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December 12th 2024

Honorable Kathleen C. Hochul  
NYS Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul,

We are businesses headquartered in New York with key operations in New York or with sales across the state. We directly contribute to the health of the state's economy

through the taxes we pay, the workers we employ, the local services we use and the communities we support.

We are writing today to urge you in the strongest terms to sign and commence enactment of one of the most climate friendly and pro-business bills to emerge from the state's 2024 legislative session: The Tropical Rainforest Economic and Environmental Sustainability (TREES) Act (S.8898/A.9711 Krueger/Zebrowski).

In short, the legislation, which passed with strong bipartisan support in both chambers earlier this year, is a climate bill with a procurement reform focus and an economic development benefit. It prevents the state of New York from purchasing products that contribute to tropical deforestation, one of the key drivers of climate change. It focuses on high-risk products including key agricultural commodities such as palm oil, coffee, beef, pulp, paper, and cocoa. It provides new business opportunities for small New York businesses, for minority-owned businesses, for women-owned businesses, and for those businesses that purchase New York sourced inputs needed by the government as part of its state level procurement.

As businesses, we know the important role that government and governmental policy plays in the economic health of the state. We are convinced this bill would add to the health of the state's economy through the purchasing power of the government while helping to address crucial climate needs. As importantly, this bill is the practical embodiment of broad policies you have outlined in your last two State of the State addresses.

New York's small businesses are the backbone of its economy, accounting for 98% of all businesses and roughly half of the state's private sector workforce. By opening up the state's procurement system this way, it allows the state to invest in its people and businesses via state directed procurement funding.

Many of the businesses that could be helped lie outside of the state's largest metropolitan areas. Crucially, New York's agricultural sector includes home-grown beef, timber, and soybeans. Increased purchases by the state of New York sourced products like these is a sound investment that will provide direct economic benefits to the state's hard working farmers.

Sadly, the state procurement system is skewed away from many businesses who would like to provide goods and services to it. By one measure, minority-owned firms account for 26% of all New York firms but they win only about 10% of state contracts. Our

government is failing to serve this important demographic, and passage of this bill would be part of the solution.

As businesses, we know we need to serve our customers in a manner that keeps their faith in how we operate, in the products we produce, and in the services we provide. If not, they take their dollars elsewhere. It is similar with governments – citizens' faith in the institutions that guide us is fundamental. Signing this bill says forcefully that the State of New York is directly addressing a global, national, and state problem with profound implications for all of its citizens.

As business leaders, we give our assurances that we will work with you and your administration to help ensure the sound implementation of this legislation offering up our own experiences and expertise as guides to how such a program can be ultimately designed and put into practice so that it helps achieve the goals you have so forthrightly put forward.

We strongly applaud and support your recent State of the State initiative to plant 25 million trees in New York over the next decade in order to maintain new forests. As great as this program is, the health, climate and economic benefits from those new trees will not be realized for decades. Allowing state procurement practices to contribute to tropical deforestation is inconsistent with your goals as evinced by the new program. It is another reason why the TREES Act is so urgently needed.

Governor, this is a bill whose time has come. It is a win for the planet, for New York and for New Yorkers. We again urge its signature as soon as possible.

Thank you,

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