May 18, 2020

By electronic mail

Honorable Michelle L. Phillips Secretary
New York Public Service Commission
Three Empire State Plaza
Albany, New York 12223

RE: Case #20-M-0187 – Petition of Multiple Intervenors Seeking Immediate, Material Rate Relief for Electric and Gas Customers, including a Pause in Surcharges and Collections for Projects and Programs Delayed as a Result of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Dear Secretary Phillips:

Please accept this comment on behalf of the 163 undersigned organizations in opposition to the petition filed on April 10 by Multiple Intervenors, in which unnamed large power consumers shielded by an “unincorporated association” attempt to use the Covid-19 public health and economic disaster to pursue their long sought agenda to defund energy efficiency and renewable energy programs.

We oppose the petition for the following reasons:

1. It is not in the public interest to defund renewable energy and energy efficiency programs, which New York needs to accelerate in order to save lives and which more than 140,000 people depend on for work in this state. There are other methods to reduce customer bills that would better serve the public interest.¹

   We support reasonable methods to reduce utility bills, and especially to provide bill relief for residential and commercial customers most negatively impacted by the Covid-19 crisis. Careful and comprehensive consideration must be given to long term and strategic impacts of all options considered. Multiple Intervenors points to the utility austerity proceeding undertaken during the last recession as precedent for Commission actions to reduce bills. But then Multiple Intervenors fails to offer any of the solutions pursued during that time. In 2009, the Commission ordered each utility “to closely examine its capital expenditures, operation and maintenance expenses and any other expense areas over which it has discretion² to identify costs that may be reduced without impairing the ability to provide safe and adequate service.” The Commission further ordered the utilities to “employ as many cost-cutting measures as possible” and mentioned that “these measures could include, but are not limited to, limiting training of employees in only safety-related or legally-mandated areas, freezing managerial salaries,

¹ We note that the Public Utility Law Project (PULP) has filed a more comprehensive and rational petition to avert unreasonable bill impacts and shut offs stemming from the Covid-19 Pandemic. Case #20-M-0198. April 21, 2020.
² We note that utilities do not have discretion over most of their energy efficiency and renewable energy collections as these are determined by the Commission in generic proceedings.
foregoing managerial bonuses, and limiting travel.” The Commission went on to stress that utilities would be expected to share the cost savings from these measures with customers.3

Instead of promoting these strategies, Multiple Intervenors proposes only to pause collections for energy efficiency and renewable energy funding and to raid the public funds held by the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) to return money to customers. These programs and the continued functioning of NYSERDA are vital to our long term survival on Planet Earth, contribute directly to life-saving indoor and outdoor air pollution reductions, and support approximately 141,230 private sector workers,4 hundreds of civil servants employed at NYSERDA, and program staff at non-profit program administrators and municipal agencies across the state. The impact of the Multiple Intervenors petition would be economically devastating for the renewable energy and efficiency sector, for the employees working at NYSERDA to address the climate crisis and support the clean energy sector through the pandemic, and for the publicly funded civil society and local government entities who work with NYSERDA to educate the public and advance the state’s legally mandated clean energy goals.

The pandemic has not changed our long-term climate trajectory, but it is delaying progress toward meeting our climate goals. The necessary social distancing policies have already imposed financial strain on clean energy businesses. The economic fallout from the pandemic will likely make the up-front costs associated with many clean energy solutions even further out of reach for more customers as financial hardship grows. The economic recovery and impending climate disaster will necessitate deeper investments in renewable energy and efficiency to overcome these barriers, achieve the equity mandates in New York’s climate law, and make up for lost time. Therefore, it is imperative that public funds set aside to support this clean energy transition remain available, and that they be used strategically today to support any short-term progress that is possible, to stabilize clean energy industries and programs, to support cost-saving efficiency and renewables investments for disadvantaged communities, and to begin investments in a green recovery.

New York State is required by law to meet certain renewable energy, energy efficiency, and greenhouse gas reduction targets by specific dates. If the proposal by Multiple Intervenors were accepted and NYSERDA’s budgets were either frozen at their current amount or reduced in order to return money to ratepayers, we will undermine our ability to meet the legally mandated targets. Further, if collections for legally mandated activities are reduced or eliminated now, collections in the future would need to be much higher in order to make up for lost revenues, creating more hardship down the road. Delaying climate action means that later action will be more expensive, and adaptation may not be possible to address the worst impacts.

