



February 18, 2021

Dear Respected Members of the Climate Action Council's Panel on Housing and Energy Efficiency:

New York's energy landscape is rapidly changing as the State works to achieve net zero emissions. But *how* we carry out this transition in the coming decades will be more important to the citizens of this State than the change itself. A careful, pragmatic approach to reducing emissions while prioritizing system reliability will be necessary if our efforts are to succeed. If the transition is based on feel-good mandates and rather than sound, informed energy policies, New York residents, particularly low-income residents, could suffer from unaffordable power options or even stretches of no power at all.

Over time, as more renewables are built and people electrify homes and businesses, natural gas use will likely decrease. During this transition period, the vast majority of New York energy companies are taking steps to reduce emissions and many are investing in new technologies that embrace clean, alternative fuels like RNG and hydrogen. Soon, our natural gas system in New York will look very different as these companies begin to achieve low and zero emissions. In addition to these efforts and tangible progress, a recent PSC report recommends incorporating climate goals into gas planning. The report calls for the 11 utilities in New York to submit three-year strategic plans for development that does not rely on natural gas, including ways to eliminate traditional gas distribution infrastructure. Although forward-thinking is a necessary part of our transitioning grid, three years hardly seems enough time when some of the technologies being developed to compliment natural gas are in their infancy.

Changes are on the horizon, but today, the reality is that more than 60% of New Yorkers rely on natural gas for their homes and businesses and even more would like the option of using natural gas because of its affordability and reliability. So how reasonable is it to mandate sweeping bans on an energy source that so many New Yorkers rely on for heat and electricity? The working group of the Climate Action Council is pro-environment, but are its members also pro-people? The recent collapse of the Texas electric grid, last summer's blackouts in California and the energy struggles in Germany should give the working group pause, as these incidents demonstrate just how fragile an energy grid can be.

Building an electric grid based on politics and not logical considerations will endanger energy reliability for all New Yorkers. The New Yorkers for Affordable Energy coalition urge the Council to do a proper *unbiased* risk assessment of every recommendation. That assessment should include a cost analysis, and a reliability analysis of what New York's energy system would look like without access to natural gas to meet customers' needs. What that analysis will disclose is that dispatchable, on-call power – be that traditional natural gas, RNG, hydrogen, or some other yet unknown fuel – is imperative to keeping people's lights on, homes warm and energy costs low. A [recent Cygnal poll](#) found that 92% of New Yorkers said cost and reliability of their energy was a top concern. So, until a realistic model can be



developed to transition to an affordable, zero-emission option, it is dangerous and premature to ban the best option we have available today.

Please consider the consequences of such changes as you put forth your recommendations for a clean energy future. The lives of all New Yorkers may rely on it.

Sincerely,

The Members of the [New Yorkers for Affordable Energy Coalition](#)