

The City of New York Mayor's Office of Sustainability 253 Broadway · 7th Floor New York · New York 10007 www.nyc.gov/sustainability

Nilda Mesa Director January 28, 2016

Testimony of Nilda Mesa Director of the Mayor's Office of Sustainability Before the New York City Council Committee on Environmental Protection Hearing on Introduction 886 and Introduction 359

Good afternoon Chairman Constantinides and members of the Committee on Environmental Protection. My name is Nilda Mesa and I am the Director of the New York City Mayor's Office of Sustainability.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Introduction 886 ("Intro 886") and Introduction 359 ("Intro 359"). Intro 886 and Intro 359 both amend the administrative code of New York City in relation to environmental justice, would mandate a 29-member advisory board, a separate agency working group, public hearings, a study of potential environmental justice communities, and over 70 separate agency environmental justice plans.

We welcome the opportunity to work with Council in developing actionable initiatives that can help us achieve full environmental justice in our communities.

Over the last few weeks we all watched in horror as the news out of Flint, Michigan showed what can happen to children and their families when the health concerns of lower income residents are systematically ignored. Children with elevated levels of lead may be at risk of lower IQs and other long term impacts, and living in a poor neighborhood means that they were already vulnerable to other stressors from their environment. We have seen environmental impacts affect low-income communities time and again throughout the U.S. over the course of many years, whether in Louisiana, Baltimore or Los Angeles.

As a 15-year-long resident of Central Harlem, I have seen what some days seems like all my neighbors suffering from asthma. Early in my legal career I wrote the amicus brief to the U.S. Supreme Court on behalf of the State of California in support of Mothers of East LA, who successfully challenged the siting of a waste incinerator in close proximity to schools and hospitals in their low-income neighborhood. I coauthored President Bill Clinton's executive order on environmental justice. While I headed the sustainability office at Columbia University, I successfully advocated on behalf of my neighbors for lower emitting new buildings, sustainable construction practices to minimize particulate matter, and that Columbia lead the city in having our neighborhood be the first to build out the infrastructure to make Clean Heat a reality. I've worked on environmental justice for 25 years now, and see what it means every day.

NYC attracts dreamers and those who would make their lives and their children's lives better than the ones they left behind. We betray them and the promise of New York if we do not pay attention to disparate environmental impacts and vulnerabilities, which can send our neighbors, their children, and their elderly relatives to the hospital, and keep them from their dreams.

Environmental injustice is often found in cities, with their relatively large populations of low-income neighborhoods and ethnic minorities, who often do not have strong political voices or access to power or information. Environmental injustice can take many forms, often including public health impacts from poor air or water quality, toxic contamination of soil, climate impacts, poor energy building performance which also then takes a higher proportion of residents' income as well as emitting more carbon into the atmosphere, lack of access to information or medical attention, lack of access to good quality food and nutrition, and lack of a voice in decision making that affects a community. Communities that are considered environmental justice areas meet a poverty test, which could be the federal poverty level or a percentage of area median income or some other test. A failure of environmental justice is a failure to meet environmental, social inclusion and economic standards all at once.

A case study for New York City is air quality. The sources of air pollutants here are mobile sources, such as cars and trucks, stationary sources, such as buildings, and sources outside the city boundaries, such as power plants. While we have the most potential to improve stationary source emissions and traffic concentrated in certain neighborhoods, it is important to recognize that a significant contributor of pollutants come from outside of New York City, including upwind power plants, industrial sources, and regional traffic emissions.

The smog that triggers the alerts to limit physical activity comes from a brew of ozone, nitrogen oxides and usually the summer heat. Ozone levels have not improved substantially in recent years following trends seen in other major U.S. cities. Ozone is formed downwind from major sources of nitrogen oxides (NOx), and reduced NOx emissions in metro area counties upwind of New York City will be required to bring down ozone levels in the city. Further improvements in NOx and other traffic related pollutants in our most congested neighborhoods will require continued and expanded local, regional and federal efforts to address on-road sources. Traffic-related pollution also contributes carcinogenic pollutants such as benzene and formaldehyde, which are found to occur at high levels in areas of high traffic density. Increased efforts to reduce congestion and adopt low-emission vehicles are needed.

