



Climate Solutions Accelerator
of the Genesee-Finger Lakes Region

Climate Solutions Accelerator's Environmental Conservation Budget Hearing Testimony

The mission of the Climate Solutions Accelerator of the Genesee-Finger Lakes Region is to create a healthier, more equitable, and regenerative community by catalyzing local efforts to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions and address the effects of climate change. The region we cover includes nine counties that are home to a diverse population of 1.2 million people. Additionally we serve as the region's Clean Energy Hub helping individuals and businesses improve the quality of their homes and buildings.

We applaud the Legislature for its efforts to address climate change. 2019's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) is nation-leading, but we cannot stop there, we must do more to implement this transformative law.

The summer our region experienced this year was not only hotter, wetter and smokier due to the climate crisis, it was also quite expensive for many. In July of this year, the City of Canandaigua, which is about 40 minutes away from where I am right now, experienced a 500-year storm that dropped 5.8 inches of rain in three hours. The City experienced severe flooding, with many residents losing everything in their basements- including their HVAC equipment. In fact more than 70 residents had to replace their furnaces, an unexpected financial burden. We were, by no means, the only region to experience extreme weather in the state. It is clear that climate change is the greatest challenge our state (and country) is facing and the state must do more to meet this challenge. You have a monumental opportunity to help us do just that.

The Governor's Budget Has Key Provisions for Climate, But More is Needed:

Along with the coalitions of which we are a part, the Accelerator was pleased to see that the Governor added key provisions of the [NY HEAT Act \(S2016A/A4592A\)](#) to her Executive Budget including the elimination of the "100 foot rule". We look now to the Legislature to ensure that the entire bill is passed this year including the provision that limits residential consumers' energy burdens to 6% of their household incomes. This cap could save many Rochesterians roughly \$75 a month. In a community where more than a quarter of the population lives in [poverty](#), this would make a huge difference for many.

The building sector is the largest greenhouse gas emitting sector in the state and the [second-largest emitter](#) in the Genesee-Finger Lakes Region. It is for this reason that the Accelerator has given such a high level of effort to passing the NY HEAT Act in 2024. The Accelerator has intervened in the past two rate cases for NYSEG/RGE and in the most recent case Rochester Gas and Electric asked for roughly \$70 million on new gas infrastructure in our area. If the NY HEAT Act was enacted, ratepayers would no longer have to foot the bill for the gas system which is making us and the planet sick, but could instead pay to expand innovative and local clean energy solutions.

Mission: To create a healthier, more equitable, and regenerative community by catalyzing local efforts to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions and address the effects of climate change.



We need additional dollars to meet the moment and fund climate action. To that end, we support NY Renews [People's Climate Jobs and Justice Package](#), which includes The [Climate Change Superfund Act](#). This bill requires the biggest climate polluters to pay for some of the damage they caused, by funding infrastructure improvements, upgrading stormwater and sewage systems, and improving grid stability and public health across New York City and the State. The bill would require Big Oil companies responsible for releasing large amounts of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) to pay apportioned fees totaling \$3 billion annually. It is based on the highly successful Federal Superfund "polluter pays" law created 43 years ago that has cleaned up thousands of toxic dumps.

New York State continues to rely on taxpayers to shoulder the cost of climate programs. A recent analysis showed that NYS taxpayers were heavily burdened by over \$2 billion in climate costs from December 2022 to December 2023.

We know that affordability is very important to the Governor. In fact as part of her executive budget, Governor Hochul [announced](#) a comprehensive resiliency plan to "protect New Yorkers from extreme weather as part of her 2024 State of the State and included \$435 million in the Executive Budget proposal to help implement the initiatives." The Climate Change Superfund could cover these programs, instead of having the burden rest entirely on the taxpayers.

Expand Renewable Energy Generation:

The State cannot achieve our 2030 CLCPA goals without expanding renewable energy generation. We ask that the Legislature modernize the Residential Solar Tax Credit (S.3596-C/A.6739-A) by:

- Making the solar tax credit refundable for low-to-moderate income households and those who live in Disadvantaged Communities;
- Removing an arbitrary system size cap for residents living in co-ops and condominiums;
- Including energy storage as eligible equipment; and
- Increasing the maximum tax credit amount from \$5,000 to \$10,000 to adjust for inflation (first cap increase since 2006) and energy storage costs while maintaining the 25% system cost limit.

We join NY's distributed solar industry in supporting A.3579-A/S.8392, legislation introduced by Assemblymember Fahy and Senator Cooney that seeks to overcome siting and permitting barriers to the deployment of distributed solar. If enacted, the legislation will:

- Allocate funding to NYSERDA for public education and community engagement to help community residents and local officials understand the benefits and limited impact of distributed renewables;
- Make renewable energy PILOT revenue exempt from New York's property tax cap to provide incentive for local municipalities to host clean energy projects; and
- Create a state-level appeal process that allows projects impacted by unreasonably burdensome local laws to appeal the local agency's decision to ORES.

Mission: To create a healthier, more equitable, and regenerative community by catalyzing local efforts to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions and address the effects of climate change.



Climate Solutions Accelerator
of the Genesee-Finger Lakes Region

Best,

Clare Henrie

Director of Policy and Advocacy

Climate Solutions Accelerator of the Genesee-Finger Lakes Region

clare@climategfl.org , 585-727-6818

Mission: To create a healthier, more equitable, and regenerative community by catalyzing local efforts to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions and address the effects of climate change.

758 South Ave., Rochester, NY 14620 • 585.461.1023 • hello@climategfl.org • climategfl.org