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The Blake Annex | 1 Steuben Place | Albany, NY 12207  
518.465.4162 | [www.lwvny.org](http://www.lwvny.org) | email: [lwvny@lwvny.org](mailto:lwvny@lwvny.org)

**MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT**  
**S278A(Gounardes)/A1559A (Simon)**

**To:** New York State Senate Re: S278A/A1559A

**Date:** May 2024

**Re:** An Act to amend the education law, in relation to establishing a course of instruction and learning expectations on climate education in all public pre-kindergarten, elementary and secondary schools which shall include various principles including environmental justice.

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan grassroots organization working to register and empower voters and defend democracy through advocacy and education at all levels of government. When the League was established in 1919, six months before the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment was ratified, it did so with the understanding that participating in democracy requires an educated voter.

The League has a long history of education and advocacy in policy making to preserve the environment, protect natural resources: air, water and soil and promote human health, all of which are threatened with climate change. In 2023, the League of Women Voters U. S. endorsed the Children’s Fundamental Rights and Climate Recovery Resolution, “which recognizes the disproportionate impact of the climate crisis on the health, economic opportunities, and fundamental rights of children...” The fundamental rights of our children include a safe environment and the educational tools with which to address and resolve the climate challenges as engaged citizens and members of the work force.

The League of Women Voters has declared climate change an emergency. The Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) which was signed into New York law on July 18, 2019, commits the State to reduce greenhouse emissions and reach net - zero emissions in New York State. The CLCPA’s goals include reducing greenhouse gas emissions to 40% below 1990 levels by 2030 and to 85% below 1990 levels by 2050. The remaining 15% reduction would be achieved through offset practices such as carbon sequestration by planting trees.

The NYS Climate Action Council Final Scoping Plan prepared to implement the CLCPA expressly acknowledges the need for “P-12 curricula to include climate change education.” (See CLCPA Scoping Plan at page 427).<sup>1</sup>

New Jersey, New York’s neighbor to the south, and Connecticut, New York’s neighbor to the north, each legally mandate a form of climate education for k-12 public school students. New York State asserts its leadership role to address the challenges associated with a warming climate

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<sup>1</sup> <file:///C:/Users/Elisabeth/Downloads/NYS-Climate-Action-Council-Final-Scoping-Plan-2022.pdf>

through the CLCPA; yet, despite the mandates of the CLCPA and the climate impacts, such as flooding, New Yorkers experience with regularity, New York has not yet legally committed to teaching our students the concepts and skills necessary to address the myriad challenges presenting by a warming climate.

Consistent with the League's mission to educate the public on matters of import, the League endorses the goal of the Climate Education Bill S278A/A1559A to "Establish a course of instruction and learning expectations on climate education in all public pre-kindergarten, elementary and secondary schools which shall include various principles and concepts including environmental justice."

The League of Women Voters of New York seeks this commonsense preparation of our next generation of citizens and leaders as a necessary correlate to successfully implement the goals under the CLCPA.

**To this end, the League strongly urges your support of the Climate Education Bill (A.8866/S.8357).**