



Good morning, Chair Restler and members of the Committee on Governmental Operations, State & Federal Legislation. My name is Louis Molina, and I am the Commissioner of the New York City Department of Citywide Administrative Services, also known as DCAS. I am joined by Deputy Commissioner for Energy Management, Sana Barakat, Assistant Commissioner, Steven Caputo and Assistant Commissioner for Real Estate Services, Matthew Berk. Thank you for inviting us to testify today.

#### Citywide Framework for Decarbonization

Local Law 97 established one of the most ambitious greenhouse gas reduction frameworks in the country, requiring the City of New York to lead by example and reduce emissions from government operations faster than the private sector. With this front of mind, we have reduced greenhouse gas emissions from City operations by 26 percent through FY23 compared to our Fiscal Year 2006 baseline. We remain on track to exceed a 50 percent reduction ahead of schedule for 2030, a remarkable achievement that reflects the dedication of our teams and partners across all agencies.

This progress has been the result of extraordinary citywide mobilization — one that integrates capital investments, operational efficiency, and deep collaboration between DCAS and our sister agencies. Together, we are transforming how the City powers, fuels, and manages its assets, and we are setting a model for large-scale urban decarbonization.

#### **Decarbonizing City Buildings**

Buildings account for roughly 70 percent of emissions from city government operations. In response, DCAS has led a comprehensive effort to upgrade, retrofit, and decarbonize our public infrastructure. Since Fiscal Year 2014, we have implemented over 17,500 energy conservation measures across 2,500 city-owned buildings, achieving a reduction of more than 460,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent; the same as removing over 100,000 cars from the road.

These measures have generated not only environmental benefits but also financial and community dividends. Through improved energy efficiency, we have reduced annual energy expenses by \$150 million per year, with more than half of all projects located in disadvantaged communities, ensuring that the benefits of cleaner, more efficient public buildings reach the New Yorkers who need them most.

Recently, the City completed 300 direct-install lighting upgrades at schools — rapid, scalable conversions to LED lighting that yield immediate and measurable emission reductions. Alongside these lower-cost initiatives, we are also advancing comprehensive retrofits at major facilities, including the 57th Street Sanitation Garage, the Brooklyn Museum, and three high-energy-use facilities operated by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME).

DCAS also provides grant funding for agency-led energy projects, supporting both capital and expense work that produces verifiable savings. These programs distribute tens of millions of dollars annually and, through ongoing process improvements, we achieved an overall 93 percent capital commitment rate in the last fiscal year, a testament to our agencies' ability to deliver results efficiently.

#### **Expanding Renewable Energy**

Expanding the City's renewable energy portfolio is central to our decarbonization strategy. Under Local Law 99 of 2024, the City is now mandated to develop 150 megawatts of solar power on City properties by 2035; a bold target that will multiply our existing capacity nearly fivefold. As of today, the City has installed approximately 32 megawatts of solar, with over 80 percent of that capacity located on public schools. Reaching the 150-megawatt goal within the next decade is ambitious, but DCAS is fully mobilized to deliver it through every feasible pathway.

Equally transformative is the Champlain Hudson Power Express (CHPE) project, which will provide the City with 100 percent renewable electricity. With anticipated completion in Spring 2026, this clean power supply will make every kilowatt consumed by our electrified buildings fully renewable — dramatically enhancing the impact of our energy and electrification efforts.

#### **Electrifying and Modernizing Schools**

Public schools represent the City's largest and most visible building portfolio. In 2022, we launched the "Leading the Charge" initiative, committing to complete or initiate the electrification of 100 schools by 2030. To date, 33 schools are already in progress toward that goal. The initiative also set targets for 800 school lighting upgrades and phased out the use of No. 4 fuel oil, thanks to Local Law 32 of 2023, which accelerated that phase-out.

These school projects not only lower emissions but also create healthier, more comfortable learning environments for our students and teachers, reinforcing the broader civic value of decarbonization.

#### **Building Capacity for Decarbonization**

Under Executive Order 89, the City has placed Agency Chief Decarbonization Officers (ACDOs) at eight of the highest-emitting agencies. These ACDOs lead agency-level implementation while DCAS provides dedicated energy staff positions, technical assistance, and training resources. This structure ensures sustained capacity, accountability, and alignment across city government as we deliver on our climate commitments.

#### Fleet Decarbonization

Parallel to our work on buildings, DCAS is also driving one of the largest municipal clean fleet transitions in the country. Under the NYC Clean Fleet Plan, launched in 2015, the City committed to reduce fleet greenhouse gas emissions 50 percent by 2025 through electrification, renewable fuels, and operational efficiencies.

We are proud to report that DCAS now operates the largest electric vehicle (EV) fleet in New York State, with 5,735 EVs currently in service and 410 additional units on order. Over 1,000 of these EVs are serving law enforcement functions across 15 agencies, and more than 1,600 medium- and heavy-duty electric trucks are in operation or procurement.

To complement our fleet's transition to electric, we are currently operating the largest EV charging network in the state, featuring 2,356 charging ports, including 404 fast chargers and 161 solar carports.

#### Renewable Fuels and Fleet Efficiency

As we look ahead, we recognize that electrification is only one part of the puzzle. To advance our efforts, DCAS has also implemented the largest biofuels program on the East Coast, transitioning all City fleet trucks and off-road equipment to renewable diesel; a complete replacement for fossil diesel fuel. This renewable diesel is primarily derived from used cooking oil and waste animal fats, helping reduce waste while cutting lifecycle emissions. To date, the City has used over 34 million gallons of renewable diesel.

This transition extends beyond road vehicles. DCAS is collaborating with the NYC Department of Transportation and other maritime agencies to power boats and ferries with renewable diesel. The Staten Island Ferry fleet has fully transitioned, and other agencies are following suit.

Efficiency remains central to the fleet program. Since Fiscal Year 2018, we have reduced total fleet size by 2,234 vehicles, or 7 percent, through the fleet-rightsizing and telematics initiatives launched under Executive Order 41. The City continues to operate 4,369 hybrid vehicles, including more than 1,000 new hybrid replacements for the NYPD, ensuring that by the end of Fiscal Year 2026, 60 percent of the NYPD fleet will

be hybrid, electric, or powered by biofuels. Collectively, these actions have resulted in a 67 percent reduction in fossil fuel use, or the equivalent of 20 million gallons annually.

#### Legislation

DCAS is grateful for the Council's partnership in advancing the policies that enable this work. Legislation such as Local Law 32 of 2023 and Local Law 99 of 2024 exemplify how strong legislative direction can aid us in delivering tangible climate progress.

