

**TESTIMONY OF THE MAYOR'S OFFICE  
BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL  
COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION  
HEARING ON THE RENEWABLE RIKERS ACT**

*Wednesday, January 29, 2020*

**Presented by:**

**Daniel Zarrilli, Chief Climate Policy Advisor & OneNYC Director  
NYC Office of the Mayor**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

Good afternoon. My name is Daniel Zarrilli, and I am the Mayor's Chief Climate Policy Advisor and OneNYC Director. I am joined today by my colleagues, Susanne DesRoches, Deputy Director for Infrastructure and Energy at the Mayor's Office of Sustainability and the Mayor's Office of Resiliency, and Pam Elardo, Deputy Commissioner for the Bureau of Wastewater Treatment at the Department of Environmental Protection.

I would like to thank Committee Chair Constantinides and all of the members of the Environmental Protection committee for inviting us here on behalf of the Mayor to provide testimony on the Renewable Rikers Act. Thank you for the opportunity to testify about the exciting opportunity that we have in front of us to collectively reimagine the future of Rikers Island.

Today, I intend to briefly discuss the City's work to confront our climate crisis, decarcerate our criminal justice system, and close the Rikers Island jail complex, demonstrating the commitment to justice that binds these actions together, while ensuring that all New Yorkers' voices are heard and considered as we chart a path together to reimagine the future of Rikers Island.

**II. CONFRONTING OUR CLIMATE CRISIS**

The three bills in the Renewable Rikers Act recognize the reality that our city faces a clear climate emergency. In fact, we are already seeing the effects of global warming—not only on a national and global level, but here on our own streets. Hurricane Sandy proved that climate change is already impacting our health, our communities, and our built and natural environments, with a disproportionate burden falling on the city's most vulnerable populations. And it will only get worse if we fail to act.

New York City is rising to the challenge. Thanks to the leadership of Mayor de Blasio and this City Council, we have become a global leader in the fight against climate change. With your help, we have locked in the actions necessary to achieve a 40% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 on the road to achieving carbon neutrality by 2050 and securing 100 percent clean electricity by 2040.

And we're confronting the climate crisis in a just and equitable way. True climate solutions must be grounded in equity, as climate justice must go hand-in-hand with economic and social justice. Planning for the future of Rikers Island perfectly illustrates the alignment of these goals.

### **III. CLOSING RIKERS ISLAND**

As we all know, New York City is committed to operating a safe, fair, and humane criminal justice system and to ending the painful legacy of the Rikers Island Correctional Facility. Driven by these priorities and having heard from our communities, the City is committed to closing the Rikers Island jail complex by 2026.

The City Council and Mayor have been working together to ensure that the Island is never used for incarceration after this date. Two jail facilities have already been closed, and one additional jail facility will be closed by the end of March 2020 as part of the City's ongoing commitment to end mass incarceration. With the full closure of the jail complex, 400 acres of public land will become available for repurposing, creating a truly remarkable, once-in-a-generation opportunity to reimagine a Rikers Island that serves all New Yorkers and turns the page on a painful history.

### **IV. ONENYC 2050**

In April 2019, Mayor Bill de Blasio released *OneNYC 2050*, New York City's Green New Deal to confront our climate crisis, achieve equity, and strengthen our democracy. Recognizing this opportunity, OneNYC includes a commitment to launch a participatory planning effort through which New Yorkers will help formulate a new vision for Rikers Island.

In that document, the City outlined four key principles that are critical to the future of Rikers Island. In our mind, it is essential that future uses on the island create broad public benefits; help our city meet urgent goals such as climate justice, economic equity, and fairness; help redress past harm to justice-impacted communities; and, where possible, improve waterfront access in this underinvested portion of our coastline. It is also essential that all voices are heard and considered, including the many New Yorkers impacted by the criminal justice system.

## V. A NEW VISION FOR RIKERS ISLAND

Building on these key OneNYC principles, the goals of the Renewable Rikers Act, and the leadership of the Renewable Rikers coalition, the Mayor has been working closely with the City Council to develop a plan for New Yorkers to shape the future of Rikers Island. Soon, the Mayor will sign an Executive Order outlining a process to engage the public and convene stakeholders to develop a community-built vision for repurposing the island consistent with the principles laid out in OneNYC.

This Executive Order will chart out a path for a participatory planning effort, providing an exciting opportunity to not only reimagine a brighter future for over 400 acres of land with a painful history, but also to bring together communities all across New York City to collaboratively shape our city.

Over the coming months, the OneNYC team will be laying the groundwork to launch this participatory planning effort, a robust, multi-stage engagement process that ensures all New Yorkers' voices are heard to develop a community-built vision. The effort will include an Advisory Board, public meetings across the city, the collection of online and in-person comments, and a public timeline for completion of the vision.

This work will aim to generate a new vision for Rikers Island, in a way that informs any future uses, consistent with the OneNYC principles. The work will establish priorities for the future for Rikers Island, study the viability of potential future uses, and recommend potential use options and implementation pathways, including any necessary transfers of property to other agencies. It may also identify opportunities for community uses in neighborhoods off of Rikers Island that may benefit from co-location of uses on the island. This community-built vision will hear and consider the voices of New York City communities, elected officials, stakeholders, and agencies, and will be a first step in the broader master planning process for the future use of Rikers Island.

The Advisory Board will be convened to offer guidance and expert advice on the participatory process, the various proposed future use options, and the final vision. It will be comprised of the Speaker of the New York City Council, or their designee, and stakeholders representing key communities invested in the future of the island. This may include Queens and Bronx communities, individuals with a lived experience of the justice system, justice organizations, environmental organizations, planning organizations, labor organizations, communities with borough-based jails, communities facing environmental justice challenges, communities housing City infrastructure, and communities that have been historically targeted by the criminal justice system. We look forward to convening this Advisory Board soon.

## **VI. INTRO 1592**

I will now to turn the pieces of legislation we are considering today. To determine the appropriate agency to oversee Rikers Island, the Island's future use must first be decided. The Mayor's Executive Order will require that the vision for the future of Rikers Island include a proposal and schedule for transferring jurisdiction and management of all or portions of the land and facilities from the Department of Correction to an appropriate City agency or agencies as that property is removed from uses connected to incarceration. We believe that this participatory planning process be finished prior to any final determinations regarding transfer of jurisdiction. Therefore, we do not support Intro 1592 as written at this time, but we do support, and intend to perform, much of the work recommended in Intro 1592 to conduct appropriate planning as described above.

## **VII. INTROS 1591 AND 1593**

To ensure that discussions in the participatory planning effort are informed, productive, and grounded in science, assessments will be needed of current use limitations on the Island and of the comparative benefits and challenges of future use options. It will also require analyses of potential future uses to assess technical feasibilities, impacts to the city and communities, and interactions with current city infrastructure planning processes.

For these reasons, we are in support of Intros 1591 and 1593, which study the potential uses of renewable energy and wastewater treatment on the Island. The analyses that will result from the bills will play a key role in ensuring that New Yorkers are informed in discussions to develop a new vision for Rikers Island. In addition to analyzing these two options, the City may also conduct analyses on other potential uses for feasibility on the Island.

Intro 1591 would require DEP or another agency to study the feasibility of locating a Wastewater Resource Recovery Facility on Rikers Island. The City supports this idea. DEP has already proposed studying the feasibility of such a project. A new facility that could replace one or more existing facilities would allow us to design and construct a modern plant that builds on our legacy of state-of-the art wastewater treatment processes and frees up existing sites for other community uses. A feasibility study would be necessary to inform a more formal siting process.

The study required by Intro 1593 will analyze the feasibility of constructing different types of renewable energy sources combined with battery storage on Rikers Island. The City supports this idea and is very interested in the possibilities of siting sustainability and resiliency infrastructure on a reimagined Rikers Island. We look forward to conducting this analysis in tandem with the Long Term Energy Plan required by Local Law 248 of 2017 and Local Law 099 of 2019. In accordance with these laws, the City is evaluating the current energy systems and pathways to enable carbon neutrality by 2050 and identifying policies and programs needed to achieve these



goals while balancing sustainability, resiliency, affordability, and equity. We look forward to working with the Council to increase renewables and energy storage in NYC.

## **VIII. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Thank you to the members of this Committee for your time today and for your continuous work to ensure that we serve as a global leader in confronting our climate crisis and promote environmental justice as we work to close Rikers Island and reimagine the future of this public asset. I would like to give special thanks to Councilmember Constantinides, who has been instrumental in driving the conversation on Rikers Island with the many advocates who are here today. He has organized town halls and events, mobilizing an active base of New Yorkers who are already engaged in shaping the future of Rikers Island. We are deeply grateful to the Councilmember and to the Renewable Rikers coalition for all of their important work on this issue. We are strongly in support of Intros 1591 and 1593, and look forward to working with you all to reimagine a brighter future for Rikers Island that serves all New Yorkers, supports our work to confront our climate crisis, and helps us to build a truly fair and just city.

Thank you.



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On the ground – and at the table

## **New York City Environmental Justice Alliance testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Environmental Protection in support of Intro 1591, Intro 1592, and Intro 1593.**

January 28th, 2020

Good afternoon Chairperson Constantinides and Members of the City Council. The New York City Environmental Justice Alliance (NYC-EJA) is a citywide membership network linking grassroots organizations from low-income neighborhoods and communities of color in their struggle for environmental justice. Through our efforts, member organizations coalesce around specific common issues that threaten the ability of low-income communities of color to thrive, and coordinate campaigns designed to affect City and State policies, including energy policies directly impacting our communities.

Climate justice is based on the principle that frontline communities are most vulnerable to climate change and, therefore, must play an integral role in planning for the renewable and regenerative energy economy. These are communities where climate vulnerabilities intersect with historic patterns of environmental burdens, many of which could be ameliorated through equitable energy policies and strategic investments. The massive systems change required to stave off dangerous climate change impacts and public health hazards requires a consideration of the unique vulnerabilities facing environmental justice communities.

New York City is home to 16 peaker plants, many with multiple generating units, both publicly and privately owned. These highly polluting, fossil fuel power plants known as “peakers” fire up in the South Bronx, Sunset Park, and other communities of color on the hottest days of the year, when air quality is at its worst, and sensitive populations are warned to stay indoors. Peakers then spew even more harmful emissions into neighborhoods already overburdened by pollution and exacerbating widespread health problems.

Many of these plants, particularly the largest, oldest, most polluting plants, are owned by out-of-state private developers, taking these billions of dollars in wealth out of these communities. Instead, New York City government can use public land to invest locally renewable energy and energy storage that could meet peak demand needs, reduce electric bills and provide local resilient power. Renewable and resilient energy systems will advance energy democracy, reduce energy cost burdens, improve air quality, strengthen the resiliency of their communities, and capture the community and workforce benefits sustainable systems can deliver. To this end, Intro 1593 is critical as it helps New York City assess the potential different types of renewable energy sources combined with battery storage within one year. We need to ensure we are prioritizing our accelerated timetable for meeting our emission reduction targets.

Additionally, Intro 1592 sends a clear message that Riker’s Island will be used for environmental purposes by transferring jurisdiction from the NYC Department of Corrections to the NYC Departments of Environmental Protection (DEP). As part of this effort, we should also seek to understand how a large-scale renewable energy will be owned and managed by the agency, as well as set standards for the jobs creation and potential

subscriber benefits to new system. Moreover, Intro 1591 can provide us with more information on the feasibility of other critical pieces of infrastructure, including a wastewater treatment facility, organic waste processing, and large-scale composting operations. The development of a state of the art anaerobic digester, alongside composting operations, would also provide the opportunity to process large quantities of organic waste diverted from landfill and incinerators, therefore helping to combat climate change and furthering the City's zero waste goals.

