The Honorable Thomas P. DiNapoli
Office of the New York State Comptroller
Albany, New York

Re: Fossil Fuels Divestment Act
Honorable Comptroller DiNapoli,

We, the faith based community of Western New York, are asking for you to commit to the divestment of the NY state Common Retirement Fund (CRF) from fossil fuels similar to what would be called for in the Fossil Fuels Divestment Act. This would be a meaningful and critically important way for the state of New York and CRF to address global warming.

All of our faiths acknowledge the gift of creation. We have a responsibility to care for our common home and have been called to action to protect the earth by many, including Pope Francis the 2015 encyclical, 

Laudato Si’. We write to affirm the faith community’s grave concern over the threat climate change in general, and fossil fuel extraction and use in particular, pose to our common home and to the poor and vulnerable here and around the world.

As citizens of the state of New York, we strongly encourage you to commit the CRF to divesting from fossil fuels. We acknowledge and appreciate your concern to tackle climate crisis with shareholder engagement. It is a worthy commitment, but we must respectfully recognize that there is great urgency and moreover, this method is not proving effective to influence fossil fuel producers such as those listed in the CU200. Church leaders are well aware of the hypocrisy of the fossil fuel industry that continues to search for new fossil fuel reserves disregarding the Paris Agreement which they claim to support. That is why over 1,000 organizations have already divested from fossil fuel corporations, with more joining every month.

Divestment, and the process and public engagement it involves, is a way to redefine society’s moral code. From this perspective, it is an important tool to de-legitimize and de-normalize the fossil fuel industry, creating a moral turning point within society and emboldening or pressuring political leaders to address issues they had previously avoided.

The magnitude of the climate crisis requires bold decisions. Through the introduction of the Fossil Fuels Divestment Act, New York is showing that there is strong interest in the state in divesting. Through your decision to divest, New York and the CRF could play an important role in altering the current fossil fuel business model, one that is in fundamental conflict with life on earth. We hope that through taking this step and demonstrating its role as a leader, New York might be recalled as one of the institutions that contributed to changing the course, for Creation and all who share it.

Yours faithfully,

Sister Eileen O’Connor, Co-Convenor, ICJC of WNY
Roger Cook, Riverside-Salem United Church of Christ/Disciples, Co-Convenor, ICJC of WNY