Since roughly half of PM2.5 in NYC's air originates upwind and ozone pollution is a regional problem, significant benefits to all NYC residents (particularly low income neighborhoods with higher densities of vulnerable populations) would be realized through efforts to reduce emissions regionally. Improvements in national vehicle efficiency standards over the next few years will also cut pollutant emissions, and the City strongly supports EPA's Clean Power Plan through joining on legal briefs backing EPA in court challenges. We will continue advocating for regional and national policy changes that will improve our local air.

Particulate matter – soot – is the other pollutant that most affects New Yorkers. The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene estimates that fine particle pollution—our most harmful pollutant overall—causes an average of more than 2,000 deaths, approximately 1,500 hospital admissions for lung and heart conditions, and 5,000 emergency department admissions for asthma each year, based on levels in 2009-11.

In 2009-2011, the rate of PM2.5-attributable deaths was 19% higher in high poverty, compared to low poverty neighborhoods. PM2.5-attributable respiratory and cardiovascular hospitalizations were 74% and 46% higher in high poverty compared to low poverty neighborhoods, respectively. The rates of

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emergency department visits for asthma exacerbated by fine particle exposures are 4 times higher in high poverty neighborhoods, compared to low poverty neighborhoods.

While all New Yorkers have a stake in cleaner air, those in our most vulnerable neighborhoods have the most to gain from efforts to reduce emissions in their own communities and elsewhere in the city, as air does not stay within neighborhood boundaries. For example, our Clean Heat programs will reduce emissions most in high income neighborhoods, yet the largest share of health benefits will occur in low income neighborhoods. In NYC, unlike other cities or nationwide, we do not observe consistent differences in levels of fine particulate matter (PM2.5) by neighborhood poverty, but there are strong differences in PM2.5 -attributable health events due to underlying neighborhood susceptibility. This is why it's so important to consider poverty levels along with environmental pollution sources when pursuing environmental justice.

The Mayor's Office of Sustainability and the rest of Mayor de Blasio's administration is committed to including environmental justice in policy and planning processes. The goals and initiatives identified in *One New York: The Plan for A Strong and Just City* ("OneNYC") recognize that equity and environmental conditions are intertwined. As the project director of OneNYC, I am proud that environmental justice was featured in the sustainability section of the plan, and I am proud that Mayor de Blasio wove equity into all of OneNYC. At this time, I want to thank the members of the environmental justice community who serve on our Sustainability Advisory Board -- Elizabeth Yeampierre, Executive Director of UPROSE and Peggy Shepard, Executive Director for WE ACT for Environmental Justice-- as well as all of you who have provided advice and guidance through other channels.

Mayor de Blasio selected the name *One New York: The Plan for A Strong and Just City* because he wanted to make explicit that the city's sustainability, resiliency, equity, and growth goals depend upon each other. The plan elaborates on the Mayor's commitment by specifying ways the City can achieve a more equitable and targeted approach when providing city services.

Over the last several years, the City has made good progress towards environmental justice, though we can do better. Having seen the fits and starts that other governmental entities have gone through in implementing environmental justice, we would like to learn from them. We have seen too many examples of well-intentioned efforts that end on a shelf, a box checked without the results, resources wasted. We want to build upon what we have put in place thus far, in terms of transparency, value of information and accountability, and focus on areas that can show real results.

Here are some examples of City initiatives to address environmental justice:

The New York City Community Air Survey (NYCCAS) is the largest urban air monitoring program in the U.S. The air quality monitoring network, which began collecting data in December of 2008, is a collaboration between the Health Department and Queens College with the objectives to:

- Measure air pollutants that affect public health across the city
- Identify local emission sources that impact neighborhood air quality
- Inform the public and city officials on clean air priorities, and
- Provide air pollution estimates for health studies.

The Mayor signed Intro 712 into law, which codifies the community air quality survey. The NYC Environment & Health portal includes the NYCCAS as well as neighborhood-level data on many health outcomes and environmental exposures which can be viewed by area poverty indicators. Additionally, DOHMH analyzes air and health data to evaluate the number and distribution of health events due to air pollution throughout the city – and publishes information on disparities in air pollution-attributable health

events by neighborhood poverty. The Environment and Health portal also includes a variety of additional information, viewable by neighborhood, for housing quality indicators such as cockroach prevalence and use of supplemental heat, climate-related indicators such as air conditioner prevalence and plant cover, as well as prevalence of pests and pesticide use.

