A.1564 (Peoples-Stokes)/S.2385 (Parker)

Summary: This bill incorporates environmental justice principles into New York State agencies' decision-making processes, makes permanent the Environmental Justice Advisory Group within the DEC, and establishes an Environmental Justice Interagency Coordinating Council to report on the effectiveness and implementation of New York's environmental justice policies within all state agencies whose actions may affect the environment.

Statement of Support: New York State has a proud legacy of environmental protection and our air quality, waterways and wilderness areas have made a remarkable recovery in the past 40 years under the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act and other seminal environmental protection laws and regulations. But as we have made consistent progress to improve New York's environment, low-income areas, communities of color and traditional immigrant neighborhoods have borne the disproportionate burden of pollution that was displaced by stronger environmental standards for more affluent areas elsewhere. This inequity is largely a function of systematic, institutionalized racism and deference to corporate values over basic human needs. As the threat of climate change intensifies, low-income communities now have to contend with the greater likelihood of extreme flooding, vulnerable infrastructure, heat waves and exotic diseases on top of their already disproportionate exposure to pollution. The State of New York can no longer stand by and let this injustice persist for those that contribute the least to climate change, yet receive the worst effects of its impacts.

This bill would make permanent the Environmental Justice Advisory Group within DEC and require NY State to incorporate environmental justice principles into policies and permitting practices across all agencies that impact low-income communities. Such an approach will begin to address these issues of fundamental fairness and equity by institutionalizing and coordinating actions that steer both state and private projects, policies and developments in a way that uplifts all communities. No neighborhood should ever bear the disproportionate environmental burden of a development that enriches the privileged in NY, especially with state money.

Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter Urges your support of A.1564/S.2385