With respect to the legislation being considered today:

- Int. 1038 requires DCAS to lead the creation of a master plan for the redevelopment of Rikers Island for sustainability and resiliency purposes. DCAS is ready and eager to take on any new projects that will expand solar capacity or generate energy savings across large-scale City infrastructure. We agree that a master plan would be a valuable tool for long-term planning as the City transitions to the borough-based jail system. We look forward to working with the Council on ensuring the plan's requirements are structured to provide maximum value and feasibility.
- Int. 1378 requires DCAS to report on the use and vacancy of space in City buildings. DCAS supports the intent of this bill and shares the Council's goal of making data as transparent and accessible as possible. We note that much of this information is already available on the City's Open Data platform, and we are happy to work collaboratively to ensure data is published in the most useful ways going forward.

#### Conclusion

Decarbonizing city government requires a progressive approach fueled by ingenuity, innovation, and partnership. From transforming our public buildings and schools to electrifying our vehicles and ferries, New York City is demonstrating what a government can achieve when climate action becomes an operational priority.

We have reduced emissions by over a quarter since 2006 and are on track to cut them by more than half ahead of schedule. We are building a clean energy future. And while this is a marathon, we're proud of every mile marker we've passed along the way because with one solar panel, one electric vehicle, and one retrofit at a time, we are making our city greener. More than that, we're saving taxpayers money, creating healthier communities, and leading by example for cities around the world.

Thank you for your partnership and continued support. I am happy to answer any questions the Committee may have.

#### Testimony of

### David B. Goldin, Administrative Justice Coordinator Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice

## Before the Committee on Government Operations, State and Federal Legislation October 27, 2025

Good morning, Chair Restler and Members of the Committee:

My name is David Goldin. I serve as Administrative Justice Coordinator in the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ). I also serve as MOCJ's general counsel. I appreciate the opportunity to testify today.

MOCJ works with partners inside and outside government to develop and implement policies that promote safety and fairness in legal enforcement and reduce unnecessary incarceration or other punitive sanctions. As Administrative Justice Coordinator, I work with the City's administrative tribunals on matters of shared concern across agencies and the use of civil adjudication in enforcement of the City's health and safety regulations. I work closely with the Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings (OATH) in particular.

Starting in 2008, my office coordinated the consolidation into OATH of the Environmental Control Board (previously part of the Department of Environmental Protection) and what had been the administrative tribunals of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the Taxi and Limousine Commission, and the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection, among other agencies. That consolidation resulted in what is now the OATH Hearings Division. The purpose of that consolidation was to ensure responsibility for adjudication of summonses issued by City enforcement agencies rested not with those issuing agencies themselves but with a neutral and independent body of professional administrative law judges and hearing officers.

As a neutral and independent adjudicative body, OATH cannot take a position on proposed legislation or policy. I am therefore addressing concerns about Intro 551, including its potential disruption of OATH's processes and unintended impacts on respondents before OATH. In 2019 I testified about a previous legislative proposal to implement a pilot day fines program at OATH. My testimony today reiterates concerns raised then.

The Council has repeatedly recognized and taken significant steps to achieve the important goal of promoting fairness and equity in enforcement of City health and safety regulations. One such step was the Criminal Justice Reform Act (CJRA) of 2016, which MOCJ supported and helped frame. The CJRA created the option for civil summonses, returnable to OATH, for certain low-

level offenses that were previously sent to criminal court. Those offenses included violations of open container, littering, and unreasonable noise laws. With the passage and implementation of CJRA, criminal summonses for those offenses were reduced by more than 90%.

For offenses adjudicated at OATH under CJRA, respondents found liable have the option of participating in an educational module instead of paying any penalty at all. More than 1 in 5 individuals found liable for CJRA violations have chosen to complete the educational module.

The Council took another step to increase fairness and equity in enforcement of health and safety regulations with Local Law 80 of 2021. That law effected wide-ranging reductions in penalties for violations, starting in 2023. Penalties were reduced for many of the violations that had been under consideration for the day fines pilot program proposed in 2019. For example, the minimum penalties for dirty sidewalk and similar violations issued by the Department of Sanitation were dropped from \$100 to \$50. Those are among the most commonly issued of all types of summonses.

Local Law 80 is worth noting for another reason as well. It has been suggested the reducing penalties results in increasing revenue, on the theory that lower-income respondents are more likely to pay penalties they can more easily afford. Experience with Local Law 80 refutes that suggestion: revenue from the summonses affected by the law dropped significantly in and after 2023.

Against that background, MOCJ offers these comments on Intro 551. We are familiar with the use of day fine models in the criminal law context, both abroad and as part of several local pilots in the United States in the 1980s and 1990s. But we have reservations about the way the proposed pilot in Intro 551 is structured.

OATH is a complex agency that annually processes over 1 million civil summonses, issued by over two dozen enforcement agencies. On an average day, OATH conducts more than 700 hearings. OATH's efficient management of that staggering caseload is a testament not only to the agency's dedicated staff, but to the integrated set of rules, processes, and systems that keeps it running smoothly.

Requiring OATH to adopt a day fines pilot program along the lines specified in the Intro would wreak operational havoc on OATH. To have hearing officers verify income and base penalties on that income determination will require a bifurcated hearing process: one hearing to determine liability, and a second separate hearing to verify income and determine penalty. That two-step process will be necessary to avoid claims of bias by respondents found in violation. Requiring income verification as part of penalty determination will also entail extensive IT reprogramming of already antiquated systems, new rulemaking, increased time to complete a hearing, increased number of hearings, and delays in issuance of decisions. And all of that will impact every respondent waiting for a hearing and a decision. Accordingly, no pilot should be mandated

without careful consideration of the institutional impact and a firm commitment to cover the costs associated with conducting the pilot.

Careful consideration also needs to be given to what features would be required for a day fines pilot. For example, the proposed legislation does not make clear whether it applies only to summonses issued to natural persons or if it also applies to business entities (corporate or otherwise) or buildings. Intro 551 already defines a "day-fine" as a penalty based on a "respondent's daily disposable income." Since a daily disposable income implies an individual, not a business, the intent is already apparent. It should be made explicit. With that clarification, however, it is important to note that when enforcement agencies issue summonses and file them with OATH, there is no distinction between those issued to natural persons and those issued to business entities. More work would be needed to determine if and how summonses could be isolated for natural persons.

A respondent's participation in the pilot program should be optional, not mandatory. A respondent should never be forced to disclose their income as a requirement to contest a violation. And a respondent who simply wants to pay a violation without contesting it—an option chosen for convenience by many people who receive enforcement summonses—should not be unnecessarily prevented from doing so by a requirement to submit income information. Imposing such a requirement would inconvenience respondents, increase the number of hearings, and increase the rate of defaults.