As we envision a Renewable Riker's, New York City must ensure that the former sites of polluting infrastructure on our waterfront land can be used for resilient industrial uses based on local needs, as well as other community defined priorities.

We support Renewable Rikers because it is an opportunity to help heal communities that have been overburdened by poor air quality, over policing, and the criminalization of our communities.

New York City's current electricity generation and organic waste management are polluting, antiquated, and inequitable. The recent passage of the New York State Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act serves as a catalyst to move us toward a renewable energy and sustainable future, and we must collectively recognize the opportunity to re-envision Riker's Island as a demonstration of a Just Transition in New York City.





## Renewable Rikers Testimony

Today I stand here representing THE POINT CDC, the Hunts Point neighborhood and the larger South Bronx community in supporting the transformation of the penal colony that has been Rikers Island into a hub for renewable energy and sustainable infrastructure through the Renewable Rikers Act. A stone's throw away from the coast of Hunts Point, Rikers Island; a 413-acre island has for decades been an eerie, dark space where so many of our youth and community members have been confined to because of an inequitable and unjust criminal justice system. The South Bronx has for decades been characterized for its accumulation of polluting infrastructure, high public health concerns and high concentration of social services such as homeless shelters, detention centers and rehabilitation clinics.

The closing of Rikers Island, should be seen as an opportunity to potentially meet many of the State, Citywide and local community needs, through community-driven and restorative justice initiatives that seek to advance climate action. The Renewable Rikers Act will allow for renewable energy and energy storage technology and other sustainable infrastructure on Rikers Island. As our City moves to meet its rigorous climate and sustainability goals, with an ever-growing population and density- we must find truly sustainable solutions that meet our community's needs and which are developed for the benefit of those most marginalized and disadvantaged from the previous penal colony that was Rikers Island.

In 2000, the New York Power Authority expedited the siting of several peaker-plants throughout NYC- including four in the South Bronx. These peaker-plants- which were supposed to be temporary, 18 years later continue to operate and pollute our already suffering environments during moments when our City has high energy demands- yet the communities where these peaker-plants are sited are the same ones who struggle with energy utility bills and who benefit the less. The Renewable Rikers Act can help facilitate the closing of the polluting energy plants and increase our reliance on renewable energy, while helping to clean our bodies of water by increasing wastewater treatment potential in our city. These bills have the potential to transform a toxic wasteland into a space that meets community, citywide and State needs. However; it is important that the future of Rikers Island honors those most marginalized and disadvantaged from its previous uses and that it is reimagined considering those communities nearest and most harmed by it, especially all those who have in some way been impacted by a school to prison cycle and the City owes the community restorative justice. The future of Rikers should not be determined by the real-estate industry or the expansion of airport infrastructure; rather its future should be one that is determined by the community and its victims and which moves our city towards a renewable, sustainable and regenerative future.





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**Testimony of Melissa Iachan at  
City Council Committee on Environmental Protection  
Hearing on Intro 1591, 1592, 1593  
January 29, 2020**

Good afternoon, my name is Melissa Iachan, and I am a Senior Staff Attorney in the Environmental Justice Program at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (“NYLPI”). NYLPI’s environmental justice program works with communities who have shouldered the disproportionate burden of pollution in our City for decades. I am pleased to be here today to voice NYLPI’s strong support of the three bills collectively known as “the Renewable Rikers Act”: Intro 1591, 1592, and 1593. Thank you Chair Constantinides and Committee members for championing these bills in response to the years of dialogue and advocacy many groups have engaged in to reimagine the future of Rikers Island.

The Renewable Rikers Act is the first step to turn the Renewable Rikers vision into a reality. For more than three years, grassroots and community groups, criminal justice advocates, formerly incarcerated individuals, and other advocacy organizations including NYLPI have worked together to push the City to close Rikers Island’s jails and reinvest in the communities most directly impacted by the criminal justice system. NYLPI’s environmental justice work is what brought us to join the #CLOSERikers efforts. It is common knowledge that the jails are built on a decomposing landfill, plagued with methane leaks and contaminated soil. About four years ago, NYLPI undertook a large-scale project to investigate potential health implications to detainees from environmental conditions. We uncovered serious problems with water contamination and access to clean running water:

- Sewage issues including sewer line breaks occurring consistently for 5-year period surveyed;
- An enormous amount of plumbing-related work orders. There were 321 plumbing work orders per inmate from 2015-2017. That means roughly 107 work orders per inmate per year, or one work order every three days per inmate;
- Many work orders clearly indicated systemic problems, such as leaking from the wall, and multiple cells being without water, or flooding, at the same time.



We concluded that there are systemic plumbing problems on Rikers Island that are likely aggravated by subsidence of the landfill-based soil. These problems deprive thousands of New York City residents of basic human rights regarding access to water and sanitary living conditions. Not only are thousands of New York City residents denied basic human rights, but taxpayers pay hundreds of millions of dollars a year to maintain this unjust and failed system. Our findings reinforced the need to shutter the penal colony on Rikers as soon as possible.

Two years ago, in partnership with JustLeadershipUSA, NYLPI convened a subcommittee of the more than 170 partners in the #CLOSERikers coalition to explore how a future where Rikers Island jails are closed could meaningfully benefit impacted communities, with a focus on health, wellness, and environmental justice. Community members and organizations came together and agreed that the most just solution for future use of the Island would be to build sustainable and renewable infrastructure that would shift burdens out of environmental justice communities, while moving our City to a cleaner and greener future.

Underlying this agreement is the basic premise that any future use of Rikers must benefit the communities most impacted by Rikers Island and our City's unjust system of overincarceration. The Renewable Rikers vision would do just that. New sustainable and green infrastructure on Rikers Island can replace polluting facilities in these same communities. That would open up space within these communities that residents can use as they see fit, whether for green space, community services, or affordable housing.

The Renewable Rikers Act is the first step towards making this vision a reality. Intro 1591 directs the City to undertake a feasibility study of what it would take to construct a state-of-the-art wastewater treatment plant on Rikers Island. Such a plant could have more capacity than the current aging plants sited in low income communities and communities of color, and be constructed adjacent to an anaerobic digester, where the sludge from the plant could be utilized for localized renewable energy. Furthermore, as we've seen in a much smaller scale with the facility in Newtown Creek, organic waste could be diverted from landfill to also be processed by the anaerobic digester. This system could provide sufficient power for the Island, and add renewable energy into the local grid to assist our transition off fossil fuels.



Intro 1591 should be amended to ensure that any feasibility study look at the possibilities of organic waste processing for the anaerobic digester in tandem with a wastewater treatment plant, as well as further organics processing via expanded composting occurring on the Island. Creating significant organics processing capacity on Rikers would allow the City to move closer to its zero waste goals, as well as potentially close some truck-based transfer stations in communities of color such as the South Bronx. The closure of these poorly-sited transfer stations would mean cleaner air for environmental justice communities—the very same communities where incarceration rates have been highest.

Intro 1593 directs the City to conduct a similar feasibility study related to how much renewable energy could be generated and stored on the Island using large-scale solar arrays and battery storage. Preliminary estimates indicate that even devoting just 100 of the 413 acres at Rikers to solar energy and storage could allow many of the City’s fossil fuel burning peaker plants sited in environmental justice communities to permanently close. These highly polluting power plants, which fire up during times of peak electricity demand, often on hot sunny days when air quality is already poor, are disproportionately located in communities like the South Bronx, Sunset Park, Eastern Queens and the Rockaways – again, many of the same neighborhoods where incarceration rates have been high. They can emit up to 20 times the levels of Nitrogen Oxides (NOx) as other power plants, contributing to elevated ozone levels that can lead to more than 400 premature deaths, 850 hospitalizations for asthma and 4,500 emergency department visits for asthma each year. Ozone’s health impacts are disproportionately borne by low-income New Yorkers.

The climate crisis, and New York’s newly enacted Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, make it a necessity for us to phase out fossil fuel peaker plants entirely and replace them with renewable energy and battery storage. The 413 acres of Rikers Island provide a critical resource for New York City to generate renewable energy – and do so in a way that directly benefits overburdened communities. The study commissioned by Intro 1593 is the first step towards us being able to really break our reliance on fossil fuels.

Finally, Intro 1592 is the cornerstone of the package of bills, because this is the only piece of legislation to truly hold the City accountable to its promise to close the abysmal penal colony on Rikers, and move the City towards a cleaner, greener

future. Together with the more than 40 other organizations who signed our letter of support, NYLPI is strongly supportive of seeing Intro 1592 become law, mandating that within five years, control and possession of Rikers Island formally and finally leave the Department of Corrections. Instead, the Department of Environmental Protection should serve as coordinating agency to ensure that the Island be used to benefit those communities who have suffered the legacy of Rikers these many years – and benefit the city as a whole. We do think that Intro 1592 should be amended to explicitly account for other agencies needed to coordinate with DEP to ensure that all of the many uses the Renewable Rikers vision has for the Island can be manifested most efficiently and effectively, and to allow for the flexibility we will need over the next few years of planning. Additional agencies we envision being involved include DSNY, DCAS, DOB, and DDC, to name a few.

A Renewable Rikers is so exciting because it is a once in a lifetime opportunity to turn something that has had such a negative impact and legacy on our City into something with the potential to truly be a tool for positive change, and to allow our City to meet so many goals at once: take a step towards restorative justice, curb our reliance on fossil fuel based energy, reduce our carbon footprint, reduce the waste we send to landfill, and improve quality of life for everyone in our City regardless of neighborhood or income level.

We look forward to continuing to collaborate with the Council to pass the Renewable Rikers Act, and move our city closer to our shared ideals of justice, equity and sustainability.

Thank you.





FOR THE RECORD

Kyle Kimball  
Vice President  
Government, Regional & Community Affairs

January 29, 2020

The Honorable Costa Constantinides  
Councilmember, 22<sup>nd</sup> District  
The Council of the City of New York  
250 Broadway, Suite 1778  
New York, NY 10007

Dear Councilmember Constantinides,

Con Edison submits this letter in general support of the Renewable Rikers Act. The concept of a large solar farm within New York City is an exciting proposition. As you know, any renewable power that can be created locally can begin to offset traditional fossil fuel-based power generation.

Con Edison, Inc. is the 2nd largest solar developer in North America and, although we are currently not able to bring that expertise to our own grid and in furtherance of meeting the State's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) goals, we would like to be a resource to the City in implementing the Renewable Rikers Act.

To meet New York State and City clean energy goals we need a major increase in large-scale renewable energy. We think it makes sense to let customers own and operate these large-scale renewable resources through their utilities, not solely through private merchant developers. These new renewable assets can be constructed by private developers, but the financing and operating costs will be lower for our customers if utilities own them. This is because utility ownership means a permanent and guaranteed source of renewable energy for New Yorkers, lowering costs and increasing union jobs.

Besides installing a solar farm on Rikers Island, synergies with a potential wastewater treatment plant such as using district energy solutions and renewable natural gas, among other ideas, should also be considered. Our recently approved investment plan facilitates these 21st century solutions and we are eager to promote their implementation here in New York City.

Finally, the idea of a renewable energy hub with a public access component is of special interest to Con Edison. Educating the wider public about our City's clean energy future is more important than ever. That is why Con Edison invests in the communities where we live and work and support an effort to provide more hands-on interaction with clean energy technologies, how they are operated and maintained, and empowering the next generation of green jobs.

As you know, the past year has been transformational for the State and City's climate legislation agenda. Local Law 97 and the CLCPA will fundamentally accelerate the transition to a low-carbon future. We support these efforts and are already working toward achieving these targets while still providing safe, reliable energy for all New Yorkers.