3 Public Service Commission Order. Case #09-M-0435. December 22, 2009
https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a98cf80ec4eb7c5cd928c61/t/5e78158396c2552a3b8fe6d5/1584928132418/NewYork-2020.pdf
It would be much more in the public interest for the Commission to seek ways to address the needs of those truly unable to pay their bills due to the pandemic, rather than approving strategies to defer costs that will compound in the future. Therefore, the Commission should reject this petition on the grounds that it is not consistent with the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act and is not in the long-term public interest.

2. The Multiple Intervenors proposal is an opportunistic ploy by a special interest group. It is unfortunate that, at a time when the people of New York are suffering through a major upheaval, Multiple Intervenors would mount an assault on our public funding for renewable energy and energy efficiency. Multiple Intervenors has made no secret of its opposition to funding of clean energy programs in many years of filings in Public Service Commission proceedings. It is revealing that they so blatantly ignore all other possible strategies to reduce bills and are singularly focused on public clean energy programs. We hope the Commission will reject this petition on the grounds that it is too narrow to contribute to any meaningful public record related to how the Commission can address the Covid-19 Pandemic.

3. Finally, the “Multiple Intervenors” petition is untransparent and prevents meaningful public dialogue and accountability. By information and belief, there is no public list of the approximately 60 large industrial, commercial, and institutional energy consumers who the filing claims are members of Multiple Intervenors. Nor is there a public list of the board members or decision-makers of Multiple Intervenors. All filings by this group are simply signed by the association’s legal counsel.

The members of Multiple Intervenors have filed a petition attempting to reverse and upend years of Public Service Commission decisions and public planning. Yet, they remain nameless and faceless, and they have made no showing of how many of those businesses are impacted by the pandemic, the extent of their losses, or to what extent the elimination of the modest clean energy collections will help with their survival. They must not be shielded from public accountability. Before considering this petition, the Commission should require transparency so that the public and the Commission can reasonably evaluate their interests and engage in a transparent and good faith public process with them.

For all the reasons above, the undersigned organizations oppose the petition by Multiple Intervenors, and urge the Commission to reject it outright; if the petition is accepted for consideration, the Commission should require Multiple Intervenors to provide a list of members and decision-makers who are willing to stand behind their filing.

Respectfully Submitted,

Alliance for a Green Economy
Jessica Azulay, Executive Director
Syracuse, NY

5 For more information, see The Shock Doctrine by Naomi Klein, in which she documents the strategy of taking advantage of crises to move forward a corporate agenda and eliminate public programs.
350.org
Dominique Thomas, Mid-Atlantic Regional Organizer
New York, NY

350Brooklyn
Sara Gronim, Co-Leader
Brooklyn, NY

350NYC
Dorian Fulvio, Steering Committee Member
New York, NY

Acadia Center
Matt Rusteika, Building Initiative Director & Senior Policy Analyst
Rockport, ME

ACES-Energy
Andrew Heiligman, President
Rochester, NY

Adirondack North Country Association
Jerrod Bley, Clean Energy Program Director
Saranac Lake, NY

Affordable Housing Partnership
Kathleen Langton, Energy Program Manager
Albany, NY

ALIGN
Phoebe Flaherty, Organizer
New York, NY

All Our Energy
George Povall, Executive Director
Point Lookout, NY

Atlantic Chapter of the Sierra Club
Kate Bartholomew, Chair of Chapter
Albany, NY

Aztech Geothermal, LLC
John Ciovacco, President
Ballston Spa, NY

Bedford 2020
Midge Iorio, Executive Director
Bedford, NY
Binghamton Regional Sustainability Coalition
Adam Flint, Director of Clean Energy Programs
Binghamton, NY

BONGARBIZ
Tina Bongar, Co-Owner
Peekskill, NY

Broome Tioga Green Party
Rick Sprout, Chair
Binghamton NY

Campaign for Renewable Energy
Sara Herr, Convener
Ithaca, NY

Capital District Community Energy
Patricia Beel, Secretary
Albany, NY

Capital District Regional Planning Commission
Todd Fabozzi, Director of Sustainability
Albany, NY