A pilot program cannot raise penalties beyond those already set forth in local law or rule. Increasing a penalty beyond the limit set by law would require legislation—not general delegation by the Council to the administrative enforcement agencies to impose otherwise unauthorized penalties. And increasing already authorized penalties to take respondents' incomes into consideration would interfere with ensuring that participation is voluntary. It is unclear—to say the least—by what means the City could force respondents to disclose confidential income information, or how OATH or other City agencies could protect the confidentiality of such material were it disclosed.

We understand it is not intended to include in the pilot program offenses that were moved to OATH as part of the CJRA. That should be made explicit by incorporating language into the Intro clarifying that CJRA offenses are not included. As I mentioned earlier, individuals found in violation for those offenses can avoid paying any penalty altogether by enrolling in an educational module. The availability of this option mitigates concerns about economic inequality.

Those examples illustrate the complexity of the issue and some of the additional work that would need to be done before a pilot could be implemented. Many specific features of the traditional day fine model reflect its development and use in a criminal, rather than civil, enforcement context. That model may be too procedurally complex and time-consuming with respect to summonses returnable to OATH. Any pilot program should be limited to a simple supplementary process, offered as a voluntary alternative, for a selected group of violations. It is critical that

nothing in legislation require a pilot program that would disrupt OATH's operations, require significant new technology and additional resources, increase defaults or give rise to public confusion. Likewise, a pilot program must not undermine the efficiencies that OATH, the Department of Finance and administrative agencies have achieved through the introduction of a universal summons and standardized processing of both uncontested and contested summonses.

CJRA and the penalty reductions following Local Law 80 of 2021 have substantially alleviated the disparate impact of health and safety enforcement. The City's enforcement agencies have consistently taken advantage of the CJRA model to identify additional violations for which enrollment in an educational module rather than payment of a penalty is appropriate when there is a finding of liability. To achieve further improvement in fairness and equity, there are other options that should be considered rather than imposing the criminal court day fine model on OATH's civil adjudication process. The Council could further expand the list of violations for which enrollment in an educational module would be the alternative to payment of any penalty. Or the Council could foster significant innovation by promoting development of an enforcement approach that efficiently takes into consideration a respondent's financial situation. For example, penalty schedules could include a penalty waiver for individuals who demonstrate indigence by showing documented participation in means-tested benefits programs.

The penalties now imposed for violations of the City's health and safety codes are almost entirely set forth in penalty schedules adopted by the various enforcement agencies. (A few penalties are specifically mandated by City or State law.) Those schedules were adopted in part to maintain uniformity in adjudication outcomes and prevent disparate results in cases involving similarly situated individuals and comparable facts. Amending those schedules to take into account legitimate considerations of equity and fairness will require agency rule-making. It is the enforcement agencies, not OATH, that are most familiar with the relationship between where and how many summonses they issue, what penalties they specify and why, and how to craft an enforcement approach that is best calculated to maintain health and safety without exacerbating inequity and economic unfairness. Likewise, the agencies can and should help inform enforcement strategies that reduce disproportionate financial penalties by increasing reliance on, for example, agency-issued warnings or demonstrations of compliance by respondents.

Moreover, a successful adjustment of the penalty schedules to promote fairness and equity must also protect a respondent's ability to resolve an outstanding summons directly with the agency that issued it, without requiring the unnecessary involvement of OATH.

Finally, I want to underscore that OATr is and must remain a neutral and independent entity. OATH is not a policy-making agency, but rather an independent administrative law tribunal. It should not be charged with responsibility for designing and implementing penalty schedules for a day fines pilot program. Nor should it be required to assess the success or shortcomings of such a program. The enforcement agencies would have to play the leading role in that effort. MOCJ is prepared to support them in working with other City agencies, such as the Department of Finance, Law Department and Office of Management and Budget, whose input would also be

necessary. MOCJ is also prepared to coordinate the reporting and analysis of the pilot program. As appropriate to a neutral adjudicative agency, OATH should be responsible only for reporting data concerning the outcomes of summonses it hears.

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## STATEMENT OF PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS TO THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS, STATE AND FEDERAL LEGISLATION OCTOBER 27, 2025

Good morning,

My name is Jumaane D. Williams and I am the Public Advocate for the City of New York. I want to thank Chair Restler, as well as the members of the Committee on Governmental Operations, for holding this important hearing.

Despite a legal mandate to close Rikers by August 2027 New York City is currently not on track to meet that deadline. As of March 2025, the population on Rikers has risen over 7,000, an increase from the roughly 6,500 incarcerated on January 1st and the four borough-based jails meant to replace the prison have seen little progress in construction. The Queens and Bronx borough jails are set to be completed by 2031 while the Manhattan jail may not see completion till 2032. In addition, the Brooklyn Borough jail is projected to be completed by 2029, if construction continues at a rapid pace. While the city should plan for the future, we would be remiss in failing to recognize that a plan for redeveloping Rikers cannot come about while its halls remain full and countless abuses continue behind its walls.

Int. 1038 would direct the Department of Citywide Administrative Services to submit a master plan for the redevelopment of Rikers Island with an aim towards sustainability and resiliency. Under Local Law 17 of 2021, the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice released a 2024 feasibility study looking at the impact of siting potential renewable energy technologies on Rikers Island — solar, battery storage, offshore-wind, and wastewater resource.<sup>3</sup> Taking into account constraints and other challenges, such as height restrictions due to the proximity to LaGuardia Airport and the island's projected flood risk, the report found four scenarios feasible.

<sup>1</sup> https://www.cityandstatenv.com/politics/2025/08/timeline-closure-rikers-island/376662/

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> https://gueenseagle.com/all/2023/7/21/brooklyns-borough-based-jail-proposal-expands-by-150-beds

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> https://www.nvc.gov/assets/climate/downloads/pdfs/Rikers-Report.pdf



Each of these scenarios would require massive capital investments from the island's environmental remediation to construction of any facilities and associated infrastructure and finally, ongoing maintenance and operational costs.

I believe the development of this master plan would help our city move forward with more concrete steps, a detailed timeline, and a clearer vision for the island post-Rikers closure. I fear that without a Master Plan, Rikers will not close in projected dates of 2030, and that NYC will not be prepared to quickly repurpose the island for future use. I look forward to working with the next administration towards this goal. Thank you.





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On the ground - and at the table

October 27, 2025

#### New York City Environmental Justice Alliance Testimony on City Decarbonization

Greetings Chair Restler and members of the Committee on Government Operations and thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony. Founded in 1991, the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance (NYC-EJA) is a non-profit citywide membership network linking 13 grassroots organizations from low-income neighborhoods and communities of color across all 5 boroughs in their struggle for environmental justice. We at the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance recognize the importance of the City's decarbonization efforts and appreciate this moment to share comments and concerns on this administration's progress towards lower carbon emissions.

