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Local Elected Official Sign-On Letter

Dear Governor Cuomo and New York State Legislators,

As local officials in New York State, we have witnessed the human and economic devastation that worsening superstorms like Harvey, Maria, Irma, Sandy, Irene, and Lee have brought to Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, and our state of New York. Our public health, our economy, and our communities are at risk; we cannot wait any longer to act. Since the Federal Government is unwilling to do its job, New York can and must lead.

As public servants, it is our duty to craft and execute policies to protect the families that we represent. We urge you to consider the following facts:

- This year may become the costliest mainland U.S. hurricane season on record, with already over \$200 billion dollars in estimated damages.(i)
- Superstorm Sandy alone cost our communities and New York State at least \$32.8 billion.(ii)
- More than \$33 billion in public health costs and at least 4,000 deaths annually in New York State alone are associated with the burning of fossil fuels.(iii)
- According to a NYSEERDA study, climate damages may cost New Yorkers more than \$10 billion annually, including from coastal flooding, agricultural disruption, and higher electricity costs from heat-wave driven blackouts.(iv)

We have seen the human and economic losses to our businesses, farms, and municipalities from extreme weather that damages our infrastructure, disrupts lives, and jeopardizes water and food supplies. Taxpayers in our communities are spending billions to rebuild and prepare. However, the companies that are largely responsible for the climate and fossil fuel pollution crisis are not paying for the damages their activities cause.

We call for strengthening state action to create tens of thousands of good jobs in all regions of our state by building the clean infrastructure we need now, for the benefit of people in every community;

- Power New York with 100% clean renewable energy by 2050;
- Significantly scale up investment in wind, solar, and other renewable energy resources, which do not include nuclear or natural gas;
- Provide rebates and expand the network of public charging stations for electric cars, and invest in more efficient and reliable public transit;
- Save families and business owners money by investing in energy efficiency for residential and commercial buildings;
- Encourage the shift to air- and ground-source heat pumps for heating and cooling, and away from reliance on fossil fuel combustion; and
- Protect communities most vulnerable to climate disasters by expanding investment in local resiliency and sustainability projects.

We call on the State to fund these solutions by instituting a corporate polluter fee on oil, gas, and coal companies, so the companies pay their fair share for their pollution that threatens our health, our communities, and our climate.

According to the Political Economy Research Institute at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, placing a fee on climate pollution in New York starting at \$35 per ton could generate over \$7 billion annually for state clean energy investments and create 145,000 jobs annually for our state, even while rebating 25-50% of revenues directly to New York families.(v) In 2017, the IRS Office of Tax Analysis found that such proposals are workable, stimulate the economy, and can be structured to protect lower income groups.(vi)

To ensure we protect all New Yorkers, the per-ton fee should be assessed on all greenhouse gases, including methane, using the best available scientific measures of carbon dioxide equivalency. The fee should be levied as close to the source of pollution as possible, such as at the point of extraction for in-state fossil fuel production, on wholesale power purchase agreements, or point of importation of oil, natural gas, or other emissions sources into the state. The fee must be structured to be progressive and not regressive, prioritize investments in working communities to create jobs and bring down energy costs, and protect and support low-income and working families.

If fossil fuel companies pay their fair share for the damage being done to our health and our climate, we can fund a green New Deal for New York and supercharge local economies across our state.

Therefore, we the undersigned local elected officials from across New York State call on the Governor and the Legislature to dramatically increase investment in clean renewable energy jobs and hold fossil fuel corporations accountable for their pollution, which threatens our health and safety.

i Johnson, David. (2017) "Is This the Worst Hurricane Season Ever?". TIME. Available:

<http://time.com/4952628/hurricane-season-harvey-irma-jose-maria/>

ii "Hurricane Sandy Fast Facts". (2017) CNN. Available:

<http://www.cnn.com/2013/07/13/world/americas/hurricane-sandy-fast-facts/index.html>

iii Mark Z. Jacobson et al, "Examining the feasibility of converting New York State's all-purpose energy infrastructure to

one using wind, water, and sunlight," Energy Policy 57 (2013), 585-601, Available:

<https://web.stanford.edu/group/efmh/jacobson/Articles/I/NewYorkWWSEnPolicy.pdf>

iv Rosenzweig, C., W. Solecki, A. DeGaetano, M. O'Grady, S. Hassol, P. Grabhorn (Eds.). (2011)

"Responding to Climate

Change in New York State: The ClimAID Integrated Assessment for Effective Climate Change

Adaptation." Technical

Report. New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), Albany, New York.

Available:

<https://www.nyserda.ny.gov/climaid>

v Pollin, Bob et al. (2017) "Clean Energy Investments in New York State: An Economic Framework for Promoting Climate Stabilization and Expanding Good Job Opportunities." Political Economy Research Institute at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

vi Horowitz, John et al. (2017) "Methodology for Analyzing a Carbon Tax." IRS Office of Tax Analysis Working Paper 115. Available: [https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/tax-policy/tax-](https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/tax-policy/tax-analysis/Documents/WP-115.pdf)

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