



Clean Air Coalition of Greater Ravena-Coeymans, NY

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via email

July 7, 2021

re: A2591A - LECCLA, Low Embodied Carbon Concrete Leadership Act

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor:

We are asking you to veto bill, A2591A, concerning the procurement of low embodied carbon concrete in State funded projects. The Clean Air Coalition of Greater Ravena-Coeymans, along with its partner organizations, believes the bill will support the cement industry at the expense of the environment, the climate and public health without reducing concrete's CO₂ footprint.

REASONS TO VETO THIS BILL

There are three reasons to veto this bill.

1) Definition: the bill does not define "low-embodied carbon concrete"

The bill sets no goals or standards defining low carbon concrete. Without a clear standard, "low-embodied carbon concrete" is more likely to reflect current industry norms than achieve any serious reduction of CO₂ from concrete. A cubic yard of concrete is currently responsible for 400 lbs of CO₂¹. How much less CO₂/cubic yard constitutes "low-embodied carbon concrete"?

2) Office of General Services (OGS): The bill creates a unfunded mandate for the OGS and establishes an OGS Stakeholder Group that lacks representation from all key stakeholders.

This bill tasks OGS with administering the Act and presiding over a Stakeholder Advisory Group, but offers no additional funding. Moreover, the Advisory Group lacks representation from key stakeholders, such as environmental groups who are expert in cement industry pollution or independent medical professionals who study the effects of air pollution on health. Instead, this bill relies heavily on the advice from stakeholders with vested interests in the cement industry. This effectively reduces your government's control over public health and public policy.

3) Solid waste: The bill opens the door to replacing fossil fuels with highly polluting solid waste, including old tires, and using potentially toxic waste in concrete mixes.

¹ See the Carbon Footprint of Concrete [here](#), quoting research from the World Business Council for Sustainable Development in Geneva.

By using industry insiders to advise the OGS, this bill opens the door to replacing fossil fuels with highly polluting solid waste, including old tires and municipal waste, a long-standing cement industry goal and practice.² Burning waste produces large quantities of hazardous pollutants like dioxins/furans and heavy metals, often carried on nano-scale particles. Such particles lodge in the lung, brain and other organs, leading to premature death and disability in all age groups. Research also shows that waste as fuel can actually increase CO₂ emissions. When recycled fly ash is added to cement and ground, it generates an inhalable and hazardous toxic dust.

OTHER ISSUES

Total emissions in concrete must include CO₂ from cement production.

"Low carbon concrete" must factor in the total emissions of producing concrete, including CO₂ from cement production which is responsible for 80% of the embodied CO₂ in concrete. The CO₂ embodied in concrete is hard to reduce, as 60% comes from the chemical conversion of limestone to cement. The balance comes from fossil fuels whose intense heat is also hard to replace, but essential to cement production.

Carbon capture, use and storage (CCUS) promises to reduce CO₂, but never delivers. Like the fossil fuel industry, the cement industry has long supported carbon capture, use and storage. Neither industry has meaningfully utilized CCUS which remains a promise that can only be kept with expensive government support and long delays as the technology is developed.

Cement kilns in New York State are far less regulated than other waste industries.

Air pollution is measured as milligrams per cubic meter of flue gas. However, cement kilns emit much more flue gas than other waste industries, producing more toxins which are inadequately controlled by industry's current air control devices.

SUMMING UP

Our Coalition endorses the reduction of CO₂ in concrete, but this bill will not achieve that goal. To be effective, the Stakeholder Advisory Group needs to represent ALL interested parties, not just industry allies, and needs to reduce toxic air pollution as well as CO₂ emissions. A truly representative stakeholder group that looks at both reducing both CO₂ and toxic air pollution would make New York a leader while reducing conflict and increasing public well-being.

We respectfully ask that you veto this bill.

Yours sincerely,

350NYC
Bronx Climate Justice North
Clean Air Action Network (CAAN), Glens Falls
Clean Air Coalition of Greater Ravana-Coeymans
Food and Water Watch
Friends of the Mahicantuck!
Gas Free Seneca
Greening USA

² LafargeHolcim already burns solid waste [outside the USA](#) and tried to do the same at Lafarge Holcim in Ravana, NY in 2017. See [article](#) in the Times Union, March 19, 2019.

Lights Out Norlite
North Bronx Racial Justice
Pause - People of Albany United for Safe Energy
Rensselaer Environmental Coalition
Saratoga Sites against Norlite Emissions
Seneca Lake Guardian
UU Congregation of Binghamton, Green Sanctuary
Zero Waste Capital District



cc: Basil Seggos, Commissioner New York Department of Environmental Conservation
cc: Roanne Destito, Commissioner, Office of General Services
cc: Paul Tonko, Congressman, U.S. Congress, CDs NY 20
cc: Michelle Hinchey, Senator NY Senate, District 46
cc: Pat Fahy, Assemblywoman, NY Assembly, District 109