NYC-EJA is a founding member of the Renewable Rikers, a movement to advance a green and restorative vision for Rikers Island and the environmental justice communities around it that coalesced after the announcement of the closure of the carceral facilities on the island during the De Blasio administration. Though the path towards Renewable Rikers looked bright at the end of the last mayoral term - with the passing of the Renewable Rikers Act and first transfer of land on the island from the jurisdiction of the Department of Correction to DCAS - the Adams administration has shown deep resistance to taking the baton and running with the clear mandate given them. Not only have they failed to oversee key portions of the legislation - including closing jails and transferring land away from DOC - they have all but tried to weaken and isolate key stakeholders within this process, including the Rikers Island Advisory Committee.

Our progress on Local Law 97 and the Renewable Rikers Act are critical to addressing the burdens of NYC's environmental justice communities and achieving a just future for all New Yorkers—reducing local air pollution, generating thousands of good-paying jobs and making our inhabited spaces healthier and more comfortable. Decarbonizing our largest and dirtiest buildings while simultaneously planning the development of a renewable and sustainable infrastructure hub on Rikers island is the direction of bold climate action we need in this critical moment.

Intro 1038 is a key part of the implementation of Renewable Rikers, with numerous benefits for environmental justice communities around the island and for the city as a whole. From a state of the art wastewater treatment plant that will be able to treat hundreds of millions of gallons of

combined sewer overflow each year, renewable energy infrastructure and a composting facility that can help centralize the city's efforts to remove food scraps from our current waste management system. Having this new wastewater treatment facility on Rikers could potentially reduce the capacity of existing ones in neighboring EJ communities, helping drive down pollution in these communities. NYC-EJA wishes to give its support for the bill with some minor tweaks to its current text. First, in line with the language within the Renewable Rikers Act - we wish to see compost and organic waste processing more explicitly named as one of the sustainability and resiliency purposes listed within the bill. Second, we wish to make sure that there is a public comment period where local communities can share their concerns and priorities for what will be sited on the island.

On Local Law 97 – The City's progress has been slow, the data shows us that the private sector is ahead on compliance. As officials from DCAS just testified at today's hearing, the City has fallen short of the required 40% emissions reduction target for 2025, which will only be met in FY 2027. There's a lot to be done and a number of buildings to decarbonize, but we can't expect the private sector to comply with the law if the City does not lead the way. We have an opportunity to develop neighborhood scale decarbonization projects using thermal energy networks, which we need to begin planning right now and not delay any further. In light of recent federal setbacks to climate action, it is imperative for NYC to lead locally. We must strengthen our commitment to LL97 in a way that supports building owners making on-site building improvements (not purchasing RECs), creates good green jobs, and reduces our overall reliance on fossil fuel infrastructure.

DCAS has installed 30.5 MW of solar PV panels across 187 facilities, achieving just over 30% of the City's (Local Law 99 of 2024) mandate to install 100 MW of solar by the end of 2030. With nearly 70% of the work still remaining, accelerated progress will be essential to stay on track as 2030 approaches. We cannot delay meeting our climate goals any further. At the same time, critical state infrastructure like Clean Path NY and offshore wind farms have been delayed due to state or federal incompetencies, slashing valuable opportunities for the City's procurement of large scale renewable energy. In light of these unplanned cancellations and recognizing the continued need to comply with the requirements for a 70% renewable energy grid by 2030, it is unclear what the City's plan is to meet the goals of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act and Climate Mobilization Act.

This moment presents a critical, once in a generation opportunity for New York City to bring the Renewable Rikers vision to life—transforming the island into a hub of renewable energy, wastewater and sustainable infrastructure that will help meet our ambitious climate commitments while delivering long overdue relief to environmental justice communities that have been burdened by pollution.

We're glad to hear that DCAS is supportive of Intro 1038. NYC-EJA appreciates your consideration and we hope to continue to work together with the Council towards the equitable implementation of Local Law 97 and greener future for Rikers Island.



#### OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

#### **ANTONIO REYNOSO**

Brooklyn Borough President

City Council Committee on Governmental Operations Testimony on Intro. 1038 October 27, 2025

Good afternoon, my name is Hannah May-Powers, and I am here today on behalf of Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso to support Intro. 1038. Thank you to Chair Restler for holding this important hearing and to Councilmember Nurse for introducing this bill, which aims to push the administration to close the Rikers Island jail for good and advance the Renewable Rikers plan.

Closing the Rikers Island jail remains a moral imperative despite how this administration has dragged its feet on constructing the associated borough-based jails. Not only will the borough-based jails be closer to courts and to incarcerated people's support systems, they will allow for incarcerated individuals to access physical and mental healthcare in a way that is currently impossible on Rikers. Though the initial plan was to close Rikers in 2027, the first borough-based jail, located in Brooklyn, is not expected to be completed until 2029.

This is a failure of preparation that extends to the fact that there is no official plan in place for utilizing the Island for sustainability and resiliency purposes, as required by 2021 law. Although required feasibility studies for renewable energy structures and a new wastewater resource recovery facility (WWRF) on the Island have occurred, significant action still needs to happen. Intro. 1038 is a critical step toward transforming Rikers into the hub for environmental progress that it is legally mandated to become.

The vision for a Renewable Rikers aims to deliver justice for impacted communities in multiple ways. Groups disproportionately impacted by incarceration and policing, namely Black, Hispanic, and low-income New Yorkers, are also severely impacted by environmental racism, leading to adverse health outcomes. For example, the neighborhoods in Brooklyn with the highest number of individuals detained on Rikers, namely Brownsville, East New York, Flatbush, Ocean Hill, and Bushwick, also have higher-than-average rates of childhood asthma, adult asthma, cancer, and premature mortality. (See maps below from *The 2025 Comprehensive Plan for Brooklyn*).

