**Transportation Climate Initiative**

**POLICY TYPE:** Regional Policy/State Policy to be Implemented  
**STATUS:** Ongoing  

**PROBLEM:**  
Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from transportation account for about 29 percent of total U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, making it the largest contributor to U.S. GHG emissions. Between 1990 and 2017, GHG emissions in the transportation sector increased more in absolute terms than any other sector. The Transportation and Climate Initiative (TCI) is a regional collaboration of 13 Northeast and Mid-Atlantic jurisdictions that seek to develop a clean energy economy, improve transportation, and reduce carbon emissions in the transportation sector. Unfortunately, the TCI has not grounded inequity and health principles that will advance the needs of environmental justice and rural communities.

**SOLUTION:**  
WE ACT will introduce and raise awareness to its staff, membership, and the Northern Manhattan community at large about the TCI process and the importance of transportation health and equity. We will advocate that the TCI policy and implementation is centered/grounded in both equity and health, benefiting Northern Manhattan and the broader environmental justice community in both New York State and the TCI region.

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**Beauty Inside Out**

**POLICY TYPE:** Legislation (Safe Cosmetics and Personal Care Products Act of 2019)  
**STATUS:** Introduced/In Committee on Energy and Commerce, Education and Labor  

**PROBLEM:**  
The average American uses roughly 12 personal care products a day, resulting in exposure to an average of 168 unique chemicals. These chemical exposures have been linked to cancer, infertility, miscarriage, poor infant and maternal health outcomes, obesity, asthma, and many other serious health concerns. The number of products used daily is even higher for women of color, who are also disproportionately exposed to more harmful chemicals through personal care products than white women. A 2018 study released by the Breast Cancer Prevention Partners found that the most toxic product it tested was a shampoo called “Just for Me” that is marketed to young black girls and contains carcinogens, hormone disruptors, and other toxicants. The Safe Cosmetics and Personal Care Products Act of 2019 prioritizes environmental justice and would create the first-ever federal grant programs to support the development of safer alternatives to harmful chemicals in professional salon products and products marketed to women of color, and to support research on the marketing and sale of harmful cosmetics to women and girls of color.

**SOLUTION:**  
WE ACT will work in coalition with the Breast Cancer Prevention Partners to engage with the Congressional Black Caucus, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, and the Congressional Progressive Caucus to get more support of the bill. WE ACT has also begun a national
campaign, Beauty Inside Out, to educate women of color in select cities (New York, Washington, Atlanta, and Detroit).

Green New Deal
POLICY TYPE: Policy, Proposed Legislation
STATUS: Resolution Introduced, Complementary Legislation in Early Stages

PROBLEM:
According to The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, climate change is already occurring, and the most recent science suggests that the global temperature is likely to rise to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels between 2030 and 2052. Should warming exceed 2°C above pre-industrial levels before 2100, the impacts of climate change will be extensive and devastating. With increasingly frequent and intense weather catastrophes, sea-level rise, and biodiversity loss, our society will be fundamentally changed, and not necessarily for the better.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE FOCUS:
Understanding the impacts of climate change cannot be done without considering historic disadvantage and current poverty, as the biggest losers from climate change are those who are already vulnerable. If we do not address our current societal inequities, people of color and low-income communities will remain the first to experience the worst impacts of our climate disaster and climate change will only encourage greater disparity between the haves and have-nots.

SOLUTION:
The Green New Deal is one of the most comprehensive plans to address climate change that the federal government has ever entertained. This resolution supports not only achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, but also seeks to radically restructure the economy to work for disadvantaged and oppressed communities. WE ACT endorses this resolution and will work with our allies in Congress to improve the current language around environmental justice communities in order to ensure that this resolution will have maximum efficacy in supporting our communities. WE ACT will continue to engage with various stakeholder groups including labor, green groups, and other aligned climate justice organizations in order to center the needs of communities in the expected suite of bills that will be created to support a Green New Deal.

Addressing Community Health Needs Through Hospital Community Benefits
POLICY TYPE: Regulatory Guidance
STATUS: WE ACT has developed a strategy for how healthcare can reach beyond the four walls of the hospital and address community health needs through community benefit activities that all non-profit hospitals are mandated to provide by the IRS

PROBLEM:
Using community benefits to address the social determinants of health is a tremendous opportunity that is currently underutilized. In the past, hospitals primarily earned their tax-exempt status by fulfilling their community benefits requirements through charity care, inpatient and outpatient care received at a reduced cost for those uninsured or underinsured, and reimbursing Medicaid and Medicare costs. While beneficial, the funding for these costs does not address the source of the most pressing health concerns in the community. However, as coverage has increased following the passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), less money is needed to pay for charity care, and hospitals now have an opportunity to make greater improvements in their communities as a whole.

SOLUTION:
With the uncertainty of the ACA’s future, we must act now to improve hospital community benefits by ensuring they meet the most pressing community health needs. WE ACT will work to leverage relationships with the members of the National Environmental Health Partnership Council and begin dialogue with members of Congress, particularly the Senate Finance Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley who has expressed strong interest in ensuring tax-
exempt hospitals are fulfilling the standards for serving communities and low-income patients as required by law. We hope to host webinars and a congressional briefing on the topic.

**Ban the Box for Green Jobs**
**POLICY TYPE:** Policy Recommendation, Landscape Analysis of Varying Law Applicability  
**STATUS:** Ongoing

**PROBLEM:**
Currently, approximately 70 million people in the United States – nearly one in three adults – are under the supervision of adult correctional systems. Having a record can severely impact one’s ability to find employment, with some studies suggesting that having a criminal record reduces the likelihood of a job callback or offer by approximately 50 percent.

**SOLUTION:**
WE ACT will work in coordination with our Worker Training program leads to survey the participants of our OSHA and SUN programs to 1) determine who is currently experiencing impediments to stable employment due to prior convictions and 2) conduct a focus group to learn about the impacts to our members and then develop a report offering possibly recommendations. We will also survey what policies and laws are currently on the books nationally to see if there is ambiguity in implementation. We will also share the results of our research and focus groups with the Solar Energy Industry Association, the Solar Foundation, and other green energy-focused employers through roundtables, webinars, and congressional briefings.

**Strengthen Ties with Unions around Environmental Justice**
**POLICY TYPE:** Stakeholder Building, Policy Recommendation  
**STATUS:** New, Ongoing

**PROBLEM:**
As the broader environmental and energy community pushed for Green New Deal, it is necessary for the equitable and just principles be included in the creation of job opportunities. An area that needs alignment is that of environmental justice organizations and our labor unions. In many instances, we have been in juxtaposition on issues based on concerns about race and a scarcity mindset for employment. In order for us to ensure that communities of color can equitably participate in the green job sector, we must find resolution to these dicey relationships.

**SOLUTION:**
WE ACT intends to utilize current relationships with New York-based labor organizations and those led by people of color membership to leverage national dialogues on how to create better relationships with environmental justice organizations and organized labor. We will have roundtable discussions across the country and produce recommendations for better relationships.

**Protect Drinking Water from PFAS**
**POLICY TYPE:** Bill  
**STATUS:** Ongoing

**PROBLEM:**
Perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are man-made chemicals that lead to adverse human health effects. The military continues to use PFAS for fire-fighting purposes. Frontline communities who live in or near military bases or industrial facilities where PFAS is manufactured are disproportionately impacted by the presence of PFAS in their drinking water.

**SOLUTION:**
This bill requires the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to address the level of PFAS in drinking water. Specifically, the EPA must publish a maximum contaminant level goal and promulgate a national primary drinking water regulation for total PFAS.