



January 22, 2021

## **My Organization Supports New Yorkers' Right to Clean Air and Water and a Healthful Environment**

Dear New York State Legislature:

We write to express our strongest support for a “Green Amendment” to the New York State Constitution to protect the environmental rights of the people of New York. This legislation would amend Article 1, the Bill of Rights, of the New York State Constitution to insert a new Section 19, recognizing the inalienable and self-executing right of all New Yorkers to clean water, clean air, and a healthful environment.

In 2019, A.2064/S2072 received its first passage. We now call on the legislature to secure a second passage of this bill to allow this common-sense amendment language to be placed as a referendum on the ballot in 2021.

Most New Yorkers are shocked to learn New York’s Constitution does not guarantee them a right to drink clean water and breathe clean air. The right to clean water, air and a healthful environment should be as fundamental as a person’s right to free speech and assembly. In fact, the right to divorce, engage in lotteries and gamble are recognized as inalienable rights that are afforded higher protections under New York law because of their inclusion in the Bill of Rights. New Yorkers deserve better.

It is our firm belief that amending the Bill of Rights to recognize our right to clean water, clean air, and a healthy environment will drive better decision-making at all levels of government. In fact, a Green Amendment is a powerful and important tool for combating environmental racism and rebalancing the inequities communities of color and low-income communities have faced for decades being disproportionately exposed to and negatively impacted by hazardous pollution and industrial practices. A Green Amendment will prevent and help course correct situations or conditions in which water becomes too polluted, air too dirty, land too contaminated, and natural landscapes too decimated to support healthy lives, including a healthy economy.

Furthermore, enshrining environmental rights sends the message that New York is a true national leader on the environment. Forty-three states or commonwealths have some form of expression of environmental values in their Constitutions; but only the State of Montana and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania have recognized protecting environmental rights as inalienable, putting environmental

rights on par with other political and civil liberties. While New York's Constitution does include Article XIV, the Conservation Article, calling for protection of the State's natural resources, this article is limited in scope and only recognizes environmental protections as important public policy, not as a fundamental right.

After a successful first passage, we need your support to ensure this common-sense amendment language is placed as a referendum on the ballot in 2021. We appreciate your support of a Green Amendment to the New York State Constitution; our health and environment depends on taking this forward action.

Sincerely,

Kate Kurera, Deputy Director, **Environmental Advocates NY**  
Maya K. van Rossum, Founder, **Green Amendments For The Generations**  
Maya K. van Rossum, Delaware Riverkeeper, **Delaware Riverkeeper Network**  
Michael Barrett, Executive Director, **Adirondack Mountain Club**  
Lyna Hinkel, Founder, **350NYC**  
Tara Sumner, Vice President, **Advocates for Springfield**  
Andra Leimanis, Communications & Outreach Director, **Alliance for a Green Economy**  
Crystal Davis, Vice President of Policy & Strategic Engagement, **Alliance for the Great Lakes**  
Mark Zakutansky, Director of Conservation Policy Engagement, **Appalachian Mountain Club**  
Barbara Heinzen, Co-Founder, **Barbets Duet**  
Melissa Auf der Maur, Co-Founder & Director, **Basilica Hudson**  
Jeremy Snyder, Co-leader, **Bethlehem Tomorrow**  
Justin Green, Executive Director, **Big Reuse**  
Jennifer Scarlott, Coordinator, **Bronx Climate Justice North**  
Kerrie Gallo, Deputy Executive Director, **Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper**  
Jeff Senterman, Executive Director, **Catskill Center for Conservation and Development**  
Kathy Nolan, Volunteer, **Catskill Heritage Alliance**  
Wes Gillingham, Associate Director, **Catskill Mountainkeeper**  
Bob Cohen, Policy Director, **Citizen Action of New York**  
Barbara J Warren RN, MS, Executive Director, **Citizens' Environmental Coalition**  
Kathleen A. Curtis, Executive Director, **Clean and Healthy New York**  
Doug Couchon, Co-Founder, **Coalition to Protect New York**  
Troy Weldy, President, **Columbia Land Conservancy**  
Roberts Connors, Co-Founder, **Community Advocates for a Sustainable Environment (CASE)**  
Anthony Breuer, Member, **Compressor Free Franklin**  
Mark Warford, President, **Delmar Farmer's Market**  
Caroline E Fenner, Environment Action Team Leader, **Dutchess County Progressive Action Alliance**  
Peter Lehner, Managing Attorney, **Earthjustice**  
Amy Rosmarin, Executive Director, **Earthkeeper Health Resources**  
Nadia Steinzor, Senior Policy Analyst & Research Manager, **Earthworks**  
Dooug Couchon, Co-Founder, **Elmirans and Friends Against Fracking**  
Judith Enck, Former Regional Administrator, **Environmental Protection Agency**  
Alex Beauchamp, Northeast Region Director, **Food & Water Action**  
Irene Weiser, Coordinator, **Fossil Free Tompkins**

