February 4, 2019

A.3876 (Englebright)/S.2992 (Kaminsky)

Title: An act to amend the environmental conservation law, the public service law, the public authorities law, the labor law and the community risk and resiliency act, in relation to establishing the New York state climate and community protection act.

Statement of Support: With comprehensive reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and 13 United States federal agencies warning that there is a narrowing 12-year window to limit a complete climate catastrophe, the urgency to act has never been greater. In stark contrast to this call to action is the Trump administration’s push to increase smokestack and tailpipe pollution as Midwest crops wither, Southern states flood and the West Coast burns.

There is no denying that Climate change is hurting New York, as well. In the past few years the state has been pounded by superstorms, deluged with floods and scorched with record heat due to the advancing effects of a warming planet. Beyond the growing frequency and intensity of severe weather events, New Yorkers will be facing the economic and social costs of dying oceans, agricultural blight, rapid changes to ecosystems and rising sea levels if we do not work together to significantly reduces carbon emissions.

The New York State Climate and Community Protection Act (A.3876/S.2992) will put New York State on the path to 100% renewable energy by 2050 and set benchmarks and reporting requirements to ensure we are meeting our goals along the way. In addition to systematically reducing greenhouse gas emissions across all sectors, the bill promotes healthy communities and will guarantee good jobs and environmental protections for those hardest hit by climate change.

This can be achieved by:

• Committing New York State to a binding goal of 100% emissions reductions by 2050 and sets a path toward 100% clean renewable energy, with an interim goal of a 40% cut in climate pollution by 2030 and 50% renewable energy by 2030. This mandate will be implemented across all
aspects of state government with an environmental/climate equity screen to identify impacted and disadvantaged communities that ensures the development of community benefits and good jobs.

• Creating a legal requirement to equitably disburse 40% of funds collected pursuant to an order of the PSC or from NYSERDA into environmental justice and low-income communities. Such environmental justice “filters” will facilitate the transition to a new clean energy economy that is supportive of localized economies, healthy environments, community well being and local control of resources.

• Creating local jobs in clean energy and protecting workers impacted by the current transition from fossil fuels – through public investment, renewable energy retraining programs, mandated job standards and targeted local hiring commitments. Schools and communities are compensated for short-term local tax revenue losses where the energy industry is in transition.

• Allocating substantial funding beyond what’s currently projected to create a worker and community-centered transition to a 100% clean, non-extractive economy through projects in energy efficiency, renewable energy, energy transmission, transportation (including public transit and zero-emission vehicles), telecommunications, agriculture, and other infrastructure.

This legislation is ambitious, but certainly not as daunting as the challenges climate change has placed before every New Yorker. In 2015, the United States joined with the rest of the world in Paris to set ambitious goals for climate action, including keeping this century’s global temperature rise below 1.5 degree Celsius. We are already at 1.1-degree rise. The tragic political blunder of the Trump administration to pull out of the Paris agreement should not deter New York or any other state from acting on the goals of greenhouse gas reduction. The direction of the global economy favors those that embrace the financial benefits of renewable energy and efficiency technologies. Those that ignore climate science and adhere to fossil fuel dependency will suffer the adverse economic consequences. Ultimately, if we don’t act resolutely together, irreversible cycles will perpetuate temperature rises and cause out-of-control warming. Following the pathway set by the New York State Climate and Community Protection Act (A.3876/ S.2992) will give us the best chance to lead the country and the world out of the climate crisis.

Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter Strongly Urges your support of A.3876/S.2992