Center for NYC Neighborhoods
Christie Peale, CEO/Executive Director
New York, NY

Central New York Poor People's Campaign
Beth DuBois, Pastor
Syracuse, NY

Chemung County Mothers Out Front
Heather M. Stanton, Volunteer Team Leader
Chemung County, NY (Elmira, Horseheads, Big Flats, Chemung, Millport)

Church Women United in New York State
Mary Smith, Communications Director
Rochester, NY

Citizen Action of New York
Bob Cohen, Policy Director
Albany, NY

Citizens For Local Power Inc
Susan H. Gillespie, President
Kingston, NY
Climate Change Awareness and Action
Peter Wirth, Organizer
Fayetteville, NY

Climate Reality Project - Westchester Chapter
Lauren Brois, Public Relations Chair
Westchester, NY

CNY Solidarity Coalition Climate Justice Committee
Katherine M. Burns, Chairperson
Syracuse, NY

Co-op Power
Lynn Benander, President
Florence, MA

Coalition Against Pilgrim Pipeline - NJ
Ken Dolsky, Co-founder and Organizer
Parsippany, NJ

Coalition Against the Rockaway Pipeline
Judith K. Canepa, Coordinator
New York, NY

Coalition to Protect New York
Maura Stephens, Co-Founder
Many Counties, NY

Community Advocates for a Sustainable Environment
Robert Connors, Co-Founder
Canaan, NY

Compressor Free Franklin
Donald Hebbard, President / Founding Member
Franklin, NY

Dandelion
Kathleen Hannun, Co-Founder and President
New York, NY

DickKornbluth, LLC
Dick Kornbluth
Syracuse, NY

Diverso Energy
Jon Mesquita, President
Brooklyn, NY
Don't Gas the Meadowlands Coalition
Ken Dolsky, Steering Committee Member
Teaneck, NY

Dryden Resource Awareness Coalition (DRAC)
Charles Geisler, Member
Dryden, NY

Dutchess County Progressive Action Alliance
Caroline Fenner, Advice, Records, and Communications
Poughkeepsie, NY

Elmirans and Friends Against Fracking
Doug Couchon, Co-Founder
Elmira, NY

Empire Clean Energy Supply
William L. Feldmann, CEO
Bohemia, NY

Environmental Justice Task Force of the WNY Peace Center
Charley Bowman, Chair
Buffalo, NY

ETM Solar Works
Gay E Canough, President
Endicott, NY

Euclid Training
Jess Vicuna
New Rochelle. NY

Food & Water Watch
Alex Beauchamp, Northeast Region Director
Brooklyn, NY

Fossil Free Tompkins
Irene Weiser, Coordinator
Ithaca, NY

Frack Action
Julia Walsh, Campaign Director
New York

FrackBustersNY
Mary Finneran, Co-Founder
New York
Gas Free Seneca
Yvonne Taylor, Vice President
Watkins Glen, NY

Geotherm Inc.
Jesse Cook, President
Honeoye Falls, NY

Get Your GreenBack Tompkins
Karim Beers, Coordinator
Ithaca, NY

Global Composites, Inc.
Kathleen Winckler, Treasurer
Troy, NY

Good Old Lower East Side, Inc.
Damaris G Reyes, Executive Director
New York, NY

Greater New York Labor-Religion Coalition
Rabbi Michael Feinberg, Director
New York, NY

Green Education and Legal Fund
Mark Dunlea, Chair
Poestenkill NY

Green Party of Monroe County
Chris Edes, Co-Chair
Rochester, NY

Green Party of Nassau County
Joseph Naham, Chairperson
Long Beach, NY

Green Party of New York
Gloria Mattera, Co-Chair
New York

Green Pathway Consultants
Judith A Karpova, Owner
Kerhonkson, NY

GreeningUSA
Diane Brandli, President
Syracuse, NY
HabitatMap
Michael Heimbinder, Executive Director
Brooklyn, NY

Halco Energy
Hal Smith, Owner
Phelps, NY

Heat Smart Otsego
Bennett Sandler, Campaign Director
Fly Creek, NY

Heat/Cool Smart Brooklyn
Martha Sickles, Board Member
New York, NY

HeatSmart Tompkins
Brian Eden, Chair, Board of Directors
Ithaca, NY

HeatSmart CNY
Lindsay Speer, Campaign Manager
Syracuse, NY

Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, Inc.
Manna Jo Greene, Environmental Director
Beacon, NY

Indian Point Safe Energy Coalition
Marilyn Elie, Co-Founder
Hudson River Valley, NY