The Department of Sanitation is also making strides through implementing the Zero Waste initiative as well as its Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP). Approximately 55 million vehicle miles of wastehauling truck traffic annually from City and regional roadways will end with the SWMP, as DSNY-waste management operations will be shifted to barges and rail transport. In addition, DSNY's trucks have reduced particulate matter emissions by 90% through filters, ultra-low sulfur biodiesel fuel and other technology. Private carter trucks are also improving, as fleets are required to be upgraded or replaced to meet new standards. DSNY is continuing to roll-out recycling at NYCHA facilities with a total so far of 719 buildings across 85 developments, and we expect rollout to be complete later this year.

The Department of Environmental Protection has hired more inspectors to enforce the updated DEP Air Pollution Control Code and is implementing registration-fee waivers for mobile food trucks that upgrade their auxiliary engines. DEP is also working to develop legislation that will require refrigeration trucks to use clean technologies such as auxiliary power units or turn off their engines after ten minutes. In addition, the revisions to the Air Code include requirements to control emissions from commercial char broilers as well as from fireplaces.

The Office of Environmental Remediation secured funding for Brownfield Jumpstart which provides higher levels of City funding and other assistance for environmental investigations and cleanup for affordable and supportive housing in mostly low-income and minority neighborhoods. As part of its place-based community brownfield planning program, OER is working with over 30 communities and recently established new grants to help community developers, non-profits, and faith-based developers identify strategic brownfield sites in their communities, develop plans for cleanup and redevelopment that are consistent with community goals, and implement these plans. To give community planners a means to communicate and share information with their peers and learn about the cleanup projects and developers that are active in their neighborhoods, OER will launch the *EPIC Community* online resource later this year.

The Department of Parks and Recreation through its Community Parks Initiative is focused on improving parks that have received little capital investment and are located in areas of high need, based on higher-than-average poverty, density, and population growth.

The Department of Housing and Preservation now requires a green physical needs assessment for buildings seeking financing, as well as provides low interest loans for energy efficiency improvements for affordable housing.

The Department of Environmental Protection is completing negotiations with the State that will lead to significant investments to mitigate combined sewer overflows during storm events in city waterbodies.

New York City Emergency Management established NYC Citizen Corps to bring together volunteer programs, community-based organizations, the private sector, and government to promote preparedness at the local level. It also organized a task force to evaluate how to better involve community-based organizations and houses of worship into long-term resiliency planning, as their involvement is a key factor in ensuring community resiliency in the face of storm events.

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With respect to energy and climate, the Mayor's Office of Sustainability launched the Retrofit Accelerator, which I've previously mentioned in testimony to this committee, and we are developing the program design for the Community Based Retrofit Accelerator, which will provide similar advising services for buildings under 50,000 square feet. One of the aims of this program is to speed the conversion of the city's dirtiest boils from #4 to gas or #2 fuel oil, significantly reducing sulfur particulate matter emissions. The air quality improvements result in a greater benefit to communities with the greatest health burdens. Residents can look up buildings to see their energy performance on the New York City Energy and Water Performance Map, a visualization tool that allows residents to understand the energy and water efficiency of the 26,000 largest buildings across the five boroughs. We are providing tools to empower residents and building owners to learn how to improve their buildings' performance, cutting costs as well as greenhouse gas emissions. We also participate in the full range of New York State energy proceedings, and regularly file comments on behalf of NYC residents calling on energy to be renewable, reliable and affordable.

Despite all of this, we can do more, and we should do more to take data we gather in our regular agency operations and use it to achieve environmental justice. We would like to work with Council on initiatives to best accomplish our shared goals, including integrating environmental justice considerations into City processes.

Overall, we support a collaborative approach amongst City agencies to improve the Administration's response to environmental justice issues. We are concerned that the bills as currently drafted would lead to delays in implementing initiatives to address environmental justice, as well as require additional time and funding from Council for technical experts in addition to the ones already in the agencies. Instead, we'd like to discuss the prospect of incorporating environmental justice considerations into existing City agency processes, such as the City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) process. This review of existing decision making processes we believe would lead to improved integration of environmental justice into planning, prevent duplicative work, and maximize resources and results from City agencies. We'd also like to discuss with this Committee the potential of adding environmental justice indicators, which could then be reported on as part of the annual OneNYC update.