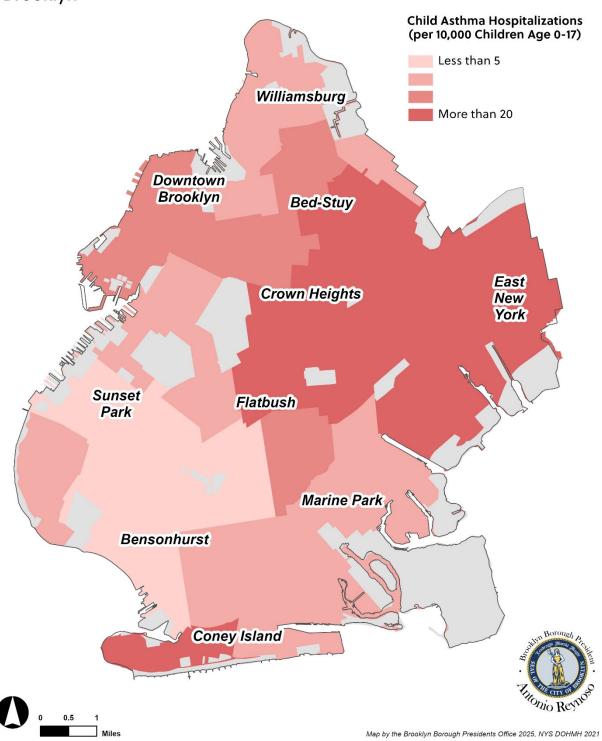
In addition to infrastructure to support clean energy, clean water, and diversion of organic waste, the Regional Plan Association's Renewable Rikers Plan calls for a research and training

institute to be located on the Island, to connect people impacted by incarceration with new, green job opportunities. It also calls for a visitor center to "document and bear witness to the painful history that soaks the soil." Additionally, consolidating WWRFs on Rikers Island could create opportunities for new open space in four NYC communities including the South Bronx.

This transformation of Rikers Island will be a major step toward addressing the long-lasting harm caused by racist policing and carceral practices that have plagued our city. Thank you again to the Committee, Chair Restler, and Councilmember Nurse for this hearing, and we encourage the Council to pass Intro. 1038 before the end of this term.

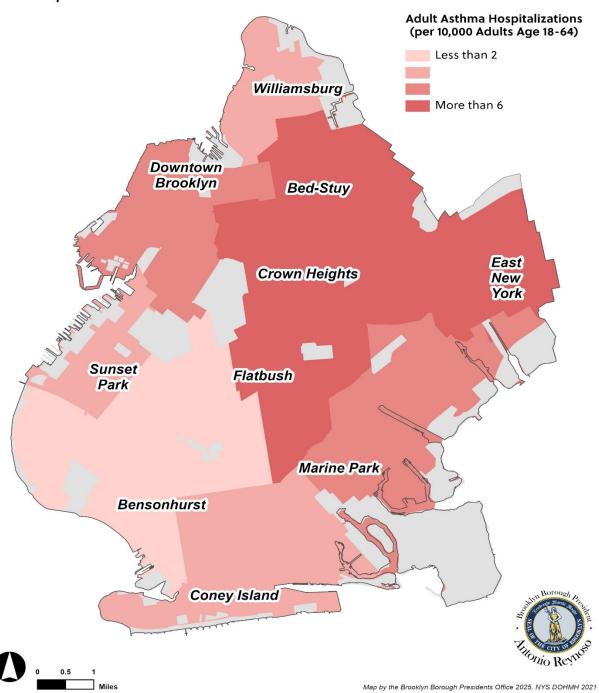
#### **Childhood Asthma**

Brooklyn

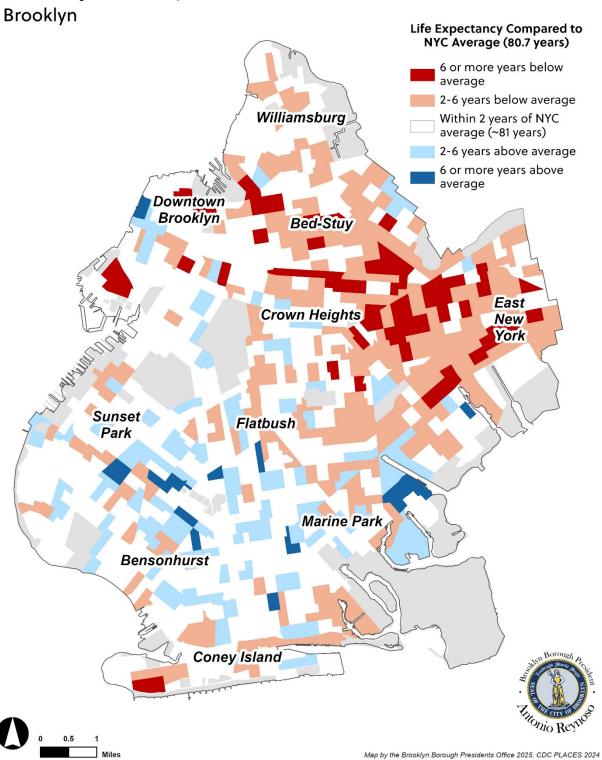


#### **Adult Asthma**

Brooklyn

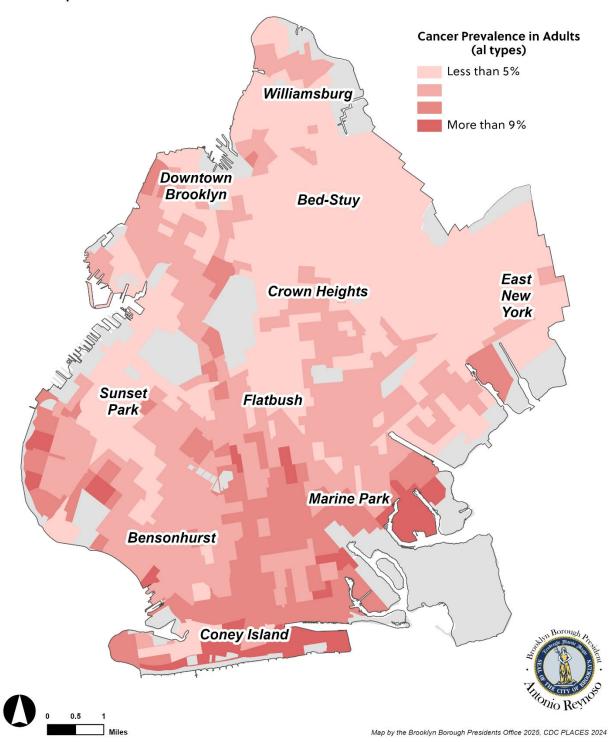


#### **Life Expectancy**



#### Cancer

#### Brooklyn





## STATEMENT OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL

# COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, STATE & FEDERAL LEGISLATION RE: THE PREPARATION OF A RENEWABLE RIKERS ISLAND MASTER PLAN October 27, 2025

Good afternoon, Chair Restler and members of the Committee. Thank you for leadership in holding this hearing and seeking to advance the Council's vision for Renewable Rikers Island.

My name is Eric A. Goldstein, and I am New York City Environment Director at the Natural Resources Defense Council ("NRDC"). As you know, NRDC is a national non-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 here in New York City where we have had our main offices since our founding in 1970.

