochul's work to double down on gas generation makes a mockery of her supposed focus on 'affordability,'" said **Vanessa Fajans-Turner, Executive Director, Environmental Advocates**

**NY.** “Our climate law was carefully crafted to cut pollution while cutting costs, and lawmakers must insist the Governor do what the law requires, let good policy do its job, and save New Yorkers money.”

“What affects the climate affects the health of New Yorkers every day. So-called natural gas is mostly methane, a powerful greenhouse gas, responsible for 40 percent of global heating over the past two decades. Transporting and using methane harms New Yorkers as it leaks from the pipelines it travels through and when it is combusted in gas appliances, especially gas stoves in the kitchen. Pipeline leaks, large and small, exacerbate health-damaging particulate pollution, or PM2.5, which travels deep into the lungs and increases the risk of heart disease and asthma. Methane burned indoors brings with it carcinogenic benzene, for which there is no known safe level of exposure,” said **Carmi Orenstein, MPH, Concerned Health Professionals of New York.** “A large body of evidence documents the harmful impacts of the methane gas energy system, and we applaud New York’s past actions to prevent exposures and improve public health. We now renew our call on Governor Hochul to reject new pipelines and to accelerate, not pause, building electrification.”

“The Governor should get a large share of the blame for New York’s difficulties in meeting the climate law targets by slow-walking implementation of the CLCPA and other climate laws. Instead of trying to weaken the Climate Law, she should immediately comply with the court order in our lawsuit and release regulations to severely reduce the use of gas and other sources of greenhouse gas emissions,” said **Bob Cohen, Policy and Research Director of Citizen Action of New York.** As a result of a lawsuit brought by Citizen Action and three other climate groups (*Citizen Action of New York vs. DEC*), DEC was ordered to release regulations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions enough to comply with the CLCPA.

“Rolling back the Climate Law means rolling back the possibilities of a healthy affordable future for myself and my peers,” said **Axel Quidone, Intern at Syracuse University NYPIRG Chapter.** Quidone added “While we are in an energy affordability crisis, exposing New Yorkers to more toxins and pollutants is not the answer to lowering our bills.”

“The CLCPA provides critical safeguards against environmental racism. As the federal government rolls back climate protections, the Governor’s push to weaken this historic law behind closed doors is an affront to Black and Brown communities that have long borne the brunt of pollution,” said **Lanessa Chaplin, director of the New York Civil Liberties Union’s Racial Justice Center.** “Black and Brown New Yorkers cannot be treated as an afterthought in the fight for climate justice. We urge the Governor to comply with the CLCPA and call on lawmakers to reject any efforts to weaken it.”

“Governor Hochul and legislators; hands off New York’s Climate Law...it is not up for negotiations. Instead, uphold its goals and transition New York to a clean, renewable energy economy that would create thousands of clean energy jobs, lower greenhouse gas emissions while supporting those communities hit hardest by climate change.” said **Maggie Reilly, co-leader at Climate Crisis Working Group of Indivisible Mohawk Valley and Third Act Upstate New York.** “Governor Hochul, show integrity and courage. Stand up to the fossil fuel

industry while standing up to protect the citizens of New York State...be on the right side of history...be a leader who will give our youth hope. For it is their future that is on the line.”

“Billions of dollars in clean-energy investments came to New York because the rules were clear and reliable. Rewriting them midstream signals our commitments are negotiable—putting jobs and investments at risk. Moving the goalposts now won't help families struggling to pay increasingly higher energy bills and make ends meet. It will protect the status quo and lock in higher costs for years. New York should be accelerating the transition, not signalling a retreat. We call on the legislature to stand by the CLCPA,” said **Lisa Marshall, Director of Organizing and Advocacy, New Yorkers for Clean Power**

“New Yorkers are suffering from the impacts of climate change and an energy affordability crisis that is driven by the rising cost of fossil fuels. The communities that we serve are being crushed by soaring energy bills, and this will only get worse if we continue to delay building affordable, clean energy. We cannot afford to delay climate action,” said **Andra Leimanis, Program Director at Alliance for a Green Economy (AGREE)**. “We call on the Legislature to defend New Yorkers by refusing to weaken our Climate Law and focusing instead on real energy affordability solutions.”

#### **Additional background:**

- New York’s climate law, the CLCPA, was signed seven years ago, after careful drafting and full consideration by the legislature. It has already led to clean energy growth, new jobs and investment, and help for homeowners and businesses across New York State in reducing their energy use and saving money.
- The Governor has delayed issuing legally mandated CLCPA regulations for two years, leading to a lawsuit by environmental groups last year — which she lost in October. The judge ordered her to issue the regulations by February.
- The NYSERDA memo was released *after* public budget hearings were concluded, after the Governor’s proposed Executive Budget was released, and after the deadline for her to propose budget amendments — suggesting it is a political tactic aimed to get the law changed at the eleventh hour.
- The Climate Law mandates that at least 35% of CLCPA funds are invested into disadvantaged communities. These much-needed funds will propel programs to boost home upgrades like better insulation and energy efficient appliances to lower bills, while also increasing access to affordable renewable energy in communities who have not previously received these benefits.
- The [recent report](#) from NY Renews shows that implementing the CLCPA will create thousands of jobs across the state, including hundreds in [Central New York](#), every year.