

April 30, 2021

Richard A. Ball, Commissioner
NY State Department of Agriculture and Markets
10B Airline Drive
Albany, NY 12235
Commissioner@agriculture.ny.gov

Re: Farmland Protection Working Group

Dear Commissioner Ball:

On behalf of the Alliance for Clean Energy New York (ACE NY) and our member companies, I am writing to respectfully request that representatives from the renewable energy industry be included in the new Farmland Protection Working Group. ACE NY is a not-for-profit membership organization with a mission to promote the use of clean, renewable electricity technologies, energy efficiency and transportation electrification in New York State, in order to increase energy diversity and security, boost economic development, improve public health, and reduce air pollution.

The enacted 2021-2022 New York State Revenue Budget, which renews the state's commitment to clean energy and achieving the goals of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, includes a provision for the establishment of a Farmland Protection Working Group through the creation of a new subdivision in Section 94-c of the Executive Law. This new working group will recommend strategies to encourage and facilitate municipal input in the renewable energy siting process, and to develop recommendations of approaches to recognize the value of viable agricultural lands and methods to minimize adverse impacts from renewable projects to these lands.

ACE NY, along with our members and many stakeholders, believe strongly that wind energy, distributed solar energy, and utility scale solar energy are all essential elements for achieving the State's 70% renewable energy by 2030 mandate and a zero-emissions electricity system by 2040. Both wind and solar projects can offer farmers steady revenue stream for over a decade, allowing their farm enterprise to continue in production and to endure impacts related to market volatility and economic disruptions. Distributed solar projects can also meet some of the on-site electric demand associated with water pumping and irrigation systems as well as refrigeration systems for milk cooling. With proper planning and input from stakeholders, solar development offers our agricultural community the chance to reinvest in their operations and remain in farming.

As you know, this new working group will include the commissioner of the Department of Agriculture and Markets, the commissioner of the Department of Environmental Conservation, the commissioner of the Department of Public Service, President of the New York State Energy

Research and Development Authority and the Director of the Office of Renewable Energy Siting as well as local government officials, municipal organizations, and representatives from at least two county agriculture and farmland protection boards. **While this represents a valuable range of perspectives, we feel strongly that the task force must also include representation from the renewable energy industry especially given the respected and extensive experience that clean energy companies have with the co-location of agriculture and renewable energy infrastructure and with engagement with local governments.**

Thank you for considering our thoughts on this important issue and I would be interested in discussing with you further.

Sincerely,

Anne Reynolds
Executive Director

Cc:

Doreen M. Harris, President & CEO, NY State Energy Research and Development Authority
John Howard, Interim Chair, NY State Department of Public Service
Basil Seggos, Commissioner, NY State Department of Environmental Conservation
Houtan Moaveni, Deputy Executive Director, NY State Office of Renewable Energy Siting