MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT OF

A.9508-A / S.7508-A (Part JJ) - Executive Budget

In Relation to accelerating the growth of renewable energy facilities to meet

NY’s climate action and clean energy goals

March 16, 2020

The Binghamton Regional Sustainability Coalition (BRSC) strongly supports legislation that would improve and accelerate the siting of renewable energy projects, knowing that without additional renewable electricity generation capacity in NYS, our state will never meet the nation-leading goals established in the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act enacted by the Legislature in 2019. NYS has 10 years to achieve the 70% renewable electricity mandate and it now takes 5 – 10 years to develop a solar or wind project and make it through the permitting process.

Part JJ of the proposed Executive Budget would create a permitting process for renewable energy projects (> than 25MW, or > than 10 MW if a project opts in) with similar strong protections for the environment as NYS has currently. Proposed projects would still have to abide by local laws or obtain a waiver based on a local law being “unreasonably burdensome,” as is the case under the current Article 10 process. Part JJ expands economic development and community benefits for renewable energy. In addition, the State will make ready under-utilized properties for development by renewable energy companies, and the Bill addresses electricity transmission bottlenecks.

BRSC supports this Bill because we have seen ‘astroturf’ groups and a few loud voices in our largely rural region using false information to undermine projects that would benefit schools, municipalities, suppliers and the local workforce. That being said, its important that as much local benefit as possible from these projects is realized. Requiring that local residents be given discounted electricity is a great step in the right direction. In future, we would like to see the funding of pro-active education and workforce development programs in the schools across the state which would prepare both youth and folks now in the workforce for clean energy jobs. Modifying existing regulations, including for Community Choice Aggregation, so that municipal or cooperative ownership of these assets becomes possible is another step we would strongly recommend. Increasing the local stake in these projects will ultimately be the strongest guarantee that projects will be welcomed.

Part JJ improves the efficiency of review and permitting process without sacrificing environmental protection. The Proposal has the similar environmental protections as the current permitting process. Local governments can weigh in during the process; it has the same provision for projects to comply with local laws as Article 10, and it sets aside intervenor funds for municipal governments to hire the experts they may need.

BRSC is a community-based non-profit that brings together regional partners to make our area more resilient, prosperous and equitable. For more information on our support of this Bill, contact Adam Flint at 607-873-9220 or AdamFlint@SouthernTierSolarWorks.org

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