

December 20, 2019

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

Re: Long-Term Solution to Prevent Gas Moratoriums

Dear Governor Cuomo:

Our organizations thank you for signing the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act into law. In order to meet New York’s climate goals and to prevent gas moratoriums like the recent ones that took place in Westchester, Brooklyn, Queens, and on Long Island, **we write to urge New York mandate that new construction must be provided electricity, not gas.** We believe that such an approach is a necessary alternative to the construction of new pipelines designed to deliver gas, which New York already has the statutory authority to adopt through a regulatory process.¹

Thankfully, 13 cities and one county in California offer New York a model. These localities have enacted new zoning codes that encourage or require all-electric new construction. These codes are meant to keep builders from running gas lines to new homes and apartments.² Such laws have been established in order to speed up the transition from gas and other fossil fuels toward the use of electricity and renewables. Electrifying homes will make transitioning to renewables for heat and other purposes much easier long-term. Additionally, such a policy is a natural way to progress New York’s existing NYStretch Energy Code, which allows localities to adopt more stringent energy efficiency standards into building code.³

Additionally, according to a study from the Rocky Mountain Institute, all-electric new homes could save residents as much as \$260 per year.⁴ This stands in stark contrast to statements from the American Gas Association that indicate cost increases for all-electric homes. This is because the Association assumes unrealistically large increases in electricity use.

New York will not meet its climate goals if fossil fuel infrastructure and plants are expanded. The construction of pipelines, such as the Northeast Supply Enhancement Project (NESE, or the Williams pipeline), put water quality at unnecessary risk and lock New York into decades of continued fossil fuel use – just as climate science has determined that the use fossil fuels must

¹ New York State Energy Law § 11-103 (2)

² Elizabeth Wise, “No more fire in the kitchen: Cities are banning natural gas in homes to save the planet,” USA Today, November 10, 2019, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2019/11/10/climate-change-solutions-more-cities-banning-natural-gas-homes/4008346002/>.

³ “NYStretch Energy Code-2020,” NYSERDA, <https://www.nyserda.ny.gov/All-Programs/Programs/Energy-Code-Training/NYStretch-Energy-Code-2020>

⁴ Elizabeth Wise, “No more fire in the kitchen: Cities are banning natural gas in homes to save the planet,” USA Today, November 10, 2019, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2019/11/10/climate-change-solutions-more-cities-banning-natural-gas-homes/4008346002/>

largely cease by 2030. Consequently, trucking, shipping, or barging fossil fuels are far from the solution to preventing future moratoriums. Transportation of fossil fuels poses potential environmental, public health and safety hazards, such as spills, explosions, and fires.

As you rightly stated in your letter to National Grid on November 12, 2019, these utilities could have, and should have, explored renewable technologies and heat pumps.⁵ There is no excuse for utilities to continue proposing fossil fuel infrastructure when back in 2014, New York State moved forward with its Reforming Energy Initiative (REV) plan which incentivizes utilities to improve efficiency and promote clean energy.⁶

However, it is not too late to course correct. New York State should maintain its position of opposition to the NESE pipeline, along with other infrastructure proposals, to ensure water resources are protected, and use this critical juncture as an opportunity to begin the rapid transition away from the expansion of reliance on fossil fuels.

Adopting the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act puts New York in a unique position to lead the country in fighting climate change. Requiring all-electric new construction, in combination with heat pumps and expansion of renewables, is what is needed for New York to continue to build upon its leadership and serve as a model for the country and the world.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments, and we look forward to working with you to create bold clean energy policies for New York.

Sincerely,

350.org

350Brooklyn

Adirondack Mountain Club

AGREE

Big Reuse

Catskill Mountainkeeper

Citizen Action of New York

Coalition to Protect New York

Community Advocates for a Sustainable Environment

⁵ Governor Andrew M. Cuomo, letter to Mr. Bruckner and Mr. Pettigrew, November 12, 2019, https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/governor.ny.gov/files/atoms/files/NationalGrid_Letter.pdf.

⁶ Governor Andrew M. Cuomo, "Governor Cuomo Announces Fundamental Shift in Utility Regulation," April 24, 2014, <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-fundamental-shift-utility-regulation>.

Delaware Riverkeeper Network

Elmirans & Friends Against Fracking

Environmental Advocates of New York

Food and Water Action

Grassroots Environmental Education

Mother's Out Front – Chemung County

NYC Democratic Socialists of America, Ecosocialist Working Group

New York Communities for Change (NYCC)

New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG)

People for a Healthy Environment

Plymouth Friends of Clean Water

Progressive Women of Pelham

Protecting our Waters

Renewable Newburgh

SANE Energy Project

Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter

Stop NY Fracked Gas Pipeline

Stop the Algonquin Pipeline Expansion (SAPE)

Sustainable Tompkins

Tricounty NY Transition

UACT, Ulster Activists

CC: Honorable Leroy Comrie, Chair, Corporations, Authorities, and Commissions Committee
Honorable Kevin Parker, Chair, Energy Committee
Honorable Michael Cusick, Chair, Energy Committee
Honorable Amy Paulin, Chair, Corporations, Authorities, and Commissions Committee