

Statement in Support of the Climate Action Council's Final Scoping Plan

Rory M. Christian, CEO of the New York State Department of Public Service

I am proudly voting to approve the Climate Action Council's Scoping Plan. It is important to first thank everyone who worked behind the scenes in developing the Scoping Plan and getting us to where we are today. I want to thank staff from NYSERDA, the Department of Public Service, Department of Environmental Conservation, and many other state agencies, who've worked tirelessly to coordinate meetings and events, develop and revise language in the Scoping Plan. They've succeeded in the monumental task of thoroughly embedding in the scoping both a clear direction and set of actions that New York can take to achieve the goals of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (Climate Act). I'd like to thank the various local governments who provided letters of support or issued proclamations committing their communities to the goals of the Climate Act. I also wish to thank Co-Chairs Seggos and Harris, for establishing and managing what has been, in my mind, a collaborative and transparent process. And last but certainly not least, the individuals and advocate organizations who engaged in the public comment process and shared their views throughout the many months developing the Scoping Plan.

In the Climate Act, the Legislature gave the Public Service Commission (the Commission) and its staff arm the Department of Public Service (the Department) several new directives. Among them, the requirement to establish a renewable energy program to attain an electric grid served by at least 70 percent renewable energy resources by 2030 and a zero-emissions grid by 2040. The Climate Act directives also require the Commission to build upon

existing efforts to combat climate change through the deployment of clean energy resources, energy efficiency measures and advanced energy storage technologies.

The Commission and Department have already made significant progress in achieving the State's climate and clean energy goals outlined in the Climate Act. The significant investments the Commission has authorized in partnership with NYSERDA and the utilities in energy efficiency and building electrification, including the Clean Energy Fund and New Efficiency. New York State's initiatives are projected to achieve over two thirds of the statewide energy efficiency goal of one hundred eighty-five trillion British thermal units of customer-level energy reduction by 2025. Additionally, the Commission's actions to date have supported the development of large-scale renewable energy resources and advanced green technologies, including solar, transmission infrastructure, energy storage, charging stations for zero-emissions vehicles, and onshore and offshore wind, through its Reforming the Energy Vision, NY-Sun, Clean Energy Fund, and Clean Energy Standard initiatives.

The Commission and Department will continue developing initiatives in support of the goals of the Climate Act including supporting the State's full transition to a zero-emissions electric grid. A transition that will cement New York as an innovative leader in identifying and implementing solutions for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and will also serve to redress some of the inequities of the past. The Department has been busy establishing a variety of processes to make the Climate Act's goals a reality. The recent groundbreaking of the Champlain Hudson Power Express project awarded under Tier 4 of the Clean Energy Standard and recent approvals of investments in local

transmission and distribution upgrades are just two examples of many efforts underway to reinforce our electric system in anticipation of future Climate Act-related needs.

Recognizing the scale of change and significant work that will be necessary to meet the Climate Act's aggressive targets, the Commission initiated the CLCPA Tracking Initiative (Case: 22-M-0149) to serve as a vehicle to assess the progress made in meeting its directives under the Climate Act and to provide guidance, as appropriate, on next steps to timely meet the requirements of the Climate Act.

With the Scoping Plan in place, the Commission will be poised to take further actions in support of the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The multiple pathways described in the Scoping Plan remove all doubt that through electrification and decarbonization it is possible to make a cleaner, more resilient, and reliable energy system. The Scoping Plan before us today sets a clear direction while also allowing for sufficient flexibility in approach, recognizing the possibility that changes in technologies, economic conditions, climate science and other factors may create new opportunities or challenges and require course adjustments over time.

The requirement that the Scoping Plan be updated on a rolling 5-year basis provides the opportunity to refine and adapt approaches; so this is not the end of our work, as it will continue for years to come. We must keep up our efforts, because it is through this process, next steps with the State Energy Plan, and other ongoing processes required under the Climate Act that we position ourselves to make the best investment possible for our future.

The various options identified in the Scoping Plan provide a myriad of tools for us to succeed. Through the actions outlined in the Scoping Plan we will be able to achieve things that our parents, and our grandparents never considered possible: a reliable energy system that is cleaner and more resilient, and a system that doesn't unjustly burden certain communities while benefiting others.

Integral to this process is the need to ensure reliability. The need for a reliable energy system is at the core of the work of the Department and the Commission. Throughout the Scoping Plan discussion, that need has been emphasized both by members of the Climate Action Council, but also by the New York Independent System Operator and other groups. Though our electric system has been the focus of much of the discussion on reliability, it goes without saying that the need for reliability extends to all energy use - that of the gas system, and other fuels such as propane, kerosene and heating oil - throughout the period of transition to cleaner alternatives.

Failing to maintain these systems during the transition has the potential to delay our efforts. Worse, should the reliability of our systems become questionable, we run the risk of derailing efforts. So, I'm grateful to see the reliability referenced throughout as a critical element, on par with maintaining safety and addressing energy affordability concerns as we focus on the environmental and economic equity issues in parallel.

The economic opportunities identified by the plan have the potential to be transformative for New Yorkers at every end of the economic spectrum. The Commission and the Department are

supportive of the State's goals for creating high-quality, family-sustaining jobs, including union jobs, while balancing the Commission's core responsibilities to ensure safe and reliable service at just and reasonable rates as outlined in the Public Service Law.

The nature of the investments to come, combined with their inherent promise of a cleaner future, represents a unique combination of opportunity and hope. Hope and Opportunity, the foundational ideas that drew my family to America and the basis behind our choice to settle in New York, are evident throughout the over 400 pages of the Scoping Plan. The jobs created through this effort will for many be the beginning of careers that can last a lifetime, providing many with family-sustaining incomes in quality, stable positions. The individuals that will fill these roles will make the goals of the Climate Act a reality.

And the plan makes it clear throughout that, in addition to clean energy and lower emissions, a healthy environment is particularly important. New York has established that every New Yorker has the right to clean air and healthy environment, a right recently established by law. The changes to both the generation of electricity and our use of energy in general as a society will lead to significant improvements in health throughout the state. Healthier people mean fewer missed days of work and school, and general improvements in economic activity within the state of New York.

Throughout the debate on the direction of the Scoping Plan, despite having divergent views on how to proceed, it has been clear throughout that the Climate Action Council members all recognize that the practices of the past are incompatible with

our future goals. Past actions and policies that stacked the deck against many New Yorkers, saddling them with the negative environmental aspects of our energy system, are incompatible with the commitment towards equity and favorable environmental outcomes.

I feel blessed to have a hand in making this change a reality and the Department will work diligently to take actions in support of the laws of New York State, prioritizing reliability while ensuring each person has the right to clean air, clean water, and to a healthful environment.