October 13, 2020

Hon. Michelle L. Phillips
Secretary to the Commission
New York State Public Service Commission Three Empire State Plaza
Albany, New York 12223
VIA E-MAIL

RE: Proceeding on Motion of the Commission in Regard to Gas Planning Procedures Case Number: 20-G-0131

Dear Secretary Phillips:

Please accept for filing a letter signed by 91 elected officials across New York state supporting the NY Public Service Commission’s March 19 launch of a proceeding to align New York’s methane gas system planning with New York’s legally mandated climate goals. Our letter urges the Commission to enact a well-researched, comprehensive plan for a managed, equitable, affordable transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy compliant with the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA). We must ensure all people in New York have the energy needed for heating, hot water, and cooking, and that access to renewable options for these services is provided in a timely, orderly, and affordable manner.

Sincerely,

Catherine F. Parker
October 13, 2020

To: Secretary Michelle L. Phillips

CC: Governor Andrew Cuomo, John Rhodes, NYDPS Chair, Public Service Commissioners: Tracey Edwards, Diane X. Burman, James Alesi, and John Howard.

Re: Proceeding on Motion of the Commission in Regard to Gas Planning Procedures Case Number: 20-G-0131

The undersigned elected officials thank the NY Public Service Commission (PSC) for initiating this ground-breaking proceeding. A managed, equitable, affordable transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy is in the best interests of our constituents and all New Yorkers. It is incumbent upon the PSC to enact a well-researched, comprehensive plan to align New York's gas utilities with the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA). We must ensure all people in New York have the energy needed for heating, hot water, and cooking, and that access to renewable options for these services is provided in a timely, orderly, and affordable manner.

We whole-heartedly support this proceeding. In the aftermath of chaotic gas moratoria declared in 2019 by some utilities, the State must require utilities to plan better for the future, and this planning must take climate goals into account. Such chaotic situations impose an extra cost to local governments and residents.

We ask the PSC to use this proceeding to impose measurable emissions reduction requirements on gas utilities to achieve the goals of the CLCPA. Climate change is rapidly exceeding worst case predictions; aggressive goals and benchmarks for energy transition are needed to get ahead of the escalating speed of the climate emergency.

Additionally, the following outcomes are needed to ensure the gas planning proceeding is successful:

NYSERDA must provide guidance and resources to cities and towns for responsible development. New construction is one of the drivers of gas expansion, but it is often more economical for new buildings to go “all electric” with energy efficiency, heat pumps, and induction stoves, rather than investing in outdated fossil fuel combustion technologies. Local municipalities and cities need planning resources to help their local residents and businesses avoid costly retrofits, stranded assets, and crises due to gas moratoria.

Require steps to ensure affordability and resilience of the electric grid. As heating costs shift from the gas bill to the electric bill, the Commission must work to make electricity more affordable to customers, especially those struggling already to pay their bills.
Require gas and electric utilities to plan comprehensively together so that as customers are shifted to renewable thermal energy for heating and cooking, there is a renewable-based electricity supply to provide the power for those uses.

As we move to fully electric heating and cooking, consequences of outages will become more severe. Direct the utilities to invest more in electric grid resilience and reliability, such as buried power lines in areas with high outages, distributed electricity generation, and renewably powered microgrids.

We look forward to working with you to help our communities transition from fossil fuels. A comprehensive planning process, resources for municipalities to support this transition, and a focus on affordability will ensure that we can avoid chaotic gas moratoria and ensure an orderly transition to renewable heating.

