

June 24, 2020

TO: NYS Climate Action Council ClimateAct@dec.ny.gov

RE: Importance of Nuclear Power to CLCPA Goals

Dear Ms. Barton, Mr. Seggos, and members of the Climate Action Council,

Thank you for your service as members of the Climate Action Council. Your collaborative work will be essential to achieve ambitious goals of the CLCPA while meeting the state's ongoing demand for energy.

We are writing to urge the Council to recognize and plan for the essential role that carbon-free nuclear power—existing and advanced—must play in the future.

Renewable energy and energy efficiency will be important components of a coherent strategy for meeting state climate goals. But they are not enough. As wind and solar comprise a larger portion of electricity generation on the grid, the challenges of intermittency become increasingly difficult, resulting in the need to overbuild, as well as curtail, renewable capacity. Due to these dynamics and the practical limitations of storage, attempting to serve baseload demand with intermittent sources in the real world leads to the “partnering” of renewables with fossil fuels, specifically gas. This not only puts carbon in the air, but can also result in less efficient gas-fired generation.

On the other hand, the combination of nuclear power, renewables, and energy efficiency offers a credible path forward. Because nuclear serves baseload demand, it will be a critical part of any realistic plan to achieve the CLCPA goal of 100% carbon-free electricity by 2040. Last year, nuclear power provided a third of New York's in-state generation and over half of its carbon-free electricity. However, by closing just half of one nuclear power plant this year (Indian Point Reactor 2), New York eliminated more carbon-free electricity on an annual basis than generated by all of the wind turbines and solar panels currently in the state. Losing nuclear power in New York would jeopardize greenhouse gas reduction objectives of the CLCPA, wiping out most of the benefit that might otherwise be achieved by the 70% renewable goal. Moreover, the reality is that choosing to shut down nuclear is a choice to keep power plants that burn fossil fuels within Environmental Justice communities running longer.

Recently, the New York Independent System Operator found that with the beneficial electrification of transportation and heating systems, even assuming aggressive targets in energy efficiency are achieved, demand for electricity in the state could increase by 40% in the next twenty years and by over 60% in 2050. Clearly, we cannot afford to take any carbon-free sources of energy off the table if goals of the CLCPA are to be met.

Moving forward, it will be important for the Climate Action Council to base decisions on science and a solid understanding of viable solutions. Nuclear power will be essential for the CLCPA to succeed. We look forward to working with the Council to make abundant carbon-free energy, vital to tackling climate change and securing a bright future for New York, a reality.

Sincerely,

The undersigned (next page)

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CC: The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor of New York