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June 28, 2023

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Re: Agrivoltaics Research Program bill (S.7081/A.4911)

Dear Governor Hochul,

We write to respectfully ask you to sign [S.7081](#) / [A.4911](#), sponsored by Senator Hinchey and Assemblymember Kelles, into law. This legislation, by amending the Agriculture and Markets Law, would establish an agrivoltaics research program to develop innovative science-based solutions to facilitate the co-location of crops and photovoltaics while promoting the biodiversity of endemic flora and fauna. The New York State College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell University will be responsible for developing the program and will be tasked with conducting, supporting, and developing technologies and management strategies, along with verifications systems to facilitate the sustainable and resilient co-location of crops and photovoltaics.

New York needs both farms and solar power. New York State should encourage both, so that farmers can have additional income and New York can have cleaner power. This proposed agrivoltaics research program can help to achieve this vision. Collaboration between the renewable energy industry and the farming community can advance the objectives of NY's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act while preserving the State's vital agricultural sector. Through the co-location of solar panels on farmland, agrivoltaics and dual-use solar can deliver a much-needed boost to farm income – for example, by facilitating a landowner's ability to lease their land – and can improve soil health, increase biodiversity protection, stabilize farm revenues, create construction jobs and bolster the local economy.

The program would research a range of aspects, including, but not limited to, crop varieties and/or livestock suitable for agrivoltaics; siting design considerations and array installation techniques compatible with agricultural co-location and/or biodiversity conservation; and integration of digital and robotic technologies. In addition to, and concurrently, the program would study socio-economics through research trials and published recommendations. A key part of the program would be conducting and demonstrating successful cropping and livestock systems and technologies through pilots located across the state and featuring private and public sector partnerships to evaluate, determine, and recommend strategies to enable agrivoltaics. The inclusion of renewable energy developers would be particularly important with these pilots. Also, the Cornell Cooperative Extension System would be utilized for the transfer of knowledge gained from this research, and annual reports will be prepared and distributed to the public.

ACE NY – which participates in the New York State Agricultural Technical Working Group and the State’s Farmland Protection Working Group – believes this research can be carried out in a manner that won’t interfere with the pace of renewable energy project construction and the state’s ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reach its clean energy goals.

Thank you for your consideration of our recommendation on this important issue.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Anne Reynolds".

Anne Reynolds
Executive Director, Alliance for Clean Energy New York

Cc:

Senator Michelle Hinchey, Chair of the Standing Committee on Agriculture

Assemblymember Dr. Anna R. Kelles

John O’Leary, Deputy Secretary for Energy & Environment, Executive Chamber