We look forward to working with your office, the City of New York, and other stakeholders on this important project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kyle Kimball", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kyle Kimball



Regional Plan Association

January 29, 2020

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## Testimony of Regional Plan Association for the New York City Council on Introductions 1591, 1592 and 1593 (The “Renewable Rikers” Act).

Dear City Council Committee Members: thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Lauren Tsuboyama and I am the Director of Communications at Regional Plan Association. RPA is a non-profit civic organization that conducts research, planning and advocacy to improve economic opportunity, mobility, environmental sustainability and the quality of life for those who live and work in the New York metropolitan region.

Regional Plan Association is a strong supporter of the package of Renewable Rikers bills (Intro 1591, 1592, 1593), collectively known as “the Renewable Rikers Act,” proposed by Council member Constantinides, as well as the need to move as quickly as possible to repurpose Rikers Island and specifically address and redress its legacy of mass incarceration and those who have been directly affected. We are especially excited for Intro 1592 of the Renewable Rikers Act, reflecting the City’s commitment to truly reinventing the Island for uses that benefit the communities who have been most harmed by Rikers Island over the last decades. We also want to recognize the community and environmental organizations which have already begun to envision what a new Rikers Island could be, and how best to make sure that nearby neighborhoods and people impacted by incarceration benefit from its transformation.

We applaud the steps taken on criminal justice reform thus far by the administration. However, concerning Rikers Island it is past time to translate plans and commitments into concrete action to close it for good. The Renewable Rikers Act will open up a once-in-a-generation opportunity for New York.

Transforming the island from one for incarceration to one for infrastructure could benefit all of New York City. It could provide 40% of our contribution to zero waste goals, generate enough renewable energy for 30,000 homes and eliminate greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to 150,000 cars taken off the road.

There are also specific possibilities and benefits for surrounding communities, many of which have grappled with a severe legacy of environmental racism. Repurposing Rikers Island for green infrastructure could:

- **Eliminate 175 combined sewer overflows & 9 billion gallons of sewer overflow into the inner Long Island Sound**, which is ground zero for Combined Sewer Overflow and its detrimental environmental effects. Preventing this will repair an entire ecosystem damaged by the high nitrogen levels from this overflow.
- **Open over 12 miles of inaccessible shoreline.** Of the 9 miles of shoreline along the South Bronx and North Queens waterfront in the area, just a few thousand feet is accessible to the public. And that’s in addition to the four miles of inaccessible shoreline on Randalls Island, North and South Brother Islands, and Rikers Island itself. This would include shutting down another notorious site of incarceration whose time should be past, the Vernon C. Bain correctional center (otherwise known as The Barge).

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- **Create major sites for parks, open space and other needed infrastructure.** In addition to Rikers Island, much of the land in this area is owned by the City. The four wastewater treatment plants alone could provide over 200 acres of open space. And there is already over 70 acres of vacant open space owned by the public, but largely inaccessible to the public, including North and South Brother Islands and the area surrounding the Queens side of the Rikers Island bridge.
- **Reduce air pollution & significantly improve health.** The South Bronx has the worst asthma rates in the City - moving contaminating uses to Rikers Island and reducing truck-to-truck waste transfer stations would provide health improvements for tens of thousands of people.

Closing Rikers Island is a moral imperative, and is also a major opportunity to better the lives of New Yorkers, especially those most impacted by its legacy, through needed and beneficial municipal improvements. Taking concrete steps to end jail usage and start the true transformation of the island would be one of the most impactful legacies this council and this administration could leave for New York City.

By transferring Rikers Island from the control of the Department of Corrections (DOC) to the control of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) as coordinating agency to direct the Island's green infrastructure uses, New York City can definitively end the era of holding our fellow New Yorkers on a toxic penal colony, and simultaneously ensure that any future use of Rikers benefits the Black and Brown communities that have been most harmed by mass criminalization, by environmental injustice, and by disinvestment. The Renewable Rikers Act is a key first step towards building a roadmap moving the City into a cleaner and more sustainable future for all of its residents.





**Statement of the Natural Resources Defense Council  
Before the New York City Council  
Committee on Environmental Protection  
Re: Renewable Rikers Island, Intro #s 1591, 1592, and 1593**

Eric A. Goldstein and Cullen Howe

January 29, 2020

The Natural Resources Defense Council (“NRDC”) is a not-for-profit legal and scientific organization active on a wide range of public health, natural resource protection, and quality-of-life issues across the country, around the world and in New York City where our main office has been located since NRDC’s founding in 1970. For almost five decades, NRDC has had a team of lawyers, scientists and other experts working exclusively on environmental matters affecting New Yorkers, including support for public transit, enhancement of parks and community gardens, air and water quality protection, solid waste reform, clean energy, sustainable development and environmental justice.

As we testified in at the Council’s ULURP hearing on the City’s proposed borough-based jail proposal, NRDC considers the issue of Rikers’ closure to be an environmental issue; any fair definition of “the environment” should be broad enough to include the conditions under which thousands of fellow New Yorkers are forced to live as they make their way through the criminal justice system. NRDC has previously expressed support for the report of the Independent Commission on New York City Criminal Justice and Incarceration Reform. The Lippman Commission report called for the closure of the existing Rikers Island jails and the creation of a borough-based jail system. As the Commission noted: “Closing Rikers Island is a moral imperative. The island is a powerful symbol of a discredited approach to criminal justice—a penal colony that subjects all within its walls to inhumane conditions.”

Moreover, the closure of Rikers Island presents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to convert this island of shame into a showplace of sustainability. The island could be transformed into one that houses resilient, renewable energy-producing solar arrays plus energy storage, along with modern sewage and food waste treatment facilities, allowing older waste facilities and polluting power plants located in densely populated city neighborhoods to close and creating hundreds of green jobs for city residents.

We are pleased to be here today to testify in support of three bills that would advance the twin goals of closing Rikers Island jails forever and bringing sustainable development and green jobs to that location.

**NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL**

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First, NRDC supports Intro # 1593, which would direct the Mayor's Office of Sustainability to conduct a feasibility study to evaluate the costs, value, and suitability of constructing renewable energy sources combined with battery storage facilities on Rikers Island. Using a portion of a redesigned Rikers Island for clean energy makes perfect sense. The island could provide space for solar arrays and energy storage facilities that could provide New Yorkers with clean and reliable energy in perpetuity. Such uses could help bring about the closure or reduced use of older, fossil-fuel "peaker" power plants that are located in densely populated neighborhoods and whose emissions pose localized air quality problems, especially for residents who suffer from asthma and other pre-existing lung conditions. These dirty peaker plants contribute disproportionately to our global warming emissions. They can also emit dozens of times more Nitrogen Oxides (NOx) than other power plants. And, when combined with other air pollutants in the presence of sunlight, they increase levels of ozone smog in our city's air. Passing Intro #1593 would be an important step to reducing New York City's global warming footprint.

Second, NRDC supports Intro # 1591, which would direct DEP to conduct a feasibility study concerning the construction of such a facility on the island, including possible alternatives to wastewater treatment and disposal and how much wastewater might be able to be diverted from other facilities if a new facility is constructed. The idea of constructing a state-of-the-art sewage plant on the Rikers Island holds great promise. Four existing city sewage plants closest to Rikers Island – located in Queens, the South Bronx, and Wards Island – are nearly 80 years old; as they approach the end of their useful lives, they will require expensive upgrades. Constructing a consolidated new plant on the island could allow the city to shut down one or more of these facilities, freeing up the waterfront acreage where they are now located for more desirable, community-friendly land uses. And modern sewage facilities on Rikers Island might also help address other persistent sewage problems, including combined-sewer overflow and nitrogen loadings into nearby waterways.

Third, NRDC supports Intro # 1592, which would transfer control of the island from the Department of Corrections to the Department of Environmental Protection ("DEP"), which would have the authority to promulgate rules to ensure the development and coordination of infrastructure to support renewable energy generation, wastewater treatment and other environmental purposes. DEP, as the branch of government charged with safeguarding our air and water, is the best agency to take control of Rikers as the City makes plans for the island's green future. And transferring Rikers to DEP would provide needed assurances to New Yorkers that Rikers' use for jail facilities would indeed be coming to a permanent end.

We offer two additional recommendations:

- NRDC believes that another worthwhile land use for Rikers Island would be to create modern composting and anaerobic digestion facilities that could convert city-generated food waste and yard waste into usable compost. Such an operation would prevent this waste from being buried in landfills where it becomes a major source of global-warming methane emissions. In addition, an in-city composting operation would save city taxpayers tens of millions of dollars a year that would otherwise be spent shipping food and yard waste to distant landfills or incinerators. We urge this Committee to work closely with the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management, as well as the City's Department of Sanitation, to expand the city's residential and commercial composting capacity and specifically to advance the siting one or more such facilities on Rikers Island.
- Several other ideas have been proposed as possible future uses for Rikers Island. One would site a waste-to-energy incinerator on the island. Another would allow for Rikers to be used to expand LaGuardia Airport. A third would provide for new housing on Rikers. NRDC opposes all three of these ideas, each of which presents a boatload of environmental concerns. A waste incinerator would immediately become one of the city's largest sources of air pollution emissions and would be inconsistent with forward-looking waste policies around the nation, which are focused on increased waste prevention, recycling, composting and making manufacturers responsible for designing products more sustainably and taking care of them at the end of their useful lives. Expanding LaGuardia Airport onto Rikers Island would harm local wetlands and waterways with landfill and pollution and represent a questionable public investment in an era of increasing global warming and sea-level rise. And constructing new housing of Rikers Island would raise concerns about building living quarters on landfill where who knows what toxins have been buried and on at a location that is largely inaccessible to public transportation.

In sum, NRDC believes that the three bills that are the subject of today's hearing are right on target for advancing a humane and sustainable vision for Rikers Island. And we stand ready to work with Speaker Corey Johnson as well as you, Chairman Constantinides, and the members of this Committee, as well as the Mayor DeBlasio and his Administration, to make this new vision of Rikers a reality.





**Remarks of Prof. Rebecca Bratspies on Behalf of the Center for Urban Environmental Reform to the City Council on January 29, 2020 regarding Renewable Rikers.**

Thank you, Chair Constantinides and members of the Committee. My name is Rebecca Bratspies. I am a professor at CUNY School of Law where I run the Center for Urban Environmental Reform. CUNY Law school is dedicated to ‘law in the service of human needs’ and my Center works from the proposition that environmental justice is a critical aspect of social justice. I am here today to talk about how Introductions 1591, 1592 and 1593 can help New York City promote restorative environmental justice.

In 2014, then-US Attorney Preet Bharara—declared that “Rikers Island is broken” finding a pattern and practice of conduct that violates constitutional rights.<sup>1</sup> Three years later, the Lippman Commission proclaimed Rikers Island (and I am quoting) “*a stain on our great City.*”<sup>2</sup> The Commission’s primary recommendation was that “Rikers Island must be closed.”<sup>3</sup>

The Lippman Commission posited that a Reimagined Rikers could be used to generate the renewable energy necessary to meet New York City’s 80 x 50 commitment, and New York State’s renewable energy mandate.<sup>4</sup>

That is where these Introductions begin to make their impact. Converting Rikers to large-scale solar energy and battery storage will write a new story for the 413 acres of Rikers Island.

Closing Rikers’ jails will be a transformative moment for the City. Renewable Rikers could make that moment an environmental justice transformation as well. These Introductions are a critical first step. By enacting them, City Council will launch a visioning process for truly restorative environmental justice.

