2020 NEW YORK STATE POLICY AGENDA
Campaigns & Initiatives

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES TO POWER CHANGE
**Energy Efficiency Equity & Jobs Act**
POLICY TYPE: Legislation
STATUS: Proposal

**PROBLEM:**
People of color and low-income New Yorkers pay more of their income for energy, and live in disproportionately inefficient, unaffordable, and unhealthy homes. Energy use in the home is a key contributor to climate change and environmental health challenges. Energy efficiency jobs represent a fast-growing industry statewide, but training for those jobs isn’t readily available in our communities.

**SOLUTION:**
WE ACT is working with statewide grassroots groups and policy experts to introduce and pass an Energy Efficiency Equity and Jobs bill. This bill will:

- Require that energy efficiency retrofit money is deployed where it is needed most – in communities of color and low income statewide;
- Fix utility benefit-cost analysis so that people’s health and well-being are at the center of decision making for targeting building retrofits;
- Empower the state to make building repairs that enable efficiency measures;
- Require the state to allocate worker training funds for energy efficiency in communities of color and low income statewide; and
- Require the state energy agency to track actual benefits of energy efficiency retrofit work.

**Mercury in Skin Lightening Products**
POLICY TYPE: Legislation
STATUS: Proposal

**PROBLEM:**
Mercury is a dangerous, persistent neurotoxin. It can cause skin irritation, as well as dizziness, cognitive, and psychological damage. Mercury is used under various different names as a preservative in creams designed to lighten skin color. These products are primarily used by black and brown people.

**SOLUTION:**
WE ACT is working with Assemblymember Carmen De La Rosa to introduce and pass a bill that would ban mercury from all skin lightening products sold in New York State.

**State Energy Spending Study Bill**
POLICY TYPE: Legislation
STATUS: Proposal

**PROBLEM:**
New Yorkers who pay energy bills contribute to the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority’s (NYSERDA) total budget via the Systems Benefit Charge, which is assessed on energy bills. NYSERDA is also funded from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, a regional carbon cap-and-trade initiative that allocates periodic carbon auction proceeds to participating states. Currently, there is no publicly available information on state energy program spending that is tracked by geographic location.
SOLUTION:
WE ACT will propose a bill to track the final geographic destination of all RGGI proceeds and all NYSERDA energy program spending by Zip Code. This would ensure that funds intended to be spent on low-income communities actually go where they are most needed.

Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention and Safe Housing Act (S5107/A3432) (Parker/Bichotte)
POLICY TYPE: Legislation
STATUS: Proposal

PROBLEM:
Lead poisoning of children remains a prevalent and preventable environmental diseases in New York, despite lead-based paint being outlawed in the mid-twentieth century. The danger of exposure is highest for people of color and low income who live disproportionately in older homes with older infrastructure. Elevated blood lead levels result in impairment of the ability to think, concentrate, and learn. Enforcement of the existing state law is not protecting people from lead poisoning.

SOLUTION:
WE ACT will work with our statewide partners to pass the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention and Safe Housing Act. The bill would make enforcement of lead hazard control standards in the state of New York more certain and more effective; create a loan fund to assist owners in complying with lead-safe requirements; provides for inspections and certification of inspectors and remediators; requires registration of affected properties; provides tax credits for remediation; provides for appointment of deputy commissioner of housing and community renewal to oversee provisions; provides for educational programs relating to lead poisoning and abatement.

Fixed Energy Bill Charges Legislation (S6241/A8118) (Metzger/Carroll)
POLICY TYPE: Legislation
STATUS: Bill

PROBLEM:
Utility bills include fixed charges that ensure that the utility makes money from customers even when they aren’t using energy. Having a fixed charge hurts low income people the most, because they tend to use less energy and pay a higher percent of their income on the fixed charge.

SOLUTION:
This bill would ensure that utilities can only include specific kinds of costs when determining the fixed charge for their customers, and should lead to a significant reduction in fixed charges across the state. The bill will reduce energy bills for the average low-income customer and incentivize energy efficiency by reducing the fixed portion of residential customers’ electricity bills.
LIHEAP Reform Advocacy - Program Implementation Plan 2021 or 2022

POLICY TYPE: Budget Proposal
STATUS: In Development

PROBLEM:
Currently, federal dollars are allocated to New York State’s annual budget for heating and cooling subsidies. Funds administered disproportionately support heating needs, particularly in Upstate NY. Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) cooling relief funding (as it currently stands) helps families purchase an air conditioner but is not flexible enough to assist with the operating costs low-income families must endure to power their air conditioner in warmer months.

SOLUTION:
WE ACT will develop a budget proposal for a fund to supplement existing LIHEAP funds for air conditioning electrical costs.

Electric Interconnection Rules and Metering Model Regulations

POLICY TYPE: Regulation
STATUS: Proposal in Development

PROBLEM:
With few exceptions, private utilities control the physical electric infrastructure that New Yorkers rely on for electrical service. As climate change worsens, and extreme weather increasingly stress and degrade the electrical grid, new solutions are necessary to ensure a reliable supply of energy. Effective and reproducible microgrids require changes to the utility regulations that empower communities to build energy infrastructure in support of resiliency.

SOLUTION:
WE ACT, along with partner Rocky Mountain Institute, will develop policy recommendations for solar plus storage, building interconnecting and multi-building electrical and steam connections that are based in WE ACT’s ongoing community research that allows for increased uptake of solar, storage, and interconnection.

Amendment to Reduce PFAS Chemicals in Food Packaging (S2000/A4739)

POLICY TYPE: Bill
STATUS: In Committee (Environmental Conservation)

PROBLEM:
Perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS, refers to a group of inorganic chemicals found in many everyday products that have been linked to reproductive and developmental effects, liver and kidney disruption, immunological disruption, low infant birth weights, increased cholesterol, and cancer. Therefore environmental justice communities are at the greatest risk of PFAS exposure via inexpensive food packaging and products.

SOLUTION:
WE ACT endorses the Amendment to Reduce PFAS Chemicals in Food Packaging. This bill would prohibit the manufacture, sale, and distribution of food packaging in which PFAS chemicals are present in any amount and will hold manufacturers accountable through compliance recertifications for any formula change. This bill, if passed, will help protect our communities from needless exposure to dangerous PFAS chemicals.
Amendment to Prohibit the Manufacturing, Distribution, and Sale of Toys and Child Care Products Containing Phthalates

POLICY TYPE: Bill
STATUS: In Assembly Committee

PROBLEM:
Phthalates are a class of chemicals used to improve the flexibility and durability of products and in cosmetics to bind fragrance to the product. Data has shown that exposure to phthalates is significantly higher in children age 6-11 and in people of color and that oral consumption is a major route of exposure. Phthalates are linked to hormone disruption and developmental disorders. It is unjust that environmental justice communities, especially particularly sensitive populations such as children, continue to be exposed to toxic phthalates despite their known health concerns.

SOLUTION:
WE ACT endorses this amendment which will prohibit the manufacture, distribution, and sale of certain toys and childcare products containing phthalates.