Yvonne Taylor, Vice President, **Gas Free Seneca**  
Wendy Seligson, Steering Committee Member, **Jewish Climate Action Network NYC**  
Laura Bierman, Executive Director, **League of Women Voters of New York State**  
Lisa Tyson, Director, **Long Island Progressive Coalition**  
Otto Butz, Founder, **Milford Doers**  
Rich Schrader, New York Political Director, **Natural Resources Defense Council**  
Adam Flint, Director of Clean Energy Programs, **Network for a Sustainable Tomorrow**  
McGregor Smyth, Executive Director, **New York Lawyers for the Public Interest**  
Elizabeth Moran, Environmental Policy Director, **New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG)**  
Joshua Howard, Executive Director, **New York-New Jersey Trail Conference**  
William Huston, **NY Friends of Clean Air and Water**  
Eddie Bautista, Executive Director, **NYC Environmental Justice Alliance (NYC-EJA)**  
Natalie Polvere & Iris Hiskey Arno, Co-Chairs Environment Committee, **NYCD16 Indivisible**  
Amy Wyant, Executive Director, **Otsego County Conservation Association**  
Nicole A. Dillingham, J.D., Board President, **Otsgeo 2000, Inc.**  
Adam Effler, Executive Director, **Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council, Inc.**  
Doug Couchon, Co-Founder, **People for a Healthy Environment**  
Peter Hudiburg, Founder, **Plymouth Friends for Clean Water**  
Peter Bauer, Executive Director, **Protect the Adirondacks**  
Gerri Wiley, Co-Founder, Facilitator, **Residents Allied for the Future of Tioga (RAFT)**  
Danny Pearlstein, Policy & Communications Director, **Riders Alliance**  
Jeremy Cherson, Legislative Advocacy Manager, **Riverkeeper**  
Kim Fraczek, Director, **Sane Energy Project**  
Gail Musante, Official Signer, **Sanford-Oquaga Area Concerned Citizens (S-OACC)**  
Grace Nichols, Collective Member, **Save the Pine Bush**  
Tracy Brown, Regional Director of Water Protection, **Save the Sound**  
Andy Bicking, Director of Public Policy, **Scenic Hudson**  
George Billard, Co-Founder, **SCRAM**  
Joseph Campbell, President, **Seneca Lake Guardian**  
Roger Downs, Conservation Director, **Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter**  
Becky Meier, Co-Founder, **Stop NY Fracked Gas Pipeline**  
Joanna Dickey, Program Director, **Strawtown Studio**  
Michael Kink, Executive Director, **Strong Economy For All Coalition**  
Courtney Garneau, Chair of Eastern Long Island Chapter, **Surfrider Foundation**  
Jessica Swindon, Board Member, **Sustainable Tompkins**  
Edward Morris, Founder & Director, **Toolshed**  
**Ujima Company**