Renewable Rikers is a path to a more sustainable, more equitable City. New York State recently committed to a 100% carbon-free electricity system. To reach that goal, we must transition away from fossil fuels. Replacing the City’s Peaker plants with clean energy is a good start. This is both an environmental necessity and a public health imperative. Peaker plants contribute to the localized air pollution that harms people’s health in overburdened, frontline communities. Some South Bronx neighborhoods have childhood asthma hospitalization rates double the City’s average.<sup>5</sup> Pollution-related emergency department visits and asthma

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, CRIPA Investigation of the New York Department of Correction Jails on Rikers Island 5,20 (Aug. 4, 2014) available at <https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/usao-sdny/legacy/2015/03/25/SDNY%20Rikers%20Report.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Independent Commission on New York City Criminal Justice and Incarceration Reform, *A More Just New York City* (April 2, 2017) available at <https://www.morejustnyc.org/>.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* at 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* at 110.

<sup>5</sup> Cecilia Butini, *Asthma by the Numbers*, MEDIUM (Jan. 20, 2018).



hospitalizations in Mott Haven and Melrose are triple the NYC average.<sup>6</sup> Replacing dirty peaker plants with renewable generation and storage on Rikers would improve air quality in these frontline communities.

Renewable Rikers is an opportunity to right old, but ongoing wrong. For too long, New York City has disproportionately sited its polluting infrastructure in low-income communities and communities of color. The 2000 Power Now! Project is a clear example. NYPA used Enron's engineered brown outs to justify adding 11 peaker plants on an emergency basis—running roughshod over frontline communities to do so. These plants were all sited in environmental justice communities. They were sited with no community engagement, virtually no environmental due diligence, and over vociferous community objections.<sup>7</sup> Although these plants were pitched as temporary, a 3 year emergency solution to a manufactured crisis—they are still there. Anyone born the year they were installed is eligible to vote and nearly old enough to drink.

If we take this opportunity to transform Rikers Island into sustainable infrastructure, we can right this wrong. A recent Ravenswood project shows that 316 MW of storage can be sited on 7 acres of land. Two such storage sites could provide more capacity than all the Power Now! plants combined. Through battery storage, solar generation, and wastewater treatment, Renewable Rikers leverages the transformation of our criminal justice system into wider transformation across multiple axes of justice. It benefits the City as a whole, while specifically benefiting the communities most impacted by mass incarceration, and incarceration at Rikers.

Renewable Rikers can be a moment for environmental justice. These Introductions are a step toward improved air quality for environmental justice communities, which are frequently the same communities most impacted by mass incarceration, and by incarceration at Rikers.

Renewable Rikers can be a moment for climate justice. These introductions are a step toward ensuring a just transition that reduces the burdens on frontline communities.

Renewable Rikers can be a moment for restorative justice. Solar installer and wind turbine technician are the two fastest growing job categories in the United States (albeit from a small base.) Renewable Rikers can create jobs with a pathway to prosperity for everyone—specifically for those most impacted by mass incarceration, and by incarceration at Rikers. CUNY can help prepare students from frontline communities to participate fully in the planning, building, and operating of Renewable Rikers.

As plans for Rikers' future mature, we need appropriate oversight mechanisms to make sure that this project benefits the communities most impacted by Rikers and by environmental racism. Int. 1592 is an important step to ensure that closing Rikers does not devolve into a privatization land grab. The communities most impacted by incarceration at Rikers, and by environmental racism, must be part of the process. I urge City Council to make sure that these communities are consulted early and often, and that their representatives are part of whatever decision-making bodies will ultimately make choices about Renewable Rikers.

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<sup>6</sup> NYC Health, *Community Health Profiles 2018: Mott Haven and Melrose* 12, <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/data/2018chp-bx1.pdf>. See also, New York State Comptroller's Office, *The Prevalence and Cost of Asthma in New York State* 9 (2014).

<sup>7</sup> Rebecca Bratspies, *Shutting Down Poletti: Human Rights Lessons from Environmental Victories*, 36 Wis. Int'l L. J. 247 (2019).



**SWIM Coalition**  
Stormwater Infrastructure Matters

Testimony of Michael Dulong,  
Senior Attorney, Riverkeeper, Inc.,  
and SWIM Coalition Steering Committee Member

Before the New York City Council Committee on Environmental Protection

in Support of the Proposed “Renewable Rikers” Bills: Intros 1591, 1592 and 1593

January 29, 2020

Thank you, Chairman Constantinides and Members of the New York City Council Committee on Environmental Protection, for your leadership in pursuing a future for Rikers Island that serves New Yorkers and our environment. Riverkeeper and the SWIM Coalition strongly support the swift passage of all three bills: Intros 1591, 1592 and 1593.

Riverkeeper is a member-supported watchdog organization dedicated to defending the Hudson River and its tributaries. We also safeguard the drinking water supply of nine million New York City and Hudson Valley residents. The SWIM coalition is a group of 70 organizations dedicated to ensuring swimmable and fishable waters around New York City through natural, sustainable stormwater management practices – called green infrastructure – in our neighborhoods.

We share your vision for a future Rikers Island that serves New Yorkers by providing for safer air and water quality via sustainable energy and wastewater infrastructure. Last week Riverkeeper joined with a number of environmental justice, criminal justice, grassroots, and community organizations to submit a letter to the Mayor in support of these bills. Along with our partner organizations, we believe the communities that have been most harmed by mass criminalization and environmental injustice should be the beneficiaries of a transition to a cleaner and greener future on Rikers Island. It is with a full-throated endorsement of the bills that Riverkeeper and SWIM submit the following recommendations to strengthen them:

1. **The feasibility studies in Intros 1591 (Wastewater Treatment) and 1593 (Renewable Energy) should be combined.** The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is the correct agency to study the potential benefits of creating new wastewater treatment capacity at Rikers Island. The same goes for Mayor’s Office of Sustainability studying Rikers’ renewable energy capacity. Yet these separate agencies should be working together to plan for New York’s future. If Rikers Island has potential for both wastewater treatment and renewable energy, those uses should not only be compared against each other in a single cost/benefit analysis, but they should also be considered jointly, with the potential to optimize the island to do both. If the studies are separate, they will result in two separate answers and two separate plans moving Rikers forward. We recommend that Intros 1591 and 1593 reference each other and direct the two agencies to work together on a single feasibility

study comparing and considering all potentially beneficial uses, including areas reserved for parkland and composting, alongside sustainable energy production and wastewater treatment.

2. **The legislation should explicitly direct assessment of potential environmental and community benefits.** While possible, it is yet unclear whether opening up a new wastewater treatment plant would alleviate the need for other plants to continue operating, including the nearby Bowery Bay, Hunt's Point, Wards Island, and Tallman Island plants. In addition, it is possible that DEP could reduce sewage overflows by storing and sending excess volume to Rikers Island. The plant might even reduce nitrogen inputs to the East River and alleviate the Long Island Sound's nutrient problems. On the other hand, it is important to note that this may not be a silver bullet to the city's water pollution problems, and it should be considered in the context of the city's green infrastructure program expansion and planned gray infrastructure construction. The potential for a Rikers Island treatment plant to work in conjunction with these plans, or in place of them, should be studied.

On the energy side, it is unclear just how many kilowatt hours that renewable energy and battery storage on Rikers could alleviate and what corresponding harmful air pollutants might be eliminated by replacing local peaker plants. Assessment of these potential benefits should be explicitly called for in the law. Having these benefits clearly assessed in the report(s) will help justify future decisions about the island.

3. **Climate change must be accounted for in the legislation.** Some of New York City's water pipes date back to the 1870s. As we design infrastructure in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we should at least be thinking about the next three generations who will live with and benefit from the infrastructure we build today. Unfortunately, future generations will have different conditions than we are used to. For instance, the New York City Panel on Climate Change (NPCC) determined that

[p]rojections for sea level rise in New York City show an increase between 11 inches and 21 inches by the 2050s, between 18 inches and 39 inches by the 2080s, and between 22 inches and 50 inches by 2100, with a worse [sic] case projection of up to six feet by 2100.<sup>1</sup>

These sea level rise projections are crucial information that must be factored into the design of a wastewater treatment plant and/or energy production and transmission infrastructure that could last more than a century. At the very least vegetated buffers should be maintained to provide storm barrier protection for this infrastructure and to protect fish habitat.

In addition to sea level rise, precipitation will increase significantly in frequency and intensity: "[m]ean annual precipitation increases projected by the [global climate models] are

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<sup>1</sup> Press Release, Mayor de Blasio Releases NPCC 2015 Report, Providing Climate Projections Through 2100 for the First Time, (Feb. 7, 2015), available at <https://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/122-15/mayor-de-blasio-releases-npcc-2015-report-providing-climate-projections-2100-the-first>.

4 to 11 percent by the 2050s and 5 to 13 percent by the 2080s.”<sup>2</sup> These figures must be taken into account in determining the volume of sewage the plant should treat.

DEP has downplayed climate change in the past in an effort to save money, and that simply cannot happen in designing brand new multimillion-dollar infrastructure. Climate change assessment must be spelled out in legislation.

4. **There should be an opportunity for public comment on the studies.** Millions of lives have been adversely affected by incarceration on Rikers Island, and for the most part, the same communities suffering criminal injustice happen to be suffering environmental and climate injustice as well. The communities most affected deserve a say to facilitate a just transition for Rikers and future of environmental justice. And now more than thirty public interest groups have weighed in on the Renewable Rikers plans, and at last count 35 council members co-sponsored these bills. It is crucial that the affected public, non-governmental organizations and our City Council members have an opportunity to comment on the studies before they are completed and that those comments are responded to by the agencies before any final documents are produced. The legislation should be modified to include provisions for public input.

\* \* \*

Thank you for your consideration of Riverkeeper’s testimony. We look forward to working with the Council Members, DEP, the Mayor’s Office of Sustainability, and our partner organizations to ensure Rikers Island is utilized in the best interests of New Yorkers.

Contact:

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<sup>2</sup> N.Y. City Panel on Climate Change, 2015 Report Executive Summary (2015), *available at* <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/nyas.2015.1336.issue-1/issuetoc>.

Testimony to New York City Council, Committee on Environmental Protection  
From Tamika Graham, #CLOSErikers campaign leader  
Re: Intros 1591, 1592, and 1593

January 27, 2020

My name is Tamika Graham, and before I took a stand in solidarity with my brothers and sisters at JustLeadershipUSA to shut down Rikers, I was a public health major and one of my focuses was chronic illnesses in poverty-stricken urban communities. Through tons of research, I found that obesity, asthma, cardiovascular disease and many other illnesses, both mental and physical, are normal variables of the factors in which, an environment contributes to its inhabitants. Meaning pretty much - you get out what you put in.

For instance, the South Bronx in particular is the poorest congressional district in the country, it has the fastest increasing morbidity and mortality rates, the highest rate of chronic health disorders, the second highest rate of incarceration in NYC, and it has the most waste transfer facilities, as well as, power plants, and a heavy flow of industrial truck traffic. Let us keep in mind I am only speaking of the South Bronx. I don't have enough time to touch on the different levels of polluted air I breathed in, over the past 40 years as a New Yorker living in those communities that shouldered these environmental burdens - from the suffocating smell and fumes of the garbage dumps, shipping yards, and factories of Staten Island, to the thick smoldering air of the power plants and food distribution center at Hunts Point.

Chronic illnesses are so prevalent in these areas because there aren't any preventative measures in our communities to help us counter or combat this poor quality of life due to socioeconomic factors and environmental injustice. Or better yet maybe its so prevalent because as the saying goes, money talks and b.s walks. I say this because the quality of life and air is so much better in our white counterpart's communities.

Being raised on Staten Island I had 3 white friends who lived 2-5 blocks away from the garbage dump. 2 of the 3 had asthma and a pump or 2 from their inhaler was enough for them, oh and lets not forget it took some time but they got rid of the garbage dump. In the Bronx living on Dawson all 4 kids that lived with me had asthma along with almost half the building. Do you know what it's like to take turns dragging 2,3,5, and 8 year olds to Lincoln Hospital to get asthma treatments at least once a week? It's very scary, and overwhelming, and you feel extremely powerless as you sit there trying not to panic while you watch your loved one struggling to breathe, while you try to stop your 2 year old nephew from trying to remove the mask thats providing the saline solution that's going to open up his airwaves so he can breathe again on his own. I don't ever want anyone to have to feel that pain.

