



COUNTY OF ERIE

ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE

P. JOSH WILSON
SUSTAINABILITY DIRECTOR

DANIEL R. CASTLE
COMMISSIONER

Thursday, March 21, 2024

Basil Seggos, Commissioner
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
625 Broadway, 14th Fl
Albany, NY 12233

RE: Support for NYSDEC CPRG Grant Application

Dear Commissioner Seggos,

On behalf of Erie County, this letter serves to express support for the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) application to the EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) program, tentatively titled "Building Community Resilience through Greenhouse Gas Emission Reductions". With this Proposal, DEC, in partnership with the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) will implement programs that reduce greenhouse gas emissions from facilities and services that play key resiliency roles for New York's communities. The programs included in this proposal will not only address greenhouse gas emissions in the near- and long-term, but will also provide substantial co-benefits such as air quality improvements and health benefits, with a particular focus on public services and disadvantaged communities.

The Erie County Department of Environment and Planning (DEP) partners with public and private sector entities to enhance the quality of life for Erie County residents. It implements programs and initiatives fostering economic growth and environmental quality. These programs ensure orderly development and redevelopment, maximizing investment opportunities and the prudent use of public funds. The DEP'S areas of focus include regional planning, cultural heritage promotion, economic and community development, and environmental services.

Each component of this application has the potential to transform New York's communities and create lasting reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants. These proposed programs, when implemented together, will ensure that investments in emissions reductions also support food resiliency, heat resiliency, and offer additional public services. The proposed measures within NYSERDA's application find strong parallels with several key action items identified in Erie County's own Community

Climate Action Plan (CCAP), underscoring the synergistic potential between our local efforts and the proposed state-level initiatives:

Support for Organics Recycling and Food Waste Diversion: DEC's proposed investment in community-scale organic waste management solutions can help avoid waste going to landfill, and potentially result in added food security for disadvantaged communities. This measure aligns with multiple action items across Erie County's CCAP which aim to educate our communities on reducing food waste and improving food security by improving the existing food donation network (Action Items 5.1.2, 11.3.4, 11.3.6). DEC's and NYSERDA's proposal directly supports our commitment to expand educational programming and support policies that encourage food waste recovery infrastructure (Action Items 11.3.7 and 11.3.9). Furthermore, the development and expansion of food and yard waste recycling programs, as described in Action Item 5.2.2, resonate with the goals of Measure 1, emphasizing our collective dedication to waste reduction and sustainability.

Phase-Out of Hydrofluorocarbons (HFC) and Support for Natural Refrigerants: Erie County's concern regarding HFC management is represented by CCAP Action Item 5.2.3, which aims to enhance local recycling solutions for refrigerant-containing appliances. This collaboration exemplifies our shared resolution to mitigate the impacts of harmful refrigerants and transitioning to more sustainable, low-impact cooling solutions.

Creation of Green Community Cooling and Heating Centers: This initiative mirrors Erie County's broader strategy for increasing community resilience and environmental stewardship. CCAP Action Item 3.1.1 includes the development of a Heat Emergency Plan, which requires support to facilitate a locally-informed plan for mitigating the effects of, and responding to, heat wave conditions. The ethos of creating sustainable community infrastructure supports our overarching goals of promoting energy efficiency and public health.

The integration of the "Phase-Out of Hydrofluorocarbons and Support for Natural Refrigerants" program with the "Creation of Green Community Cooling and Heating Centers" initiative presents a significant opportunity for communities in Erie County to transition public-use buildings in the heart of disadvantaged communities, into environmentally sustainable heating and cooling centers. Communities can significantly reduce harmful HFC emissions and boost energy efficiency by updating public-use buildings with modern heat pumps and eco-friendly refrigerants. Additionally, converting these buildings into green cooling centers can strengthen community resilience to heatwaves, while also supporting public health and further improving energy efficiency. This dual approach not only underscores Erie County's dedication to environmental stewardship but also ensures our libraries serve as safe, sustainable havens during extreme heat events, contributing significantly to our overarching goals of community well-being and sustainability.

Support for Advanced Energy Performance Contracting for Local Governments: NYSERDA's Measure 4 directly supports Erie County's action items such as 7.1.3, 7.1.4, and 7.2.4, which focus on educating homeowners about energy savings, providing homeowners and landlords assistance to convert to clean heating and cooling technologies, and subsidize energy efficiency upgrades in disadvantaged communities. These initiatives are crucial for empowering our residents and local governments to embrace sustainable energy solutions and reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions.

Erie County DEP firmly believes that the implementation of these measures will significantly contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, enhance the resilience of our communities, especially in low-income and disadvantaged areas, and complement Erie County's ongoing sustainability and resilience efforts. We are particularly excited about the opportunity these measures present for integrating state-level initiatives with local actions to maximize environmental and community benefits.

We endorse NYSERDA and NYSDEC's application enthusiastically and anticipate the positive impacts its realization will bring to our communities. We stand ready to collaborate and support the successful implementation of these measures.

Thank you for considering our support for this crucial initiative.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. Josh Wilson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "P. Josh" and the last name "Wilson" clearly distinguishable.

P. JOSH WILSON
Sustainability Director

Cc: Daniel Castle, Commissioner