Hon. Governor Kathleen Hochul  
NYS Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224  

June 2024

The undersigned organizations representing environmental interests in New York State and internationally are writing to respectfully urge you to sign the New York Tropical Rainforest Economic and Environmental Sustainability Act (S.8898/A9711 Krueger/Zebrowski) into law. As you may know, deforestation is one of the largest drivers of climate change. Currently, an estimated more than 15% of all greenhouse gas emissions result from deforestation and forest degradation, which is a major contributor to climate change.

We know that inaction is not an option: last year, New York experienced storms with record-setting precipitation of up to 8.13 inches in the worst hit areas, resulting in destruction of infrastructure, such as Route 28 in the Adirondacks and the Amtrak and MTA railways along the Hudson River, costing taxpayers millions of dollars.

This bill, if enacted, will ensure any business providing goods or services to New York do not contribute to tropical deforestation or forest degradation and the associated abuses of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in tropical forested regions. By ensuring that the products the New York state government buys do not contribute to the destruction of Earth’s most vital ecosystems, New York will begin to slow the impacts associated with climate change. Governor Hochul chose to prioritize climate mitigation and forest systems this year by directing $47 million to plant 25 million trees. We ask that she continue to lead by these values and use the procurement power of NYS to prevent tropical deforestation.

To be clear, this Act does not place any restrictions on private companies that do not do business with the state of New York. And this Act, being limited in scope to commodities that originate in the tropics, does not impose any restrictions on industrial logging in forests outside the tropics. This Act simply prohibits the state of New York from contributing to deforestation and forest degradation in the tropics through its procurement contracts. This year’s bill contends with and adapts to the Governor’s critiques from last year, making this legislation an even more practical choice for New Yorkers.

Tropical deforestation and degradation is driven primarily by the clearing or industrial logging of forests for the grazing of cattle and the cultivation of soy, palm oil, wood products, cocoa and coffee. It is often linked to human rights abuses including violation of indigenous land tenure and rights, particularly with respect to human rights defenders.
While the focus of the bill is on curbing environmentally harmful business practices, the legislation, if enacted, will not only be beneficial to New York’s fight against climate change but will have a direct and positive impact on the stimulation of New York business, particularly the small and medium sized businesses that drive job creation. The bill is also an economic development initiative as it creates incentives for small, medium sized, women and minority owned as well as companies that source goods using New York state products via a 10% price differential preference program.

In short, this bill is a win-win for New York, for New York-based businesses, for the global climate and for human rights.

Having passed the legislature with a landslide bi-partisan majority, the New York Tropical Rainforest Economic and Environmental Sustainability Act is a heartening sign that New York continues its commitment to combat climate change and pursue environmental justice everywhere.

We respectfully urge Governor Hochul to sign this critical bill into law.

Signed,

350 Brooklyn
ActionAid USA
Agency for Turkana Development Initiatives (ATUDIS)
Asia Indigenous Peoples Network on Extractive Industries and Energy (AIPNEE)
Better Food Foundation
Biodiversity Conservation Center
Brazilian Network for Social Justice and Human Rights
Brighter Green
Build a Better Planet
Canopée
Friends of the Earth El Salvador
Citizens' Climate Lobby Brooklyn
Citizens' Climate Lobby New York State
Climate Change and Environmental Justice Alliance
Climate Reality Project - Western NY Chapter
Climate Reality Project Los Angeles
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Jamaa Resource Initiatives
Jewish Climate Action Network NY Metro
Justice Committee of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet Albany
KaiaUlu Council
Kerio Valley Community Organization (KVCO)
Long Island Progressive Coalition NY
Lower East Side Ecology Center
Mercy for Animals
Mighty Earth
Milieudefensie - Friends of the Earth Netherlands
Movement Rights
Mutasa Youth Forum and Empowerment Trust
National Wildlife Federation
Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)
New Paltz Interfaith Earth Action
New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG)
New York State Council of Churches
New Yorkers for Clean Power
North American Indigenous Center of New York
NY Climate Advocacy Project
NYC Audubon
Oceanic Preservation Society
Onondaga Audubon Center
People of Albany United for Safe Energy (PAUSE)
Pivot Point
ProPurus, Peru
Rainforest Action Network
Re:wild
Rivers & Mountains GreenFaith
Seatuck Environmental Association
Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter
Sierra Leone Land Alliance
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team
Sisters of St. Joseph
Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester
Size of Wales
Slow Food New York State  WESPAC Foundation, Inc.
Social Compassion in Legislation  Western NY Drilling Defense
Society for Responsible Design  Wild Heritage
South Asian Fund for Education Scholarship and Training Inc (SAFEST)  Womens Earth and Climate Action Network
South Bronx Unite  Zero Waste NYC
STAR Kampuchea (SK)
Stop NY Fracked Gas Pipeline
Sustainable Development Institute, Liberia
Sustainable Finger Lakes
Talent des femmes autochtones et rurales
The Climate Reality Project New York State Chapters Coalition
The Long Island Conservancy
The Raven Corps
Think Zero
Third Act Upstate New York
Tompkins County Climate Protection Initiative
WALHI/Friends of the Earth Indonesia
WALHI/Indonesian Forum on the Environment (WALHI)