This is one of the many reasons I stand for, and urge you to pass the Renewable Rikers Plan. We could go green and use the land that has caused decades and decades of trauma and health disparities to instead heal its people. These plants and waste transfer facilities in Black and Brown communities - the same ones who have been terrorized by Rikers Island - should be replaced with green infrastructure and moved on Rikers so we can have that land in our communities back - and have our health back. . I have survived Rikers, but Rikers will not survive me. Let the healing begin.

FOR THE RECORD



**NEW YORKERS**  
FOR  
**CLEAN POWER**

Mayor Bill de Blasio  
City Hall  
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor de Blasio,

New Yorkers for Clean Power strongly supports the Renewable Rikers Act to transform the formally socially and environmentally destructive island to a productive source of renewable energy. This will mark a new beginning for the island by transferring it under the control of the Department of Environmental Protection so it can provide clean energy jobs and millions of dollars in economic activity and cost savings. Transitioning Rikers to a renewable energy resource is not only ethically right but environmentally urgent. New York City is on the frontlines of climate change, with the effects disproportionately impacting the poor and communities of color.

We fully support that any future use of Rikers must benefit communities that have been most harmed by its legacy. We need to implement the Renewable Rikers Act as quickly as possible in order to begin atoning for decades of mass criminalization and protecting the communities most harmed by the climate crisis. This act is the first step to building large-scale resilient renewables on Rikers, which will allow the city to better manage its energy supply, and begin to close down hyper-polluting peaker plants that are currently harming the health of many New Yorkers in environmental justice communities--often the very same communities who have been impacted by the over-incarceration on Rikers.

Your strong support and fast action on the Renewable Rikers Act is required in the face of the environmental justice and climate crises that New York City residents face.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Broad  
Director, New Yorkers for Clean Power  
[betta@nyforcleanpower.org](mailto:betta@nyforcleanpower.org)  
607-222-3678



Hello,

Thank you Chair Constantinides, Council Members and staff.

My name is Georgi Page and I am a member of 350Brooklyn, a former Marketing Executive and the founding Director of the Page Center for Education and Social Justice. 350 Brooklyn is an all-volunteer community organization with 100s of very active, engaged members working to counter the climate crisis and achieve climate justice through local action, but our reach is in the thousands. We promote the sustainable energy sector, oppose the fossil fuel industry, and educate and activate our community. 350 Brooklyn is also a local affiliate of 350.org, a global grassroots organization and we support the *Renewable Rikers Act*. We are also participants in a newly-forming city-wide network of environmental groups that is beginning to embrace Renewable Rikers as a possible focus of Earth Day actions.

Passage of the Renewable Rikers Act has the potential to mark a momentous societal shift: from a society that regularly and carelessly violates and degrades its people and planet, to one that carefully and courageously rehabilitates and restores them...OR it could mark just another failure of our collective will, and the inability to seize a remarkable opportunity.

Furthermore, I am here today because I was incredibly moved by the horrifying stories of former Rikers detainees like Kalief Browder and Korey Wise. In the name of these boys and so many others, I hope each of you will personally seize on **some part - any part** - of this singular opportunity to create a kind of reconciliation - re-dedicating Rikers as a site for growth and hope.

While there has been justifiable pride in New York's climate leadership and in recent legislation addressing our state of Climate Emergency, what is needed is to immediately advance that legislation into more aggressive, aspirational and accountable plans of action.

The broader environmental, health and economic rationales for moving toward 100% renewable energy and away from fossil fuels are well-established. But New York City has additional imperatives. 1) The Indian Point Nuclear Power Plant is scheduled to be closed by April 2021 and the city could eventually use Rikers' renewable alternatives to replace an estimated 1000Megawatts of the plant's 2,000Megawatt output, as well as some of the jobs lost. 2) With total energy needs of New York City and Westchester exceeding 13,000KiloWatts there is also a longer-term need for solar and other renewable energy generation if we are to

meet our Climate Mobilization Act and Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) targets, eliminating greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Increased use of fracking and natural gas are not acceptable replacements - and the Williams Pipeline would take us backward when we need to move forward!

350 Brooklyn agrees with the Sierra Club's Atlantic Chapter that imported hydropower would have a negative environmental impact and create a dependency that would undercut the development of local renewable energy and local jobs. Continued fossil fuel emissions - which are currently generated by the eleven 'peaker' power plants situated in and near the city's low-income neighborhoods - will increase adverse health effects among populations that already lack adequate resources. Battery storage on Rikers would allow us to close these peaker plants. The recent approval of a 316 MW Battery storage facility at the Ravenswood plant by The New York Public Service Commission proves that the plan is possible - and even better, the October 2019 Lippman Commission Report has already determined that the "Projects on Rikers could be situated outside of the 100-year and 500-year floodplains, making them more reliable during extreme weather."

While some may think of Rikers as yet another bonanza for developers or a wonderful site for low-income housing, Lippman Commission developers who were consulted soundly rejected this use; not only is Rikers Island impossibly remote and isolating, it is subject to 4-story height restrictions AND it is built on methane-leaking landfill. The island is unsuitable for most other kinds of development, but it is - according to the EPA - uniquely compatible with renewable energy generation.

This vision, whose proposals have been well-researched by The Lippman Commission as well as by CUNY's Center for Urban Environmental Reform (or CUER) is very viable. According to the Report, if it's recommendations are followed, a Renewable Rikers :

- Would have a positive ECONOMIC IMPACT, generating an estimated \$340 million in annual economic activity, as well as 1,500 jobs.
- It would ENABLE GROWTH, modernizing critical pieces of the City's infrastructure network, facilitating future growth in population and economic activity.



- A Renewable Rikers would REDUCE EMISSIONS. In total, it would have benefits equivalent to taking more than 150,000 cars off the road and powering up to 30,000 households with renewable energy.
- And it would generate annual cost savings for the City of up to \$75 million from improved water treatment.

All that is lacking is our commitment and an increased sense of urgency. A September 22nd report at the UN's Climate Action Summit determined that there is still a giant and glaring 'emissions gap'. The gap is the difference between "where we are likely to be" based on our current targets, and "where we need to be". The report warns that our "current level of ambition needs to be roughly **tripled** to align with the 2°C limit and must be increased around fivefold to align with the 1.5°C limit."

We have great hopes for the framework provided for in the CLCPA, but the timeline gives the New York State Climate Action Council two full years to create a plan. Just a plan. Local Law 97 of the CMA, known as the 'Dirty Buildings Bill' establishes yet another advisory council, but does not require compliance until an initial period of 2024-2029

Swift passage of the Renewable Rikers Act presents the perfect opportunity to act on our Climate Emergency and Human Rights Crisis NOW. It is a bold, era-defining move that doesn't just tell the world the kind of city New York wants to be, it shows the world the city we will become.

Thank you for your attention,

350Brooklyn

Georgi Page

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## **Testimony by UPROSE before the New York City Council Committee on Environmental Protection on the Renewable Riker's Oversight Hearing**

January 29th, 2020

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today on the Renewable Riker's Oversight Hearing. My name is Summer Sandoval and I am the Energy Democracy Coordinator at UPROSE. I am here today on behalf of UPROSE, to express our support for Intro 1591, 1592, and 1593-2019- to utilize Riker's as New York City's renewable energy future. Founded in 1966, UPROSE is Brooklyn's oldest Latino community-based organization. UPROSE is an intergenerational, multi-racial, and nationally recognized organization that promotes sustainability and resiliency in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. We focus on climate justice and all of our work is rooted in the Just Transition model.

Sunset Park is an environmental justice community that suffers from disproportionate siting of polluting energy infrastructure. There are three peaker power plants in our community. Peaker plants along with, two solid waste transfer stations, and the 200,000 cars and 25,000 trucks that traverse the Gowanus Expressway daily have led to complex and systemic inequities. The cumulative impacts of pollution are intensified with climate change and put our frontline community in harm's way.

We need support for frontline-led energy solutions like Sunset Park Solar, New York's first cooperatively-owned community solar project led by UPROSE. It will develop 685-Kilowatts of affordable and accessible solar energy in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. Sunset Park Solar also has a job training component to train and hire local residents to work on the installation of the solar

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garden. Sunset Park Solar is an example of local implementation of a Just Transition and how to operationalize New York City and State climate policies and visions by promoting climate mitigation, energy democracy, and workforce development.

Equity and justice must be at the forefront of our city's energy work. In 2018, UPROSE partnered with the Collective for Community, Culture, and the Environment to develop a community-led proposal for Sunset Park, called the Green Resilient Industrial District (GRID). The GRID is a holistic vision and comprehensive zoning that plans for existing and long-term climate impacts in Sunset Park. The GRID outlines the process of how to use the industrial sector as the economic engine to meet our regional climate needs. The GRID creates a green industrial economy that trains local residents for renewable energy, green retrofit, and sustainable manufacturing climate jobs while promoting equity.

Our criminal justice system and energy systems perpetuates disparity and compromises frontline communities' health, safety, and well-being. We support the Renewable Riker's Act as an integral part of New York City's climate resilient future and a Just Transition.

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Testimony to New York City Council  
Committee on Environmental Protection  
Re: Intros 1591, 1592, and 1593

January 27, 2020

Dear Council Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Sarita Daftary, and I'm testifying on behalf of JustLeadershipUSA. As leaders of the #CLOSErikers campaign, we strongly support the package of Renewable Rikers bills (Intro 1591, 1592, 1593) proposed by Council member Constantinides. JustLeadershipUSA supports these bills for a number of reasons.

**First, by transferring Rikers Island from the control of the Department of Corrections (DOC) to the control of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) for green infrastructure uses, as called for in Intro 1592, New York City has the opportunity to further solidify the end of the Rikers Island jail complex** that has traumatized generations of New Yorkers, and simultaneously ensure that any future use of Rikers benefits the communities that have been most harmed by mass criminalization, by environmental injustice, and by disinvestment. Few things could make the end of the Rikers Island penal colony more definitive than actually transferring the land for a positive use.

**Second, any future use of Rikers must benefit communities that have been most harmed by its legacy.** This has been our position from the beginning of our campaign to close the jails on Rikers. In the summer of 2018, we conducted a wide ranging community planning process to develop our #buildCOMMUNITIES platform, published in January 2019. The process involved more than 50 partners and more than 200 individuals in communities most impacted by Rikers Island. We asked people about the investments they want and need for their communities to thrive. Included among our Public Health proposals is a vision for dedicating Rikers Island to green infrastructure uses. We also asked, through our #buildCOMMUNITIES assemblies, how people believe Rikers should be remembered. There were a range of responses,

many of them about active public education - through schools, curricula, or mobile exhibits. Some people also suggested a memorial (either on Rikers, in the communities that have been most impacted, in very visible places throughout the City, or all of these options). Some form of memorial on Rikers Island certainly could co-exist with Renewable Rikers proposals, given how much land is available.

**I also want to note what we did not hear in our community assemblies.** We did not hear anyone who has been impacted by Rikers Island suggest that it should be used to expand LaGuardia airport. We did not hear impacted people say that Rikers should be redeveloped for affordable housing, or mental health treatment centers, or homeless shelters. Rikers is - to this day - a site of torture. It is a site of historical trauma. For more than 80 years, people the City doesn't want to deal with have been sent to an isolated and toxic island, and it's been a human rights disaster for 80 years. **People do not belong on Rikers.**

**It will likely take generations to repair the harm Rikers has done to Black, brown, and poor New Yorkers.** But we need to start somewhere, and we will not get another chance to use 400 acres for the benefit of communities that have borne the brunt of both mass criminalization and environmental burdens. The bare minimum to start addressing that legacy is to make sure Rikers Island is used in a way that is guided by and for the benefit of people who have suffered its harms, and the harms of environmental racism that affect the same communities.