Conclusion

The Mayor's Office of Sustainability as well as the other City agencies are committed to ensuring that environmental justice is integrated into our ongoing operations and planning and reflects the feedback of all of you here today. We look forward to working with you on achieving this important goal. Thank you.

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Testimony to the NY City Council on Intro 886 and Intro 359 By Peggy M. Shepard, Executive Director, WE ACT For Environmental Justice January 28, 2016

I want to commend Council Member Barron and the other bill sponsors for taking the first step in addressing the city government's accountability on the issue of equity and justice in communities of color and low income in New York City.

- How do we address the issue of disproportionate impact of pollution that is fueling the asthma epidemic in our vulnerable neighborhoods?
- How do we address the transportation-related health impacts of diesel combustion in the air that exacerbates, asthma, and heart disease?
- What do we do when studies at the Columbia Children's Environmental Health Center shows: that when pregnant women are exposed to traffic-related air toxins like PAH, their babies are born with low birth weight, at higher risk for obesity and asthma, and now we find that the unborn child's breast tissue is impacted and the child begins life at higher risk for breast cancer.

So what do we do as a city to address these issues? We live in a city that takes seriously the idea that there are two cities and two realities within ONE NYC. Our mayor was elected with a mandate to pursue equity and inclusion in all policies.

So the first step in reducing exposure to our vulnerable populations, is to better understand what those impacts are, where they are, who is most impacted, and what impacts should be prioritized to build healthier sustainable communities.

To do that, Intro 359 proposes a study that would describe and map those communities with the goal of eliminating those adverse impacts and reducing exposure and disparity. My recommendation is that the study should include the health profile of the communities, and it should be carried out by not only NYC DEP and NYC DOHMH but with the expertise of an academic institution as well.

Over the past 30 years of the national Environmental Justice (EJ) Movement, an academic field of study has matured that involves scientists in the fields of sociology, environmental science and health, and Geographical Information Systems (GIS) that have produced numerous studies, peer-reviewed papers, and academic disciplines. Students now read about NYS's waste problems, the North River sewage treatment plant, and the impact of diesel buses in Harlem. They read about NYC issues like these in textbooks at Harvard, Yale and throughout our university systems. These scientists are advising the city on climate change and can do so on environmental justice as well.

Studies are great. We need them. But we also need to hear from the affected communities. That is the purpose of Intro 886. The EJ mantra is: We Speak For Ourselves. In order to do that and

to democratize decision making that affects the health and sustainability of our communities, the city needs to adopt the provisions of Intro 886, develop an EJ advisory board, develop an interagency task force that develops plans for reducing exposure and promoting inclusion in decision making. I have heard that the city thinks this would involve too many meetings. How else can you understand the challenges, and impacts and set goals and priorities without having meetings of those most affected?

I hear that it is too hard to get agencies to meet with each other. And this is what I know: there can be no comprehensive plan, or strategy that is not well coordinated between and among city agencies. Why did the mayor have an array of agencies to communicate the city's plan for the recent snow storm that affected mortality and morbidity, sanitation, transportation, and human services? Why has it taken a variety of agencies at the city, state, and federal levels to take on the crisis of environmental racism in Flint, Michigan? Why did President Clinton in 1994 issue an Executive Order on EJ that requires 17 federal agencies to issue plans to reduce the disproportionate exposure of pollution on EJ communities?

Let's look at the health status of our most vulnerable communities to understand the impacts of diesel buses and trucks on neighborhood streets, the leakage of formaldehyde along Riverside Drive from the North River Plant, the trash trucks rolling into transfer stations in Brooklyn and the Bronx, the illegal sales of banned pesticides, of toxic toys, of products with mercury all sold in 99 cent stores that proliferate and have been mapped in low income communities but are located predominately in African-American neighborhoods.

Though we have Local Lead Law of 2004, the city is not complying with or enforcing the law that should be protecting the 91% children of color who are lead poisoned each year in New York City. So if we want to understand the scope of this challenge then we must understand the necessity for a comprehensive, interagency approach to creating real change, and achieving equity, if that is a real goal and not just a slogan.