NRDC strongly supports Intro 1038, which would require the Department of Citywide Administrative Services ("DCAS") to prepare a master plan for the redevelopment of Rikers Island "for sustainability and resiliency purposes." NRDC believes that this is among the most important pieces of environmental legislation before the Council as it prepares to close out its current term at year's end. Significantly, the bill also presents the best opportunity in years to advance much-needed, green jobs-producing, modern infrastructure redevelopment in the nation's largest city.

As the Council understood when it enacted what became Local Laws 16, 17, and 34 of 2021 ("the Renewable Rikers legislation"), there are numerous, compelling reasons for closing Rikers Island to incarceration. In 2017, the Independent Commission on NYC Criminal Justice and Incarceration Reform, chaired by former Chief Judge of the New York State Court of Appeals, Jonathan Lippman, called the Rikers Island jail complex "an international symbol of despair and damage" and concluded that ending incarceration on the island was "a moral imperative."

But often overlooked these days in the debate over the timing of Rikers closure are the multiple environmental and economic benefits expected to flow from the redevelopment of Rikers as a jobsproducing oasis of environmental infrastructure. Two city studies released last year highlight these benefits. In releasing a New York City Department of Environmental Protection ("DEP") feasibility study in March 2024, DEP Commissioner Rit Aggarwala wrote that building a modern wastewater treatment plant on Rikers "could transform DEP's operations...," "would be technically feasible...," and likely to be "similar in cost" to the needed rehabilitation of several of the city's nearby aging sewage plants. A second study, released by the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice, also in March 2024, found that constructing a major solar installation, battery storage, and an offshore wind converter station on Rikers presents a "feasible" and "compelling alternative" to the city's "current antiquated energy ... infrastructure." And an NRDC analysis

prepared by former NYC Sanitation Commissioner Brendan Sexton concluded that establishing a major new food- and yard waste composting facility on Rikers was both feasible and necessary to achieve the city's ambitious climate goals.

Since the completion of these studies, however, nothing has happened. The Adams administration has failed to take any meaningful steps forward to advance the Renewable Rilers vision.

To be sure, it was encouraging to hear the Department of Citywide Administrative Services ("DCAS") Commissioner's testimony this morning that seemingly expressed support for Intro 1038. But then the Commissioner stated that DCAS has assumed no management responsibilities for the 42 acres already transferred to it from the Department of Correction. And he conceded that DCAS has not taken steps to clean up those properties or to advance interim uses of those parcels for sustainability and resiliency purposes.

Those admissions reinforce the need for passage this year of Intro 1038, which has been championed by Councilmember Sandy Nurse.

We do offer one friendly amendment. We recommend that the final bill require that the Rikers Island Master Plan specifically be required to provide for the construction of a major composting facility on the island -- on the scale of the city's existing Fresh Kills composting operation. Such a facility would be fully consistent with the charge that, post-incarceration, Rikers Island be used for "sustainability and resiliency purposes." And it would be a logical outgrowth of the very small composting operation that has been operating successfully on the island for decades.

While meeting the August 2027 statutory deadline for an end to incarceration at Rikers remains challenging, few can seriously contest the wisdom of the Council's forward-looking vision for post-closure redevelopment of the 413-acre Rikers Island as a hub for building modern environmental infrastructure, advancing reparative justice, and producing hundreds of permanent green jobs for city residents. Preparation of an official New York City Master Plan for Renewable Rikers Island, as provided for by Intro 1038, is what is needed to turn an island of shame into a showplace of sustainability for all New Yorkers.

Thank you for your attention.

## Statement of the Natural Resources Defense Council Before the New York City Council in Support of Intro. 1038-2024, a Local Law in relation to a master plan for the redevelopment of Rikers Island for sustainability and resiliency purposes

Thank you to the members of the New York City Council for the opportunity to submit this testimony. My name is Ridgana Bonne-Annee, and I am an Environmental Justice Legal Fellow at Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). NRDC is a not-for-profit legal and scientific advocacy organization active on a wide range of public health and environmental issues across the country and in New York City, where our headquarters have been located since our founding in 1970. We submit this testimony in support of Int. 1038-2024, which requires the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) to prepare a master plan for the redevelopment of Rikers Island for sustainability and resiliency purposes. A master plan for Renewable Rikers moves New York City closer to implementing a just transition that replaces systems of harm with community driven solutions that advance environmental justice.

The Rikers Island jail complex has long stood as a symbol of environmental and racial injustice. The same communities disproportionately harmed by mass incarceration in New York City have also lived for generations under the shadow of pollution from peaker power plants and outdated wastewater facilities that should be moved. Closing Rikers is not only a moral imperative, but also an environmental one.

The City Council's past actions laid the groundwork for transforming Rikers Island. In 2021, the Council enacted Local Laws 16, 17, and 31, which initiated the closure of the jail complex and charted a path towards a Renewable Rikers. Together, these laws mandated the end of carceral use on the island and required feasibility studies on renewable energy and battery storage facilities. Those studies found that redeveloping Rikers into a hub for green infrastructure is both feasible and promising.

These milestones reflect years of advocacy by community leaders, environmental justice organizations, and people directly impacted by the harm caused by Rikers. Transforming the island's 413 acres into a hub for clean energy, modern wastewater treatment, and green jobs, can repair environmental damage and create opportunities for the same communities historically overburdened by pollution and mass incarceration. What is needed now is a clear plan that defines how Renewable Rikers will take shape and moves the vision toward reality.

The passage of Int. 1038-2024 represents the next step. A master plan will provide a clear, actionable roadmap for what happens when the jails close as required by law. Developing sustainable infrastructure on Rikers that replaces aging and polluting facilities, like peaker power plants and old wastewater recovery facilities, improves citywide sustainability and opens the door for reinvesting in those same frontline neighborhoods that continue to experience environmental injustice. Without this master plan, the city risks losing momentum and clarity on how it will deliver the full promise of Renewable Rikers.

If enacted, Int. 1038-2024 can demonstrate how a just transition looks like in practice: investing in sustainable infrastructure while centering the voices and needs of the workers and communities most impacted by injustice. A just transition is both the pathway and goal of moving from an extractive economy to a regenerative one by ensuring that sustainability efforts repair harm and build equitable power in affected communities. It means that the communities that have borne the greatest burdens of pollution, incarceration, and disinvestment must be centered in shaping sustainable solutions. It ensures that public investments do not simply clean up past harms, but actively build pathways to health, dignity, and jobs for communities facing environmental and racial inequities.