If it were not for courageous advocates who survived Rikers, we would not be having a conversation about what to do with that land. If it were not for their leadership, there would be no end in sight to its use as a penal colony. In honor of them and on behalf of the leaders of the #CLOSERikers campaign, we ask the Council to move this proposal forward now.

Sincerely,

Sarita Daftary  
Senior Community Organizer  
JustLeadershipUSA

Good afternoon. My name is Clara Zayas, and I am a proud graduate and staff member of The HOPE Program, one of New York City's leading job training organizations. We are so appreciative of the ongoing support and partnership of the Council to fuel our effective programs. Thank you.

We offer four different job training programs, three of which focus on green construction and maintenance careers. Across all of our programs, we serve men and women with deep barriers to employment, including, but not limited to, histories of criminal justice involvement, substance abuse, homelessness and others. Despite these challenges, 75% of our graduates secure jobs and 80% are employed one year later, a rate that outpaces our peers nationwide.

I am here today to share HOPE's support for Renewable Rikers. The philosophy underlying HOPE's approach to green job training is to empower our neighbors who have been disproportionately impacted by negative environmental and societal impacts to continue to make positive change in their communities. Renewable Rikers shares this focus. Just as the men and women who have been detained on Rikers Island deserve opportunities to build thriving careers and sustainable futures, so does the island itself deserve the opportunity for renewal.

We all know that the City Council has pledged to reduce energy consumption by 40% in the next decade. Renewable Rikers has huge potential to help the City meet this goal



while transforming the legacy of Rikers Island and providing hundreds of jobs to our neighbors returning to their communities.

The families and neighborhoods and communities most impacted by criminal justice policies have earned the new opportunity created by the transformation into a sustainable infrastructure hub that creates HOPE for a sustainable future. This is a true opportunity to create pathways from jails, to jobs, to justice. We certainly offer to participate in any formal or informal advisory committees that may be created to focus on this issue .

Testimony to New York City Council, Committee on Environmental Protection  
From Vidal Guzman, #CLOSErikers campaign leader  
Re: Intros 1591, 1592, and 1593

January 27, 2020

This April will make 4 years since the #CLOSErikers campaign began. Over those years, the campaign grew to a coalition of 176 organizations who marched in the rain, snow, cold and heat to put pressure on the Mayor Bill De Blasio to finally close Rikers Island. As a member of the #CLOSErikers campaign and as someone who spent two and a half years on Rikers Island, I am honored to have fought and marched with other directly impacted people like Darren Mark, Donna Hylton, Johnny Perez, Anna Pastorasta, Herbert Murray and many others. Without their voices -- people who have survived Rikers -- there would be no plan to close the jails on Rikers, and we wouldn't be talking about what to do next.

But we always knew that closing Rikers Island wasn't enough; our vision for justice was always bigger than that. That's why we also proposed reallocating funds from 7.3 billion now budgeted for the Department of Corrections, NYPD, Department of Probations, and District Attorneys to fully fund directly impacted communities through the #buildCOMMUNITIES platform.

But even that is not the complete vision. We also have a plan for what to do with the island after the Rikers jails are gone. We believed that New York could be a leader in not just decarceration and but also in environmental justice by replacing power plants and waste water treatment sites in places like the South Bronx and Queensbridge Housing with green infrastructure on Rikers Island. I lived in Hunts Point as a kid, and I remember the smell from wastewater treatment plants. I remember all of the people dealing with asthma and wondering why. What if Hunts Point didn't have to deal with that anymore? Passing Renewable Rikers would fulfill the vision we had to turn that horrible stain on our City into something that could start to restore the neighborhoods hit hardest by mass incarceration, divestment, and pollution.

We have all heard the questions about what will happen next with Rikers. Some people, like the Correction Officers Union, are just spreading rumors about building luxury housing there. We know it's too toxic for that. But some people have said that the City Should build mental health facilities on Rikers Island, or affordable housing. Those of us who have been on Rikers know this is not the way to address the harm Rikers Island has DONE TO COMMUNITIES OF COLOR. I can tell you, you could not pay me enough to live on Rikers Island. And there are much better ways to create mental health services and affordable housing in our communities, as the #buildCOMMUNITIES plan describes. Directly impacted communities are speaking again: it's time to move this forward and pass the Renewable Rikers plan.



Testimony to New York City Council, Committee on Environmental Protection  
From Harvey Murphy, #CLOSErikers campaign leader  
Re: Intros 1591, 1592, and 1593

January 27, 2020

My name is Harvey Murphy and I am a community organizer at JustLeadershipUSA. And yes I am a Rikers Island Survivor. Let me just say that the communities that are most harmed are leaning on us to do the right thing. My neighbors in Mott Haven are asking me - "What are they going to do with Rikers Island now, Harvey? Are they going to extend LaGuardia airport? Are they going to build luxury apartments?" I say no!!!! We have to do something to invest into the communities that are suffering.

We can't wait any longer. This right here is a powerful moment in history. We can plan on a real plan to invest in communities that were most harmed by mass incarceration and waste water treatment and dirty power plants. I live in the Bronx, and my community smells right now from those waste water treatment plants.

It's time to move forward and pass the Renewable Rikers Plan (Not now but right now)

Good afternoon. My name is Clara Zayas, and I am a proud graduate and staff member of The HOPE Program, one of New York City's leading job training organizations. We are so appreciative of the ongoing support and partnership of the Council to fuel our effective programs. Thank you.

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We all know that the City Council has pledged to reduce energy consumption by 40% in the next decade. Renewable Rikers has huge potential to help the City meet this goal while transforming the legacy of Rikers Island and providing hundreds of jobs to our neighbors returning to their communities.

The families, neighborhoods, and communities most impacted by criminal justice policies have earned the new opportunity created by the transformation into a sustainable infrastructure hub that creates HOPE for a sustainable future. This is a true opportunity to create pathways from jails, to jobs, to justice. We certainly offer to participate in any formal or informal advisory committees that may be created to focus on this issue.

Lisa DiCaprio. Statement on behalf of the Sierra Club NYC Group in support of Int. 1491-2019, Int. 1592-2019, and Int. 1593-2019 for the City Council Committee on Environmental Protection hearing on January 27, 2020.

My name is Lisa DiCaprio. I am a professor of Social Sciences at NYU where I teach courses on sustainability. I am also the Conservation Chair of the Sierra Club NYC Group.

The Sierra Club NYC group supports Int. 1591-2019, Int. 1592-2019, and Int. 1593-2019 relating to Rikers Island.

We support transferring the jurisdiction of Rikers Island to the Department of Environmental Protection, as it provides an ideal location for infrastructure projects that benefit our environment.

With regard to a study on the feasibility of a renewable energy project with battery storage on Rikers Island:

A renewable energy project; for example, a solar farm combined with utility-scale battery storage, will facilitate the achievement of NYS's renewable energy goals as mandated in the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act; specifically, 70% of electricity generated from renewable sources by 2030, 6 gigawatts of distributed solar, and 3 gigawatts of energy storage.

The technical and regulatory feasibility of a renewable energy project on Rikers Island with utility-scale battery storage is promising, especially given the New York Public Service Commission's decision on October 28, 2019 to approve the installation, in three phases, of 2.5 GWh of battery storage in Queens that will replace gas powered peaker plants. As Steve Hanley wrote in his article, "[World's Largest Storage Battery - 2.5 GWh - To Replace Gas Peaker Plants in Queens](#)," which was published in [Clean Technica](#) on the same day as the PSC decision, "The path to the future is clear – larger storage projects with longer storage times. Both will be a welcome addition to the renewable energy revolution." [1]

With regard to a study on the feasibility of a new wastewater treatment plant on Riker's Island:

If deemed feasible, a new wastewater treatment plant on Rikers Island will alleviate the inadequacies of NYC's existing wastewater treatment infrastructure.

Sixty percent of NYC has a combined sewer system that, ideally, directs wastewater and stormwater into NYC's 14 wastewater treatment plants which treat about 1.3 billion gallons of water a day. (Forty percent of NYC relies on a separate sewer system.) [2]

Today, a tenth of an inch of rain within an hour can exceed the capacity of the combined sewer system and result in a combined sewer overflow (CSO) – the discharge of untreated wastewater and stormwater (about 20 billion gallons annually) into the Hudson River, East River, and New York Harbor.

One main cause of CSO incidents is the loss of permeable surfaces and trees resulting from the expansion of NYC's built environment. As related by Anthony DePalma in his article, "[When It Rains, Sewage Often Pours Into Harbor](#)," published in the New York Times on August 11, 2007, "From 1984 to 2002, 9,000 acres of trees, bushes and vegetative cover were paved over. That land, according to government analysts, could have absorbed 243 million gallons of water for each inch of rain that fell on the city." [3]

To compensate, NYC has focused on various forms of green infrastructure, such as green and blue roofs, rain barrels and gardens; and the expansion of tree beds, bioswales, and new green spaces to absorb, slow down, and reduce the flow of water into the sewer system.

The DEP can also reduce combined sewer overflow by expanding its [Wait...](#) program, "a voluntary text messaging program that notifies participants when to use less water during a heavy rainstorm," [4] with Public Service Announcements, posters in the subways, and educational materials designed for distribution in public schools and our communities.

However, a new wastewater treatment plan is still required because of the projected increase of NYC's population, combined sewer overflow (CSO) incidents, and annual precipitation, including heavy downpours, as related in the 2019 NYC Panel on Climate Change report. [5]

Finally, given the Trump administration's initiatives to weaken or repeal 96 Obama administration environmental regulations; most recently, the "Waters of the United States" regulation under the 1972 Clean Water Act), [2] we express our appreciation for the City Council's resolutions and legislation to protect our environment.

[1] Steve Hanley, "[World's Largest Storage Battery - 2.5 GWh - To Replace Gas Peaker Plants in Queens](#)," Clean Technica, October 28, 2019.

[2] See the DEP website, [Combined Sewer Overflow](#).

[3] Anthony DePalma, "[When It Rains, Sewage Often Pours Into Harbor](#)," New York Times, August 11, 2007.

[4] The DEP [Wait...](#) program.

[5] "[New York City Panel on Climate Change 2019 Report Executive Summary](#)," Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, March 15, 2019. See also, Michon Scott, "[Prepare for more downpours: Heavy rain has increased across most of the United States, and is likely to increase further](#)," NOAA Climate.gov, July 10, 2019.

[6] Nadja Popovich, Livia Albeck-Ripka, and Kendra Pierre-Louis, "[95 Environmental Rules Being Rolled Back Under Trump](#)," New York Times, December 21, 2019 and Coral Davenport, "[Trump Eases Pollution Controls on Wetlands and Streams](#)," New York Times, January 22, 2020.



