

February 7, 2024

AIA New York Testimony for the 2024 Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Environmental Conservation

Thank you, Senator Krueger, Assemblymember Weinstein, Senator Harckham, Assemblymember Glick, and members of this joint legislative budget committee, for your consideration of American Institute of Architects New York's budget testimony. AIANY represents more than 5,000 architects and design professionals committed to positively impacting the physical and social qualities of our state.

AIANY strongly supports Part P of the Fiscal Year 2025 Executive Budget Transportation, Economic Development, and Environmental Conservation Article VII legislation, the Affordable Gas Transition Act. This proposal would make critical changes to the Public Service Law related to the mission of the Public Service Commission by eliminating the "100 foot" rule and making other amendments to meet the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) greenhouse gas emission reduction requirements. The "100 foot" rule requires utilities to supply gas to any customers who want it and demands that ratepayers foot the bill to hook them up if those customers live within 100 feet of an existing line.

The current law requires gas companies to expand natural gas infrastructure at the request of consumers regardless of the cost of the expansion or if more climate friendly alternatives would be more cost-effective. These rules constrain the Public Service Commission from meeting the CLCPA's emission reduction requirements and meeting evolving demands of the marketplace. The CLCPA is one of the most aggressive and ambitious climate laws in the United States; the law sets significant greenhouse gas emission reductions in all sectors of New York's economy and directs agencies to focus on equity in the transition.

The Affordable Gas Transition Act will allow customers who want to use gas to do so while enabling the cost-effective transition to clean, energy efficient electric heating and other alternatives to natural gas. This bill will reduce New York's reliance on gas, make progress on the transition to more sustainable utilities, and prevent utilities from passing the costs of new gas lines onto existing customers.

Additionally, this proposal will protect existing customers from the financial burden of investment in fossil fuel infrastructure while not impacting the safe and reliable service they already receive.

As we move towards a fully electric future, it is vital our building codes and appliance efficiency standards modernize with this transition in order to meet New York's ambitious climate goals.

AIANY encourages the legislature to consider the proposal as you negotiate and authorize the final State Budget.