While Int. 1038-2024 establishes a framework for redevelopment, the bill can go further to ensure that both the process and outcome reflect just transition principles. First, the bill should explicitly include composting and organic waste processing among the potential sustainable uses for the island. These uses would advance the city's zero-waste goals, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and create green jobs for residents in overburdened communities.

Second, the bill should include a public comment period to allow for meaningful community participation in the master planning process. Meaningful participation aligns with the just transition principle that development of health, safety, and environmental policies must include the fenceline communities experiencing the environmental damage. The voices and lived experience of the people shaped by the legacy of Rikers are essential to ensuring that this transformation fulfills its promise of sustainability and resiliency.

New York City has consistently led the nation in setting ambitious environmental and social standards, whether it's modernizing waste management, expanding public transit, or advancing climate goals. The redevelopment of Rikers continues that legacy. Int. 1038-2024 ensures that the island is not left in limbo when the jails close and that the city remains a model for progress. With the passage of Int. 1038-2024, the Council can demonstrate how cities move from punishment to restoration, pollution to renewal, and disinvestment to community benefit.

For these reasons, NRDC urges the Council to pass Int. 1038-2024, and to strengthen it by explicitly referencing composting and organic waste processing and including a public comment process. Together, these elements will ensure that the Renewable Rikers vision serves as a blueprint for a just transition that centers the voices and rights of communities living with the burdens of environmental harm.

Thank you for your continued leadership in advancing a sustainable and resilient future for New York City.



#### Testimony of Riverkeeper, Inc. before the New York City Council

# Committee on Government Operations, State and Federal Legislation Oversight Hearing on Sustainability in City Government October 27, 2025

My name is Em Ruby, and I am the Senior Coordinator for Advocacy and Policy at Riverkeeper. Thank you, Chairperson Restler and Members of the Committee, for your leadership on this issue. I appreciate the opportunity to testify today.

Riverkeeper has for decades worked to improve New York City's water quality, expand public access to waters, and increase climate resilience and stormwater flood protection. We are a proud member of the Renewable Rikers Steering Committee.

While the current administration has dragged its feet in moving forward with the legally mandated closure of Rikers in 2027, many New Yorkers awaiting trial on Rikers Island have died in custody of the Department of Corrections. This legacy of violence, coupled with the collapsing physical infrastructure on the island, makes it clear: Rikers needs to close.

Renewable Rikers is the community consensus vision for the future of Rikers Island. Council Member Nurse's bill, Intro 1038, would create a Masterplan for the redevelopment of Rikers for sustainability and resiliency purposes, establishing a much needed roadmap for when the jail complex has finally been closed. Riverkeeper strongly supports this legislation and urgently calls on the Council to pass it before the end of this year.

More than half of the 21 billion gallons of raw sewage that New York City dumps into its waters yearly is released into the Upper East River and its tributaries in the Bronx and Queens. This is an environmental justice issue, adding to an already high pollution burden for communities in the South Bronx and Northern Queens.

In addition to planning for renewable energy and composting facilities, Intro 1038 requires the Department of Citywide Administrative Services to begin planning for the development of a wastewater treatment plant on Rikers Island. Building a new plant on Rikers Island is absolutely essential, as the city works to meet its regulatory commitments to reduce Combined Sewer Overflows into New York City Waters, and its own goals to achieve zero CSOs by 2060.

Not only is a new plant essential, it has also been found to be feasible and economical. In a Feasibility Study released in March of 2024, DEP found that:

- A new plant would save New Yorkers \$10 Billion over its lifetime, because building a new, state-of-the-art plant is far more economical than refurbishing the four wastewater treatment plants operating in the vicinity of Rikers Island, which are more than 90 years old.
- The plants in Hunts Point, Bowery Bay, Tallman Island and Wards Island could then be repurposed, reducing the impact of those plants on surrounding communities, and alleviating odor and water pollution issues in surrounding communities.

In order to address these concerns and meet regulatory requirements, while reducing pollution load on environmental justice communities, Riverkeeper calls on the Council and Mayoral Administrations to move forward with Renewable Rikers, and pass Intro 1038.

Thank you, Em Ruby Senior Coordinator, Advocacy and Policy Riverkeeper

Em Ruby, Senior Coordinator of Advocacy and Policy · <u>eruby@riverkeeper.org</u> · 20 Secor Road · Ossining, NY 10562 ·





# Testimony of Alia Soomro, Deputy Director for New York City Policy New York League of Conservation Voters City Council Committee on Governmental Operations, State and Federal Legislation Oversight Hearing on Sustainability in Government Operations October 27, 2025

My name is Alia Soomro and I am the Deputy Director for New York City Policy at the New York League of Conservation Voters (NYLCV). NYLCV is a statewide environmental advocacy organization representing over 30,000 members in New York City. Thank you, Chair Restler and members of the Committee on Governmental Operations, State & Federal for the opportunity to testify.

New York has some of the most ambitious climate laws in the country. In 2016, the City introduced "80x50," setting an ambitious target of 80% carbon emission reduction by 2050. In 2019, the City enacted Local Law 97, which requires many large buildings to cut their carbon emissions or face significant fines. Local Law 97 requires a 40% reduction in emissions from City government operations by FY25 and a 50% reduction by calendar year 2030. Additionally, in 2023, the City released *PlaNYC: Getting Sustainability Done*, which outlines many goals including maximizing climate infrastructure on City-owned property.

New York City's government operations need to continue making progress to cut its carbon emissions, whether it's by sustainably retrofitting city-owned and/or operated buildings, installing more charging infrastructure for the city fleet, or scaling up city-owned and/or operated renewable energy. For instance, when it comes to solar, according to the 2025 Mayor's Management Report (MMR), at the end of Fiscal 2025, the City has installed 31.31 megawatts of solar capacity, a nearly 30% increase over the prior fiscal year and a 123% increase since Fiscal 2021. This expansion includes the completion of New York City's largest collection of solar arrays, installed atop 104 City schools. DCAS is also developing more than 38 megawatts of new solar projects and will continue planning, procurement, and implementation efforts in Fiscal 2026.

When it comes to the city's fleet, DCAS needs to continue making progress to implement Local Law 140 of 2023, which calls for the full electrification of the City fleet by 2038, subject to commercial availability and reliability. This means the city also needs to continue working with utilities to install charging infrastructure. According to the MMR, DCAS installed 221 electric vehicle charging ports in Fiscal 2025, down from 346 the prior fiscal year.

Lastly, we urge the City to work towards the mandate for an all electric school bus fleet by 2035 (Local Law 120 of 2021). The City must continue working with utilities to invest in and expand

electric vehicle charging infrastructure, especially for medium- and heavy-duty vehicles. Cleaner technology should be prioritized for vehicles with the highest average miles traveled and highest emissions, and those that largely operate in environmental justice communities.