Several years ago, the American Bar Association issued a report you can find online called: <u>Environmental Justice For All: A Fifty-State Survey Of Legislation, Policies, and Initiatives</u> (2004). This report identifies the statutes, policies, initiatives, or other commitments that states have undertaken to give force of law and/or tangible meaning to the goal of environmental justice. Importantly, the report finds that from the first policy issued in 1993 to the present more than 30 states have expressly addressed environmental justice.

If this administration is committed to uniting the two cities of poverty and wealth here into One NYC, than this approach described by Intro 886 must be implemented. If Equity is a goal and not merely a slogan, then the city must act now.



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New York City Council Committee on Environmental Protection Hearing on Environmental Justice Legislation, Int. No. 886, Int. No. 359

Statement of Mychal Johnson on behalf of South Bronx Unite

January 28, 2016

My name is Mychal Johnson. I am a resident of the Mott Haven neighborhood in the South Bronx and a member of South Bronx Unite, a coalition of residents, organizations and allies fighting for environmental, economic and social justice in the South Bronx.

I am here to testify in support of Int. No. 886 and Int. No 359, which we believe will begin to lay an important foundation in response to several decades of cycles of harm in environmental justice communities.

For far too long, proposed economic development and planning have taken place in environmental justice communities without either meaningful community input or heightened environmental review.

Over the course of the last several decades, the South Bronx has been plagued with devastating health impacts from an extensive concentration of highway systems encircling our community and an oversaturation of industrial and diesel truck-intensive facilities spread out across an 850 acre significant maritime industrial area (SMIA), the largest in New York City.

It is well known that the South Bronx suffers from asthma rates eight times the national average and asthma hospitalization rates 21 times that of other New York City neighborhoods.

The cause is no mystery. Twelve years ago, the U.S. EPA administered a study - the "South Bronx Environmental Health and Policy Study" - which linked the extreme levels of asthma to the area's oversaturation of highways and industrial facilities, and recommended reduction of truck traffic and more green space. Yet, the assault on our community continued without incorporating these recommendations.

Within the last year alone, we have been faced with three major environmental struggles:



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First, 15 years ago then Governor Pataki placed four peaker power stations in our community, when he brought 10 online throughout the state of NY. Now, the New York Power Authority seeks to re-permit for the third time these supposedly temporary installations that line our waterfront. When first built, these facilities bypassed heightened environmental review on the basis that they generated 79.9 MW, just shy of the trigger for a comprehensive impact analysis, and no pollution mitigation plan was put in place because ambient air quality was determined on a city-wide basis rather than a South Bronx basis. Over the last several months, more than 200 residents and other environmental leaders wrote letters urging rejection of the re-permitting.

Second, Action Environmental Systems is seeking a permit expansion to operate its 3,000 ton per day waste transfer facility, which also sits on our overburdened waterfront. Hundreds of comments from the community were logged against the permit expansion, citing several permit violations, including extremely noxious odors, leaving garbage-loaded tractor trailers on public streets, and littering the area outside of the gates. The community still awaits a decision.

Third – and perhaps the most egregious - is the proposed relocation of FreshDirect, which would bring 1,000 additional diesel truck trips through the South Bronx every day, all with a \$130 million subsidy. It shows how our own city agencies - EDC and IDA - oversaw and approved FreshDirect's cursory environmental assessment that was based off of a 20 year old Environmental Impact Statement and somehow concluded - with the help of a few lobbyist and government hires - that this volume of additional trucks would not exacerbate our community's chronic respiratory ailments.

These are just three examples of the types of struggles from which this environmental justice community is forced to defend itself.

We thank the members of this committee for the opportunity to testify in this regard. Our community, like others across the city, deserves to have the same opportunity to live full and healthy lives without having to constantly fight for the right to breathe. This legislation is an important step in that direction, particularly as it seeks to develop solutions in partnership with the impacted communities.

We are happy to assist in further discussing the sources of the problem as well as the breadth of solutions. One recommendation we would offer today is that you consider incorporation as interagency working group members both the Department of Sanitation as well as the Department of Small Business Services (as the agency that funds EDC and IDA), because these agencies have a significant presence and impact in the South Bronx. Thank you.