Indivisible Scarsdale
Myra Saul, Co-Leader
Scarsdale, NY

Joan Beard Photography
Joan Beard, Goddess
New York, NY

Kinetic Communities Consulting
Daphany Sanchez, Executive Director
Maspeth, NY

Kinetik Energy Solutions
John Pfeiffer, Owner
Poughkeepsie, NY
Long Island Progressive Coalition  
Lisa Tyson, Director  
Massapequa, NY  

Mamaroneck Indivisible  
Jean Chung  
Mamaroneck, NY  

Metro Justice  
Mohini Sharma, Lead Organizer  
Rochester, NY  

Milford Doers/Residents of Crumhorn Mtn  
Otto Butz, Founder  
Maryland, NY  

Mothers Out Front Dutchess County  
Caroline Fenner, Communications and Outreach  
Poughkeepsie, NY  

Mothers Out Front-Tompkins  
Elisa Evett, Co-Chair  
Ithaca, NY  

Natural Energy Solutions  
Eric Maskell, Owner  
Red Hook, NY  

New Paltz Climate Action Coalition  
Jess Mullen, Chairperson  
New Paltz, NY  

New York Climate Action Group  
Judith K. Canepa, Co-Founder  
New York, NY  

New York Communities for Change  
Patrick Houston, Climate & Inequality Campaigns Associate  
Brooklyn, NY  

New York Geothermal Energy Organization (NY-GEO)  
Bill Nowak, Volunteer Executive Director  
Buffalo, NY  

New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG)  
Elizabeth Moran, Environmental Policy Director  
Albany, NY
New York Sustainable Business Council (NYSBC)
Bob Rossi, Executive Director
Ithaca, NY

New Yorkers for Clean Power
Betta Broad, Director
Kingston, NY

News from the Neighborhood
Paul Tick, Editor
Bethlehem, NY

North American Climate, Conservation and Environment (NACCE)
Jerry Rivers
Roosevelt, NY

North Country 350 Alliance
Ginger Storey-Welch, Group Leader
Potsdam, NY

Nuclear Information and Resource Service (NIRS)
Timothy Judson, Executive Director
Takoma Park, MD

NY Climate Advocacy Project
Ruth Foster, Member
Albany, NY

NYC Grassroots Alliance
Jill Mcmanus, Event Coordinator
New York, NY

NYC 2030 District
Haym S. Gross, Co-Chair
New York, NY

NYC-Environmental Justice Alliance
Eddie Bautista, Executive Director
New York, NY

NYCD-16 Indivisible
Natalie Polvere, Co-Chair, Environment Committee
Yonkers, NY

New York Solar Energy Society (NYSES)
Joanne Coons
New York, NY
Oblong Valley Indivisible
Bill Kish, Co-Organizer
Millerton, NY

Orange Environment Inc.
Scott Martens, Board Member
Goshen, NY

Partnership for Policy Integrity
Laura Haight, US Policy Director
Red Hook, NY

PAUSE - People of Albany United for Safe Energy
Diana Wright, Treasurer-Signer
Albany, NY

Peace Action Manhattan
Florindo Troncelliti, Coordinator
New York, NY

Peace Action New York State
Sally Jones, Volunteer
New York, NY

Peace Action of Staten Island
Joanna Fredericks, Board Member
Staten Island, NY

People for a Healthy Environment
Doug Couchon, Co-Founder
Horseheads, NY

People's Climate Movement - Capital Region
Tina Lieberman, Chair
Albany, NY

People’s Climate Movement NY
Marilyn Vasta, Member Administrative Team
New York, NY

Poor Persons Campaign
Tanisha Logan- Lattimore
Elmira, NY

Pratt Center for Community Development
Rebekah Morris
Brooklyn, New York
Purity Ice Cream Co., Inc.
Bruce Lane, Owner
Ithaca, NY

PUSH Buffalo
Clarke Gocker, Director of Policy and Strategy
Buffalo, NY

Putnam Progressives
B. R. Lemonik, Facilitator
Putnam County NY

Ratepayer and Community Intervenors
Carol Chock, President
Finger Lakes Region, NY

Renewable Energy Long Island (reLI)
Gordian Raacke, Executive Director
East Hampton, NY

Renovus
Joe Sliker, CEO
Ithaca, NY

Residents Allied for the Future of Tioga (RAFT)
Gerri Wiley, Co-Founder, Facilitator
Owego, NY

Resist Spectra
Courtney Williams, Coordinator
Peekskill, NY

ResistCVE
Iwan C. Leanare
Dover, NY

Riverdale Jewish Earth Alliance
Elliott Rabin
Bronx, NY

Riverkeeper
Paul Gallay, Hudson Riverkeeper
Ossining, NY

Rochester People’s Climate Coalition
Kristen Van Hooreweghe, Collective Impact Project Manager
Rochester, NY
Safe Energy Rights Group (SEnRG)
Courtney M. Williams, Co-Founder
Peekskill, NY

Sane Energy Project
Kim Fraczek, Director
New York, NY

Sanford-Oquaga Area Concerned Citizens (S-OACC)
Gail Musante, Official Signer
Deposit and Sanford Townships, NY

Save the Pine Bush
Grace Nichols, Collective Member
Albany, NY

Scottsville Properties LLC
Joseph Lake, President
Scottsville, NY

Seneca Lake Guardian
Joseph Campbell, President
Watkins Glen, NY

ShaleshockCNY
Sharon Osika-Michales, Core Member
Syracuse, NY

Shut Down Indian Point Now
Catherine Skopic, Chair
New York, NY

Simply Home Performance LLC
Logan Cole, Owner
Walworth NY

Sisters of Charity Federation
Teresa Kotturan, Main NGO Representative at the UN
New York, NY

Sisters of Mercy
Sister Janet Korn, RSM, Justice Coordinator
Rochester, NY

Snug Planet LLC
Jon Harrod, President
Ithaca, NY
Solarize Albany
William Reinhardt, Director
Albany, NY

Solstice Initiative, Inc.
Avni Pravin, Program Manager, Low Income Inclusion Team
Cambridge, MA

South Asian Fund For Education, Scholarship and Training (SAFEST)
Mazeda A. Uddin, Founder/CEO
New York, NY

Stone Quarry House
Nancy Norton, President
Ithaca, NY

Stop NY Fracked Gas Pipeline
Becky Meier, Co-Founder
Canaan, NY

Stop the Algonquin Pipeline Expansion
Susan Van Dolsen, Co-Founder
Rye, NY

StopCricketValley.org
Bill Kish, Organizer
North East, NY

Sullivan Alliance for Sustainable Development
Linda Reik, Board of Directors, Member
Narrowsburg, NY

Sustainable Hudson Valley
Melissa Everett, Ph.D., Executive Director
Kingston, NY

Sustainable McDonough
Steve Ellsworth, Board Member
McDonough, NY

Sustainable Otsego
Wayne Mellor, Chair
Fly Creek, NY

Sustainable Tompkins, Inc.
Gay Nicholson, President
Ithaca, NY
Sustainable Warwick
Michael Helme, Steering Committee Member
Warwick, NY

Sustainable Westchester
Steven Rosenthal, Interim Executive Director
Mt. Kisco, NY

Syracuse Cultural Workers
Andy Mager, Sales Manager and Social Movements Liaison
Syracuse, NY

Syracuse DSA
Bobby Carroll
Syracuse, NY

Syracuse Peace Council
Michaela Czerkies, Staff Organizer
Syracuse, NY

Taitem Engineering
Lou Vogel, President
Ithaca, NY

Tinker Tree Play/Care
Natalie Cronin, Chief Play Artist
New York, NY

Tompkins County Climate Protection Initiative
Peter Bardaglio, Coordinator
Ithaca, NY

Tompkins County Environmental Management Council
Thomas Shelley, Chairperson
Ithaca NY

United for Action
Ling Tsou, Co-Founder
New York, NY

Urbecon LLC
Martha Sickles, Principal
New York, NY

Viridius Property
Stuart Staniford, President
Ithaca, NY
Weather Medic Inc
Jack W. Kanack, President
North Tonawanda, NY

WESPAC
Nada Khader, Executive Director
White Plains, NY

Westchester for Change
Susan Van Dolsen, Co-Organizer
Rye, NY

Western New York Environmental Alliance
Lynda Schneekloth, Chair
Buffalo, NY

Workers Center of CNY
Jessica Maxwell, Executive Director
Syracuse, NY

Youth Action Programs and Homes, Inc.
Robert Taylor, Executive Director
New York, NY