#### Intro 1038

NYLCV supports Intro 1038 of 2024, sponsored by Council Member Nurse, which would require the NYC Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) to submit a master plan for the redevelopment of Rikers Island for sustainability and resiliency purposes, including wastewater treatment, renewable energy generation and storage, and off-shore wind converter stations.

NYLCV supported the Renewable Rikers Act and included it in our 2022 New York City Council Environmental Scorecard. This package of bills included mandates to transfer Rikers Island from the Department of Correction to DCAS, study the feasibility of constructing renewable energy sources, which could include wind, solar, or battery storage on the Island, and study the feasibility of a new wastewater treatment facility. However, the Renewable Rikers Act did not definitively mandate that, once the land is transferred to DCAS, it be used for renewable energy purposes, only that the idea be studied.

NYLCV supports Intro 1038 because it continues the intent of the Renewable Rikers Act and would help the City and State meet its greenhouse gas reduction and renewable energy goals, as well as create green jobs. In fact, in 2024, DEP published a report finding it feasible to build a new wastewater treatment plant on Rikers Island, along with solar, battery storage and new equipment to feed offshore wind power into the electric grid. Lastly, and most importantly, requiring a long-term sustainability and resiliency master plan which outlines renewable energy generations and storage would help New York City get on a path to retiring fossil fuel peaker plants, which are disproportionately located in environmental justice communities.

With the climate crisis impacting us more and more everyday, at this point we must focus heavily on implementation of existing laws and policies and—perhaps most importantly—the need for robust funding and long-term capital planning. We urge the City Council to continue working with advocates and the City to implement existing laws and allocate the requisite funding to implement them.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Good morning, and thank you to the Councilmembers present today, as well as the advocates who have testified.

My name is Janos Marton, and I am the Chief Advocacy Officer of Dream.Org, a national organization committed to closing prison doors and opening doors of opportunity. Criminal justice and the clean energy transition are two of our biggest issues, so naturally I am in support of the Intro 1038 and Renewable Rikers more broadly. But I also bring two experiences to bear.

The first dates from my tenure as the first campaign director for the Close Rikers campaign, during which time a coalition led by individuals and families directly impacted by Rikers successfully moved the city's policy towards closure. At that time, we believed that Rikers brutal history called for the island to be used for a positive public purpose after the jails' closure, and the campaign continues to support Renewable Rikers to this day.

My second relevant experience is my more recent tenure on the Rikers Island Advisory Council, which consists of city staff named by Mayor Eric Adams and public members named by Speaker Adrienne Adams. As has been reported, the Advisory Council started slowly and accomplished little, much to the frustration of its public members, and frankly, several of it's city members as well. There is so much we could have done to advance Renewable Rikers, but as with all measures relating to closing Rikers, this mayoral administration has done nothing but waste time, money, and opportunity.

If there was any tangible benefit from the Advisory Council, it was our unearthing one of the key details to why Rikers is closing so slowly. The Renewable Rikers statute requires DOC to evaluate land it is not using on Rikers every six months, and pass that on to DCAS, who can then determine which agency is best equipped to engage with that parcel for the Renewable Rikers transition. Under the de Blasio administration, in its final year, this resulted in two parcels being transferred to DCAS.

On the Rikers Island Advisory Council we learned that those parcels have been leased from DCAS back to DOC, defeating the purpose of the initial transfer. Furthermore, and more outrageously, we learned that DOC had undertaken no analysis whatsoever during the past four years to determine additional sites for transfer. So this is a failure from both DCAS and DOC.

All of this begs for a master plan to actually get things moving forward. That is why I am here in support of this plan. However, putting this ball in DCAS' court, as the legislation does, gives me some pause, given their track record the past four years. If 1038 passes, I'd ask this body for vigorous oversight of DCAS to ensure it completes the Master Plan in a timely manner.

Finally, I'd like to push back on DCAS' earlier characterization of the RIAC meetings. These meetings took nearly 18 months to begin. The early meetings were a waste of time. Our site visit to Rikers Island was highly restricted. There will be no recommendations issued this year. It was the opinion of all public members that RIAC was an unserious effort from the

administration, and with the passage of time, I am sure there will be city staff who can attest to that.

Thank you for your time. Sincerely, Janos Marton October 27th 2025

Dear chair restler and the committee on governmental operations. My name is Christopher Leon Johnson and I am here to show my support to the rikers renewable plan in the city council. On the record I was inside the building today. I was in the bathroom so I wasn't able to do what I do have these bathrooms laugh out loud. So the reason I support the renewable rikers plan is because of the fact that little rikers have to close in 2027 that's the law you cannot circumvent the law. No America ever circumvent that law. So let's keep it 100 here that the city council has to find a way to put rikers in the position or the new Irondale pipe called rikers Islands for malakai Island they ain't put a position where that is breathable because. The land the ground is not that good The ground is horrible they did many ground tests in the ground testing not that good. So the way you rectified the period the rectify the ground is by finding a way to make it to where that the island is breathable and climate friendly. Myself I'm really against closing the closing rikers Island. But the laws of law I can't stop I can't stop the love being lost. So going forward. I support the play 100% supports councilmember Sandra. Nurse plan for renewable rikers. I am for the bill that councilmember Justin Brannan has introducing the city council to where that the oath must form a day finds pilot to be able to supplement the people that aren't able to pay to fines due to the income. I believe that look the city has to make their little money through fines and fees and etc and sanctions and violations and look that's how the city makes a money that's not be able to pay pay their pay their employees and pay for services in the city. But there's many people in the city like myself that can afford those fees so. I believe that the fees should be able to get paid based on a person's salary no person that makes less than \$20,000 a year like myself is able to pay \$1,000 fine. A person like my soul makes a less than \$20,000 a year which that means I'm a poverty person is able to pay a \$500 upon. Unlock might might be might not be a lot to many people in this city because this but the same time \$100 to me is like a lot of money. Even \$10 makes a lot of money. A dollar is a lot of money. So let's read ways people to pay all these fees without having a income burden. Lastly I want to show my support to Oswald feliz bill for the vacancy bill for city-owned buildings. The reason I support that bill is because of the fact that we need that numbers. I believe that the city owned any vacancy in the city of building machine able to be used by people that request space in the city until it will be filled up by by agency or or they able to give it to a developer etc I believe that many Vegas vacation spots in the city should be used for rent by people in

the city. Set up price to be able to rent and the people could fall to rent they should be able to pay it to use the space. Why is there only about eight spaces that people the public could use to to do their events in that's ridiculous. I support this bill thank you enjoy your day

Sincerely Christopher Leon Johnson October 27th 2025.

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