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The North Shore Waterfront Conservancy of Staten Island, Inc. P.O. Box 140502 Staten Island, New York 10314

January 28, 2016

To: City Council Members Constantinides, Cornegy, Koo, Rose, Wills, Cumbo, Rodriguez, Mendez, Rosenthal, Deutsch, Treyger, Williams, Palma, King, Johnson, Levin, Dromm, Gentile and Menchaca. Barron, Miller, Richards, Chin, Cabrera, Ferreras-Copeland, King, Palma, Levine, Johnson, Vallone, Garodnick, Gibson, Reynoso, Espinal, Maisel, Koslowitz, Lander, Van Bramer, Crowley, Levin, Torres, Lancman, Cohen and Ulrich.

Reference: Int. No.359 – In relation to requiring a study of potential Environmental Justice Communities in New York City and the publication of the results of such study on the City's website.

Int. No. 886- In relation to identifying and addressing Environmental Justice Issues.

The Honorable City Council Members:

On behalf of the North Shore Waterfront Conservancy of Staten Island, Inc., (NSWC or NSWCSI) and Staten Island's North Shore Environmental Justice and Waterfront Communities that we advocate on behalf. Let it be known on that on this day, Thursday, January 28, 2016, we are in favor of the passing of Int. No 359 and Int. No. 886.

And it is our belief based on our experiences that these Bills are long overdue in becoming law in New York City.

The people of Staten Island are skeptics of studies because most of the ones that have been done on Staten Island have yield no tangible results that have improved the quality of life for our people and our communities.

Therefore, if this Environmental Justice Study comes back stating that it found no evidence of Environmental Injustice in New York City and on the North Shore of Staten Island. We will know that something is truly amiss. When clearly there is so much evidence to be had.

This is an exciting chapter in the life of New York City and we look forward to experiencing all of the good things that it will bring to our Environmental Justice Communities and their people.

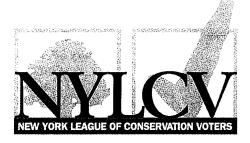
Thank you for inviting NSWC to be a part of this historic moment.

Sincerely, uman Ø

Beryl A./Thurman, Executive Director/President NSWC Creating Livable Communities www.nswcsi.org

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Contact: January 28, 2016 Contact: Ya-Ting Liu (212) 361-6350 x203 yliu@nylcv.org

Statement of Ya-Ting Liu Director, NYC Sustainability Program New York League of Conservation Voters Committee on Environmental Protection January 28, 2016

Intro. 359-2014 and Intro. 886-2015

Good afternoon. My name is Ya-Ting Liu and I am the New York City Sustainability Program Director at the New York League of Conservation Voters (NYLCV), a statewide environmental group with over 25,000 members in New York City. We are committed to advancing a sustainability agenda that will make our people and our neighborhoods healthier and more resilient. Thank you for the opportunity today to comment on Intro 359, which requires a study of potential environmental justice communities in New York City and the publication of the results; as well as Intro 886, which requires agencies to develop plans for promoting environmental justice policies and actions and creates an agency working group and advisory board. We commend the City Council for taking the lead on codifying the commitments made in OneNYC for "a more equitable and targeted approach to a broad variety of City services."¹ Intro.359 and 886 is the start of a necessary conversation with the Administration on strategies to address environmental justice and an action plan that is SMART – specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timebound.

Intro. 359 would require the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) to conduct a study of potential environmental justice communities in the city in the city and report on environmental factors and health consequences in those communities. One recommendation is to start with the data the City is already collecting and expand upon it. New York City Community Health Profiles capture the health of 59 community districts across the city. They are the most comprehensive reports of neighborhood health ever produced by the City and for the first time they look beyond traditional health measures such as infant mortality and stroke hospitalization rates to broader measures of community well-being. They include housing quality, incarceration rates, school absenteeism and even the square footage devoted to supermarkets. The community health profiles can be expanded to include additional indicators such as air quality, access to parks and open space, number of brownfield sites, number of facilities or sites that have environmental, human health or economic effect on surrounding populations, etc. DOHMH also has a NYC Environment and Health Data Portal where one can create reports, charts, maps and tables on outdoor air and weather, food & drink, built environmental, water quality, pests and pesticides use, and environmental sustainability. Based on the existing data DOHMH is collecting, one consideration would be to require DOHMH publish the environmental health data in the form of

¹ One New York: The Plan for a Strong and Just City, Vision 3, page 164.



Contact: January 28, 2016 Contact: Ya-Ting Liu (212) 361-6350 x203 yliu@nylcv.org

annual reports, much like the community air surveys. Dr. Bassett said about these reports, "We will be making injustice visible."² An annual or biannual report would accomplish this.