Sincerely,

Catherine Parker, Westchester County Legislator
Catherine Borgia, Westchester County Legislator
James F. Creighton, Councilman, Town of Cortlandt
Manna Jo Greene, Ulster County Legislator
Kathryn E. Paterson, Councilman, City of Corning
Timothy Murray, Councilman, Town of Caroline
Vanessa Agudelo, Councilmember, City of Peekskill
Mark Witmer, Supervisor, Town of Caroline
Joseph Driscoll, Common Council Member, Syracuse
John Deer, Councilor, Town of Manlius
Mary Lupien, City Council, Rochester
Katelyn Kriesel, Councilor, Town of Manlius
Jen Metzger, New York State Senate, 42nd District
Irene Weiser, Councilmember, Town of Caroline
Melinda Little, Trustee, Village of Saranac Lake
Sean Ryan, NYS Assembly, 149th District
Joel Gagnon, Town Supervisor, Town of Danby
Sarah Schnabel, Councilmember, Town of Danby
Anne Koreman, Tompkins County Legislator
Mary Kuhn, Onondaga County Legislator
Damon Maher, Westchester County Legislator
Colin D. Smith, Westchester County Legislator
Heather Waters, Councilor, Town of Manlius
Nancy F. Barr, Westchester County Legislator
Nick Page, Dutchess County Legislator
Anthony Grice, Councilman at Large, City of Newburgh
Anna Kelles, Tompkins County Legislator
Ruth Walter, Westchester County Legislator
Benjamin G Darfler, Trustee, Village of Trumansburg
Ken Wray, Mayor, Village of Sleepy Hollow
Robert Carroll, NYS Assembly, 44th District
Stephanie Redmond, Supervisor, Town of Enfield
Jo Anne Simon, NYS Assembly, 52nd District
Amber Grant, Councilmember at Large, City of Beacon
Victoria Gearing, Mayor, Ossining Village
Nily Rozic, NYS Assembly District 25
David Buchwald, NYS Assembly District 93
Paul Feiner, Town Supervisor, Greenburgh
Virginia C. Bryant, Councilperson, Town of Enfield
Jason Leifer, Supervisor, Town of Dryden
Kathleen Talbot, Councilmember, City of Peekskill
Latrice Walker, NYS Assembly, District 55
Stephen Levin, NYC Council, District 33
Brian Pugh, Mayor, Village of Croton-On-Hudson
James E. Skaley, Councilperson, Town of Dryden
Barbara Lifton, NYS Assembly, 125th District
Benjamin Boykin II, Westchester County Legislator
Joel P. Feroleto, Common Council, City of Buffalo
Dan Lamb, Deputy Supervisor, Town of Dryden
Joseph Wetmore, Town Board, Town of Lansing
Rachel May, NYS Senate, 53rd District
Martha Robertson, Tompkins County Legislator
Sherry Horowitz, Trustee, Village of Croton-On-Hudson
Thomas Roach, Mayor, City of White Plains
Richard Gottfried, NYS Assembly, 75th District
Deborah Dawson, Tompkins County Legislator
Ronny Hardaway, Trustee, Village of Lansing
Christina Sonsire, Chemung County Legislator
Kerin Rigney, Town Councilor, Town of DeWitt
Terry Nelson, Councilmember, City of Beacon
Ann Gallelli, Trustee, Village of Croton-on-Hudson
Anthony Del Plato, Deputy Mayor, Village of Interlaken
Sarah Salem, Councilmember-at-large, City of Poughkeepsie
Michael Aymar-Blair, Councilmember, City of Beacon
Pamela Hunter, NYS Assembly, 128th District
Thomas Butler, Mayor, Village of Tarrytown
Karines Reyes, NYS Assembly, 87th District
Dan Klein, Tompkins County Legislator
Brent A Stermer, Councilman, City of Elmira
John Fracchia, Councilmember, Town of Caroline
Shawna M. Black, Tompkins County Legislator
Elaine Denton, Councilor, Town of Manlius
Andy Simmons, Trustee, Village of Croton-on-Hudson
Robin Wilt, Councilmember, Town of Brighton
Paul H. Rudz, Trustee, Village of Lancaster
Yuh-Line Niou, NYS Assembly, 65th District
Teresa Cheetham-Palen, Councilperson, Town of Keene
Dana Levenberg, Supervisor, Town of Ossining
Ellen Calves, Town Board, Town of Bedford
William Reinhardt, Albany County Legislator
Rod Howe, Supervisor, Town of Ithaca
John L. Habib, Trustee, Village of Croton-on-Hudson
William D. Goodman, Deputy Supervisor, Town of Ithaca
Loren Sparling, Councilperson, Town of Dryden
William T. Kinne, Onondaga County Legislator
Kevindaryán Luján, Orange County Legislator, Newburgh-District 4
Jeffrey Dinowitz, NYS Assembly, 81st District
William Colton, NYS Assembly, 47th District
Bronwyn Losey, Councilperson, Town of Lansing
Gregory Young, Fulton County Supervisor, Gloversville Ward 5
Brian Kavanagh, New York State Senator, Senate District 26