**Chelsea Reform Democratic Club, New York City, NY**  
**Climate Resolution January 15, 2020**

WHEREAS, Chelsea Reform Democratic Club recognizes we are in a climate emergency caused by greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere due to man's use of and dependence on fossil fuels; and

WHEREAS, global heating from these emissions is causing extreme weather events to be more frequent and more intense. Eighteen of the 19 hottest years on record worldwide have occurred since 2001; and

WHEREAS, the extreme weather event Hurricane Sandy devastated entire areas of New York City. New York City is projected to be submerged before the end of this century; and

WHEREAS, New York City is the city on record as the biggest contributor in the United States and third in the world of greenhouse gas emissions to the atmosphere, the current total being 412ppm; and

WHEREAS, New York City has a responsibility to act now in leading the nation with common sense meaningful legislation; and

WHEREAS, each month of inaction results in approximately .3 parts per million of new greenhouse gases in the atmosphere; and

WHEREAS, the City Council voted on October 17th to approve the closing of the jail complex on Riker's Island; and

WHEREAS, New York City Councilman Costa Constantinides, representing the 22nd Council District in Queens which encompasses Riker's Island, has sponsored Council bill Intro 1591 directing the Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection {DEP} to conduct a feasibility study to determine if a new wastewater treatment facility can be constructed on Rikers Island, and how much wastewater it might be able to divert from other facilities; and

WHEREAS, New York City Councilman Constantinides has sponsored Council bill Intro 1592 to amend the New York city charter, placing the DEP Commissioner in control over all prison areas of Riker's Island, giving him or her the authority and discretion to plan and coordinate the island's future uses for renewable energy generation or for other environmental purposes; and

WHEREAS, New York City Councilman Constantinides has sponsored Council bill Intro 1593 directing the Mayor's Office of Sustainability or other agency or person designated by the mayor to study the feasibility of constructing different types of renewable energy sources combined with battery storage on Rikers Island; and

WHEREAS the resolution and the written consents shall be filed with the minutes of the proceedings of the Board and membership; and

THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT the Chelsea Reform Democratic Club, New York hereby approves by this RESOLUTION by a response of yes, the endorsement of New York City Council bills Intro 1591, Intro 1592, and Intro 1593 on this date of January 15, 2020.

**Committee on Environmental Protection  
January 29, 2020**

**Public Testimony of Dr. Gregory A. Bowden  
Senior Wastewater Process Specialist, AECOM**

First, I would like to thank the members of the Committee on Environmental Protection, and particularly Committee Chair Constantinides, for the opportunity to testify today about the potential for a “Renewable Rikers” and what that could mean for New York City.

My name is Gregory A. Bowden, and I am a Senior Wastewater Process Specialist at AECOM, the global infrastructure firm. I have a PhD in Chemical Engineering and more than 25 years of experience serving as a wastewater treatment expert on projects throughout North America and around the world. I am also a contributor to the latest edition of Metcalf & Eddy’s *Wastewater Engineering Treatment and Resource Recovery*, the definitive text used in leading engineering schools across the world.

I will speak today about the potential community, environmental, and economic benefits that current, proven technologies can offer, and share my assessment of what is possible at a new, state-of-the-art treatment facility on Rikers Island. These technologies are being used across the nation and around the world, and I hope the examples I provide today will help inform your decision-making process.

One of the most significant benefits of the current technology is that it can enable New York City to close the four existing wastewater treatment facilities on the upper East River—Wards Island, Tallman Island, Bowery Bay and Hunts Point—and consolidate them into a single, state-of-the-art treatment plant on Rikers Island.

As you know, the first three of these facilities date from the late 1930s with the fourth built in 1952. They are all on sites that are physically constrained. It is to the enormous credit of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) that they have been able to maintain and optimize these aging facilities and keep them operational well past their expected lifespans. But these older plants will never be as energy-efficient or compact as a new, state-of-the-art plant.

Today, these four facilities cumulatively occupy approximately 170 acres of waterfront property and have the capacity to treat more than 705 million gallons per day (MGD) of wastewater during a normal, dry day and up to twice that amount (1410 MGD) on a rainy day or during a storm event. Rain events in New York City can result in more than 1410 MGD of flow in the sewer collection system, and that excess can overflow the system and discharge into the surrounding water, tributaries, and bays.

These overflows are referred to as Combined Sewer Overflows or CSOs. The existing facilities are limited in their capacity to deal with such peak wet-weather flows. While DEP is currently evaluating how it can most effectively mitigate CSO events, the space constraints of the existing WWTP facilities limit the options.

With the incorporation of proven wastewater and biosolids treatment technologies, a new, consolidated Rikers Island plant could offer a host of community, environmental, and economic benefits and be a global example of an eco-friendly, energy positive island.

Depending on the city's goals, the new facility could potentially:

- Occupy less than 100 acres of land, which means it would be 40% more space-efficient than the older conventional WWTPs;
- Leave approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  of Rikers Island for other beneficial uses, such as solar energy recovery, educational facilities, and/or public open space;
- Reduce energy demand and costs by up to 40% by using more energy-efficient process technologies and equipment;
- Include a centralized biosolids/food waste/organics energy recovery plant to move toward an energy neutral or energy positive facility;
- Capture and treat more peak storm/CSO flow, thus improving receiving water quality in the East River;
- Allow for the beneficial reuse of the majority of the waterfront property currently occupied by the four existing plants.

There are also many additional community, environmental, and economic benefits that a new, consolidated, state-of-the-art wastewater treatment plant could offer:

### **Social and Community Benefits**

- **Reduction in odor** by removing most of the existing WWTP facilities from the existing sites and building new modern facilities to capture and treat odors. Many of the new odor-control technologies are more environmentally friendly because they use naturally occurring bacteria to mitigate odors, rather than chemicals.
- **Enhanced water quality** through the increased capture and treatment of more stormwater and wastewater that would otherwise be discharged into the local waterways. By using modern technologies that are 40 to 60 times more compact and space-efficient than old technologies, a new Rikers Island plant could potentially capture and treat not only the current and future daily wastewater flows, but also even more of the combined storm or wet weather flows that occur during heavy rain events.
- **Potential to close down peak power plants** or reduce operating frequency, thus mitigating many of the air-quality and health issues associated with these plants.
- **Further reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions** by reducing energy demand, truck traffic, and off-gases from the treatment facilities.

## **Economic and Energy Benefits**

- **Recover energy and store it for peak demand periods** by redirecting food waste, fats oils and grease (FOG), and other high-energy organics from landfills for either co-digestion with the wastewater biosolids or separate digestion. These processes can be coupled with energy recovery and storage technologies to power the entire plant and potentially develop an energy neutral or energy positive plant, or alternatively the gas could be cleaned using modern technologies, such as pressure swing adsorption, to remove impurities and moisture, and be injected into gas pipelines for use in local homes and industries.

## **Environmental Benefits**

- **Produce high-quality biosolids for beneficial reuse**, such as a Class A product that can be used for soil amendment and fertilizer for parks and community gardens.
- **Recover valuable nutrients for revenue**, such as phosphorus and nitrogen. Chicago's Stickney WWTP, which is similar in capacity to a consolidated Rikers Island plant, currently operates one of the largest phosphorus recovery facilities in the world to produce fertilizer for the local market.
- **Water reuse** for irrigation and/or industrial uses.

These concepts are based on other similar projects such as:

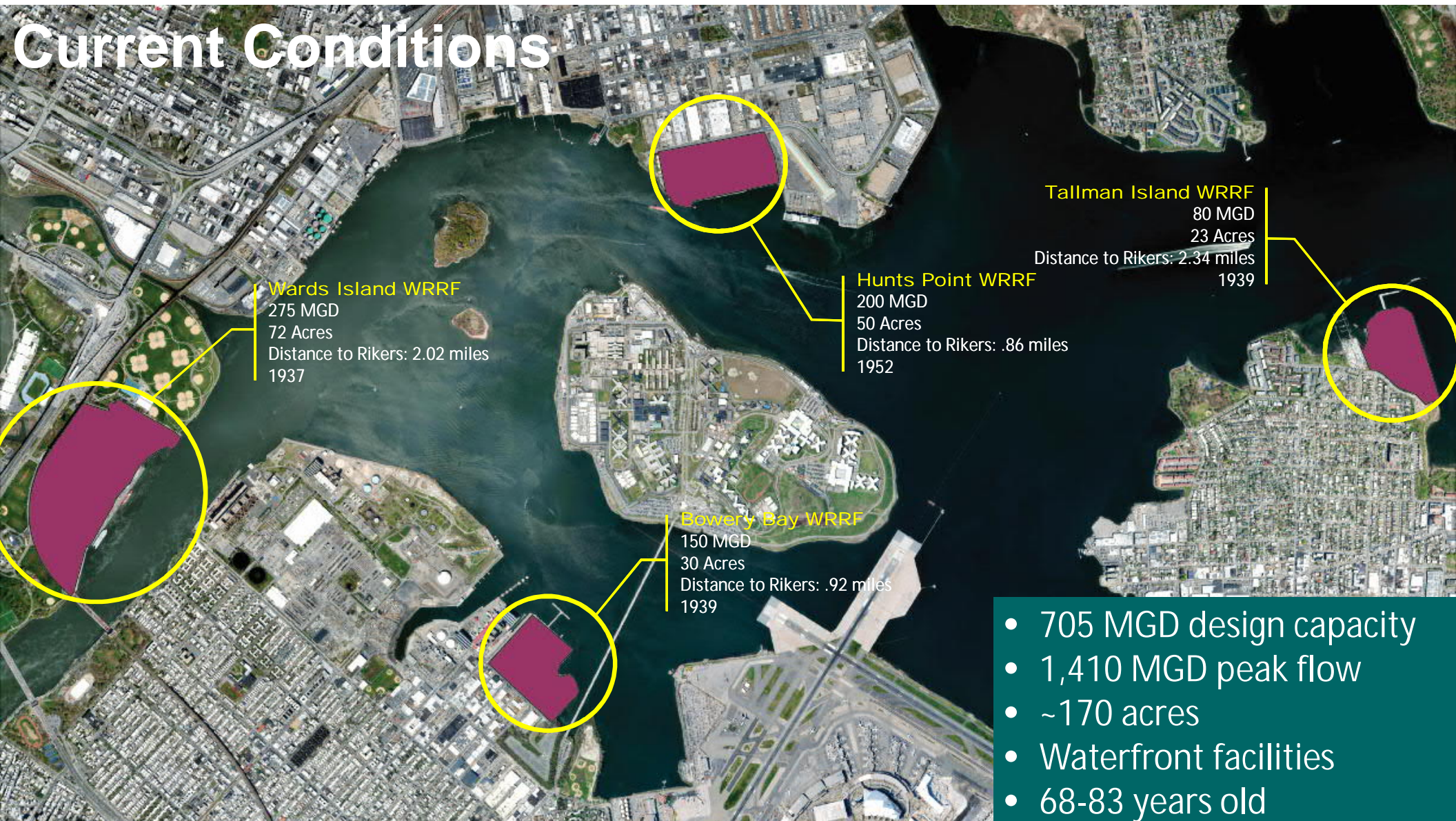
- **Deer Island Sewage Treatment Plant, Boston, MA**  
(380 MGD/1200 MGD peak)  
This is a precedent for the consolidation of existing treatment facilities, and Deer Island similarly included a jail.
  - Consolidation of two existing facilities operational by 2000
  - Nut Island now public open space
  - Vastly improved water quality in Boston Harbor and Charles River
  - Energy recovery/renewable energy
  - Capture and treats 95% of CSOs
- **Lions Gate Secondary Wastewater Treatment Plant, North Vancouver, Canada**  
3.7 Hectares (31 MGD/84 MGD peak) in 7.7 acres
  - Relocated existing waterfront plant in a smaller footprint (25 % reduction) while improving the level of treatment
  - Return waterfront land to the Squamish Nation's for beneficial community use
  - Enhanced treatment level and receiving water quality
  - Energy Recovery & Energy Reduction
  - District heating and cooling for 500 homes



- Reduced GHG emissions >75%
  - Reduced odor
  - Sustainable LEED Gold Buildings
- **Blue Plains Wastewater Treatment Plant, Washington, DC**  
Biosolids Treatment Facility (384 MGD capacity; about 40% capacity of a consolidated Rikers Island facility)
    - Regional WWTP serving eight local communities
    - Modern biosolids program focused on energy recovery, GHG reductions, beneficial reuse, and cost savings
    - Consistent with New York City's 80 x 50 goal of 80% reduction in GHG emissions by 2050
    - Modern biosolids technology has the potential to recover 13MW Green Power = ability to power 12,000 homes.
    - Digesters are half the footprint and half the cost of conventional digesters
    - Class A beneficial reuse product
    - 40% reduction in GHG emissions
    - 50% reduction in biosolids trucking
    - 50% reduction in biosolids management operations and maintenance costs
  - **Sha Tin WWTP Cavern Relocation, Hong Kong**
    - Relocate existing waterfront wastewater treatment plant to an artificial cave
    - Recover prime waterfront property
    - Reduce footprint by up to 60% using energy-efficient, compact technologies
    - Enhanced wastewater/stormwater capture and treatment for restoration of receiving waters and beaches
  - **Tuas Resource Recovery Facility, Singapore**  
(211 MGD)
    - Consolidation of multiple Wastewater Facilities into Modern, Compact Resource Recovery Facility on a largely artificial island
    - > 50% Footprint Reduction
    - Recovered valuable property for beneficial reuse
    - Improved treatment and receiving water quality
    - Energy reduction and recovery:
      - Advanced Digestion – Class A and compost
      - Redirect organics from landfill for co-digestion
      - Municipal sludge incineration with heat & energy recovery
      - Co-location of municipal solid waste incineration with heat and energy recovery
    - Industrial reuse of water

I would like to thank the Committee for their time and attention, and would be happy to answer any questions.

