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September 21, 2020

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor
State of New York
Executive Chamber
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

In these challenging times, we are pleased to see the State moving forward with climate and clean energy initiatives. Recent announcements on large-scale renewables, offshore wind, port investments, electric vehicles, solar energy, and energy efficiency for low-to-moderate income households are a testament to New York's leadership on climate action and an acknowledgement that clean energy spending is going to play an integral role in our economic recovery from the COVID-19 crisis.

However, the success of these programs is predicated on the continued availability of resources to fund them. As the State explores avenues to accelerate a full economic recovery, we urge you to continue to invest resources into State agencies and programs that have a proven track record of supporting local economies through revenue generation and job growth. Funding sources like the Clean Energy Fund (CEF) and the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) pay for NYSERDA programs supporting renewables, community solar, energy efficiency,

transportation electrification, community energy planning, and energy innovation that create jobs, impact market decisions and lead to healthier, cleaner communities across New York. It is critical that these funds remain dedicated to helping the State meet the climate, clean energy, and equity goals dictated by the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA). A diversion of RGGI or CEF resources from NYSERDA, would be economically, environmentally, and racially harmful to the state and its residents.

The clean energy industry in New York is one of the fastest growing industries in the state economy, employing nearly 159,000 people (prior to the pandemic), and clean energy jobs have grown by more than 8% since 2016. Clean energy job growth doubled the average statewide job growth in 2018. This impressive job growth in recent years has made New York the fourth largest clean energy economy in the nation. Climate and clean energy programs run by NYSERDA directly benefit communities because they create well paying, long-term, local jobs. As we experienced coming out of the Great Recession a decade ago, clean energy jobs have a track record for boosting economic recovery, while also directly benefiting communities by lowering energy costs and decreasing air pollution.

NYSERDA is one of the primary agencies tasked with implementing the CLCPA, which requires the state to transition to a carbon free electric grid by 2040 and reduce emissions to achieve 85% GHG emission reductions and a 100% carbon neutral economy by 2050. A core component of the climate law is the requirement that no less than 35-percent of climate and clean energy funds be invested in ways that benefit disadvantaged communities. RGGI and CEF funded programs will be essential to meeting this mandate and delivering jobs and GHG emission and co-pollutant reductions to the communities that have been hit hardest by the climate crisis and the coronavirus pandemic. These funds can also play a role in addressing the systemic racism that had led to Black and Brown people being disproportionately impacted by dirty air. We see this in stark relief in the current pandemic. Studies have found that those living in high air pollution areas have a greater likelihood of dying due to COVID-19 infection than those living where air is cleaner.

Since RGGI began, \$228 million (17.5% of the total) of RGGI funds have been transferred by NYSERDA to the state General Fund, depriving New Yorkers of funding that could have lowered energy bills and created good jobs. It is more critical than ever that these funds are dedicated to implementing New York's programs focused on addressing climate change and racial injustice.

We cannot let the impacts of one crisis deepen the severity of the next crisis, which is why we are looking to your leadership to ensure climate and clean energy investments are preserved and continue to be central to New York's just economic recovery.

Sincerely,

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cc: Hon. Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Temporary President and Majority Leader, New York State Senate
Hon. Carl E. Heastie, Speaker, New York State Assembly
Doreen Harris, Acting President and CEO, NYSERDA
Ali Zaidi, Deputy Secretary, Energy and Environment and Chairman, Climate Policy and Finance
Amanda Lefton, First Assistant Secretary for Energy and the Environment