July 16, 2019

Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Executive Chamber
Capitol Building
Albany, N.Y. 12224

RE: Governor Program Bill #7, S.6599 (Kaminsky)/A.8429 (Englebright)

Dear Governor Cuomo,

The Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter urges you to sign into law your Program Bill #7, (S.6599 /A.8429), 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 Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA).

This groundbreaking legislation would 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 would promote healthy communities and guarantee good jobs and environmental protections for those hardest hit by climate change. And taking your lead, Governor, the bill also mandates that New York receives 70 percent of our electricity from renewable sources, like wind and solar, by 2030, achieves a 100 percent carbon-free electric sector by 2040, and codifies your existing clean energy commitments, including a 3 percent utility energy efficiency target, 9 gigawatts of offshore wind, 3 gigawatts of energy storage and 6 gigawatts of distributed solar.

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 reduce carbon emissions.

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.

We urge you to sign Program Bill #7, S.6599/A.8429 into law, because the New York State Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act will give us the best chance to lead the country and the world out of the climate crisis. Thank you for your leadership in enacting this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Roger Downs
Conservation Director
Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter