MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT
A1466C/S6453B

The PEAK Coalition—UPROSE, THE POINT CDC, New York City Environmental Justice Alliance (NYC-EJA), New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI), and Clean Energy Group (CEG)—aims to end the long-standing pollution burden from power plants on the city’s most climate-vulnerable people. This coalition is the first comprehensive effort in the US to reduce the negative and racially disproportionate health impacts of a city’s peaker plants by replacing them with renewable energy and storage solutions.

PEAK Coalition supports A1466C/S6453B Build Public Renewables Act (“BPRA”). This bill authorizes the New York Power Authority to purchase, acquire, plan, design, engineer, finance, construct, operate, manage, improve, and maintain any renewable energy project.

Fossil fuel power plants are disproportionately sited in frontline communities most vulnerable to climate disasters, skyrocketing energy bills, and public health crises in New York. We know that these disasters have and will continue to hit New York’s frontline communities first and worst. With an ongoing energy affordability crisis layered on top of a surge in Covid-19, it is critical to secure local, affordable, and renewable energy sources for the social and energy security of New York. The state must do better with all the tools it has at its disposal to meet the codified mandates of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, and Building Public Renewables is an important piece of the transition process.

Currently, the New York Power Authority (NYPA) is legally prohibited from owning more than six utility-scale generation facilities. The NY Build Public Renewables Act would remove this limitation, allowing NYPA to scale up renewable energy generation faster, cheaper, and more efficiently. As the country’s largest publicly-owned energy provider, NYPA can take advantage of having some of the highest-rated green bonds to make the upfront investments necessary to put us on track to meet our renewable mandates.

NYPA and the PEAK Coalition have collaborated on a joint study of how to fully transition publicly-owned peaker plants to battery storage facilities in the coming decade, released in April 2022. NYPA has been an accountable partner for frontline communities in New York to collaborate on opportunities to reduce fossil fuel reliance and increase renewable energy and battery storage deployment. Empowering NYPA through the Build Public Renewables Act can further accelerate the Authority’s work to accelerate the development of distributed energy resources centered on environmental justice.
We further urge the Legislature to ensure that definitions of “renewable energy projects” under 30 (b) ii of the Assembly bill must explicitly prohibit the combustion of green hydrogen in a power generation context. Hydrogen combustion generates more NOx emissions than fossil fuels, which is a serious public health hazard. It is far more efficient to use renewable energy directly to power our grid than to generate green hydrogen in most contexts. Provisions for the highest and best use of renewable energy projects are critical to ensuring a clean energy future.

We urge the New York State Legislature members to demonstrate their commitment to climate leadership and community protection today by passing the BPRA.