# Current Conditions



- 705 MGD design capacity
- 1,410 MGD peak flow
- ~170 acres
- Waterfront facilities
- 68-83 years old



# Summary of Potential Sustainability Benefits

- All four plants could feasibly be consolidated on Rikers Island
- Compact modern plant < 100 acres
- 40% smaller footprint when compared to existing conventional treatment
- Majority of island (>300 acres) remains available for other beneficial uses – parkland, solar and wind energy



## Social and Community Benefits

- Recover Waterfront Property
- Reduce Odor and Truck Traffic
- Enhance Water Quality – Capture/ treat more CSO, stormwater
- Mitigate Flooding
- Shut Down Peak Power Plants

## Economic and Energy Benefits

- Reduce Energy Demand and Costs by up to 40%
- Recover Energy - Redirect organics, food waste, fats, oils, grease from landfills
- Reduce Maintenance Costs
- Reduce Biosolids Disposal Costs

## Environmental Benefits

- Green Energy Recovery – biosolids, solar, wind
- High-Quality Biosolids for Beneficial Reuse – Class A, soil amendment, fertilizer
- Reduce GHG emissions
- Recovery Valuable Nutrients – phosphorus, nitrogen
- Water Reuse – irrigation or industrial reuse

# Deer Island Sewage Treatment Plant Boston, MA

- Consolidation of two existing facilities. Fully operational in 2000.
- Nut Island now public open space
- Vastly improved water quality in Boston Harbor and Charles River
- Energy recovery/renewable energy
- Captures and treats 95% of CSOs





# Lions Gate Secondary Wastewater Treatment Plant North Vancouver, Canada

- Relocated existing waterfront plant in a smaller footprint (25% reduction)
- Returned waterfront land to the Squamish Nation for beneficial community use
- Enhanced treatment level and receiving water quality
- Energy recovery and energy reduction
- District heating and cooling for 500 homes
- Reduced GHG emissions >75%
- Reduced odor
- Sustainable LEED Gold buildings

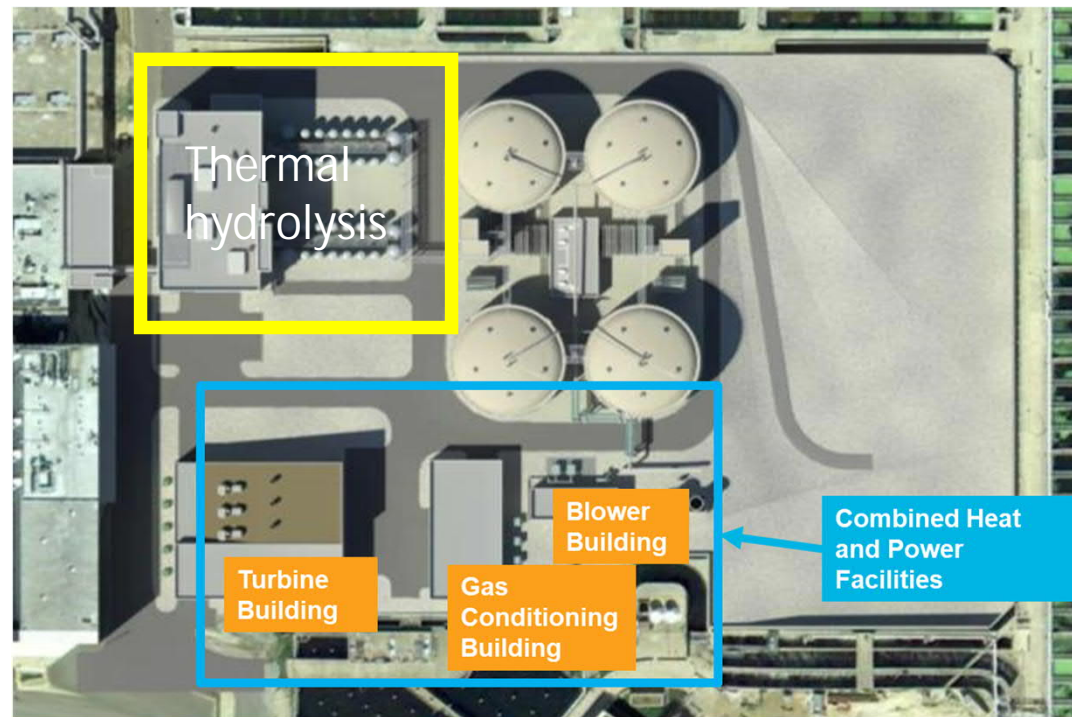




# Blue Plains Wastewater Treatment Plant

Washington, DC

- Regional WWTP serving eight local communities
- Modern biosolids program focused on energy recovery, GHG reductions, beneficial reuse and cost savings
- Consistent with NYC's 80 x 50 goal of 80% reduction in GHG emissions by 2050
- Modern biosolids technology recovered 13MW Green Power = 12,000 homes (40% capacity of Rikers Island WWTP)
- Digesters half the footprint and half the cost
- Class A beneficial reuse product
- 40% reduction in GHG
- 50% reduction in biosolids trucking
- 50% reduction in biosolids management O&M costs



# Sha Tin WWTP Cavern Relocation

## Hong Kong

- Relocate existing waterfront wastewater treatment plant to an artificial cave
- Recover prime waterfront property
- Reduction in footprint by up to 60% using energy-efficient compact technologies
- Enhanced wastewater and stormwater capture and treatment for restoration of receiving waters and beaches



# Tuas Resource Recovery Facility Singapore



- Consolidation of multiple wastewater facilities into a modern, compact, resource recovery facility on a largely artificial island
- > 50% footprint reduction
- Recovered valuable property for beneficial reuse
- Improved treatment and receiving water quality
- Energy reduction and recovery:
  - Advanced digestion – Class A and compost
  - Redirect organics from landfill
  - Municipal sludge incineration
  - Solid waste incineration
- Industrial water reuse



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 91-92-<sup>93</sup> Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 2/29/2020

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Curtis Bell

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: A little piece of light

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Curtis Bell

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: A little p.o.l

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1591, 92, 93 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: John HALL

Address: 127 West 43rd St

I represent: We Act for Environmental Justice

Address: 1854 Amsterdam Ave, New York NY

10031

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

27

Appearance Card

[ ]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1591, 1592 Res. No. 1593  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: 1/29/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: CECIL CORBIN-MARK

Address: 1854 AMSTERDAM AVE NY NY 10031

I represent: WE ACT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Address: 1854 AMSTERDAM AVE NY, NY, 10031

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

[ ]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rebecca Bratspies CUNY Law

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: CUNY Center Urban Environmental

Address: Reform

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

[ ]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tyler Nims

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Robert Lippman Commission

Address: \_\_\_\_\_



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: DR. GREGORY BOWDEN

Address: 33 MADISONVILLE ROAD, BASKING RIDGE, NJ

I represent: AFCOM

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1591, 92, 93 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 1/29/2020

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Annel Hernandez

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: NYC Environmental Justice Alliance

Address: 462 30th Street Bklyn, NY 11232

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 1/29/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Melissa Tachan

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: NYLPI

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1591, 1592, 1593 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 1/29/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lauren Tsubayama

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Regional Plan Association

Address: One Whitehall, 16<sup>th</sup> Fl, NY NY

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1591, 1592, 1593 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Michael Dulong/Rebecca Pryor-Riverkeeper

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Riverkeeper/SWIM Coalition

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1591, 1592, 1593 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 1/29/2020

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sanita Daftary

Address: 1900 Lexington

I represent: JLUSA

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ERIC GOLDSTEIN

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL

Address: 40 W. 20 ST NY NY

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1591<sup>1592</sup>, 1593 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 1/29/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jane Selden

Address: 446 East 20th St, NY, NY 10009

I represent: 350 NYC

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 01/28/2020

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Clara Zayas / Arthur

Address: 1259 East 222 Street

I represent: The Hope Program

Address: 7 Smith Street BK NY 11201

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: DANIEL ZARRILLI

Address: 253 BROADWAY

I represent: NYC MAYOR'S OFFICE

Address: CITY HALL

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Susanne DesRoches

Address: Mayor's office of Sustainability

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. <sup>1591</sup> <sub>1592</sub> <sub>1593</sub> \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 01-29-2020

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Fernando Ortiz

Address: 940 Garrison Ave Bronx, NY

I represent: The POINT CDC

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Minister Dr. Victoria A. Phillips - Ms. V

Address: 40 Rector St

I represent: Mental Health Project Urban Justice

Address: 40 Rector St 9th floor

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 15917 <sup>1592</sup> Res. No. 1931 ~~94~~  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Alexa Adams

Address: 40 Rector St.

I represent: Urban Justice Center

Address: MENTAL HEALTH PROJECT

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: 1/29/2020

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Clara Zayas

Address: 1 Smith Street 1259 E 222nd St

I represent: The HOPE Program

Address: 1 Smith Street

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: CLAUDIA COGER

Address: 3-20-27th Ave ASTORIA NY 11102

I represent: ASTORIA TENANTS ORG INC

Address: 4-05-ASTORIA BLVD ASTORIA NY 11102

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: VILL GUZMAN

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: JLUSA

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1591, 1597, 1593 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 1/29/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tamika Graham

Address: 198 Roman Ave S.I. N.Y 10314

I represent: MYSELF & Just Leadership USA

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1591, 1592, 1593 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Georgi Page

Address: 1620 Union St, Brooklyn 11213

I represent: 350 Brooklyn

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Harold

Address: 228 Willis Ave

I represent: Bx Ave 10/59

Address: Bx Ave

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 01-29-20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Pam Elardo

Address: 59-17 Junction Blvd

I represent: NYC DEP, Deputy Comm. of Wastewater Treatment

Address: 59-17 Junction Blvd.

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**Appearance Card**

[ ]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Sgt. Timothy Farrell

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Dept. of Correction

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**Appearance Card**

[ ]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Rep. Commissioner Patricia Feeney

Address: Department of Correction

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**Appearance Card**

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1591, 1593 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor     in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Adriana Espinoza

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: NYCCU

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**Appearance Card**

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor     in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Kandra Clark

Address: 111-09 76<sup>th</sup> Rd, Forest Hills, NY 11375

I represent: Exodus Transitional Community

Address: 2268 Third Ave, New York, NY 10035

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