Intro. 886 would require agencies to develop and periodically update plans for promoting environmental justice in their programs, policies and actions and create an agency working group for coordinating the development of these plans. We applaud Mayor de Blasio's focus on addressing inequality in OneNYC. In the sustainability section of OneNYC, there is particular emphasis on environmental justice which states, "it is imperative that we empower communities through public dissemination of data and the creation of venues for participatory planning. We need the help of community stakeholders to identify at-risk populations, toxic 'hot spots,' research gaps, and effective implementation strategies. Only through the joint deployment of scientific expertise and local knowledge will we achieve clean, healthy, livable and sustainable communities across the city."³ Intro. 886 lays out a framework and an implementation plan on how the City can do just that. Given the role of the Mayor's Office of Sustainability's (MOS) responsibility to oversee the implementation, tracking and reporting of OneNYC, MOS should lead the advisory board or interagency task force efforts to ensure the City meets the environmental justice goals and commitments in OneNYC.

NYLCV looks forward to working with the Council and the Administration to develop implementation strategies toward a more sustainable and equitable city.

² http://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/local/Community-Health-Profiles-Show-Disparity-Between-New-York-City-Neighborhoods-332607172.htm

³ One New York: The Plan for a Strong and Just City, Vision 3, page 164.



RIVERKEEPER STATEMENT OF SUPPORT TO THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COUNCILMEMBER COSTA CONSTANTINIDES, CHAIRMAN

THE INFRASTURCTURE DIVISION MATTHEW GEWOLB, LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR

RE INT. NO. 886 AND INT. NO. 359

Riverkeeper applauds the efforts of the New York City Council to provide environmental justice for those of our neighbors who lack it.

As stewards of the Hudson River, its tributaries and the drinking water of residents of New York City and the Hudson Valley, we have long observed the relationship between pollution and underserved communities, and the great good that is achieved for everyone when common-sense action is taken and meaningful measures are legislated that protect all our people and all our natural resources.

The specificity of the research, remediation and planning efforts described in Int. No. 359 and the inter-agency work provided for in Int. No. 886 are excellent beginnings toward a potentially well-funded and coordinated remedy, and we wholeheartedly endorse them.



January 27, 2016

My name is Rodney Cromartie. I am a WE ACT member and have been a resident of Hamilton Heights since the 1980's. I am writing to support the two environmental justice bills that are being discussed today.

I believe that these agencies need to make environmental justice concerns and issues a top priority and create standards for improving environmental health. They need to protect communities and people that are impacted by the past unhealthy environmental decisions.

Public funding for residents of my environmentally impacted neighborhood are needed to provide jobs, trainings and solutions to clean up our neighborhoods. People should not have to leave their community because they are at risk to toxics and pollution that environmental justice community's experience.

Rodney Cromartie 3333 Broadway New York, NY 10031 Thank you for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to speak.

I'm Ken Gale. I produce and host an environmental radio show on WBAI-FM and am the founder of the NYC Safe Energy Campaign.

Environmental justice has been with us a long time. Let me tell a story from 19th century New York City, culled from visits to the Tenement Museum and an exhibit on the history of sanitation a few years ago at the New York Public Library, another reason to keep our libraries open.

When the Erie Canal was built and there were more jobs on the NYC waterfront than we had workers for, people emigrated here in waves from all over the world, often with nothing but the clothes they were wearing. And there was always someone from the home country ready to exploit them. Apartments on the lower east side that are too small for a modern family of four would have *two* families of six or seven in them. And no running water and one outhouse in the back for the whole building. A breeding ground for disease in the poorest parts of NYC. Lower East Side sanitation of the 19th century was things like pigs running lose eating garbage. Rather than improve sanitation, they simply passed a law that pigs were not allowed to run loose in the parks on Sundays. I think that law is still on the books. Please leave it there, it's a piece of our history.

The reaction of the richer people back then was to notice that immigrants were dirty and Catholic or Jewish, the, ah, "wrong" religion to them. Rather than improve conditions for the poor working class, they created the slogan "Cleanliness is next to godliness."

It was only when the diseases of the poor spread to everyone else that they woke up to the fact that maybe the poor had more diseases because they had no running water and no sanitation. Thus starting a series of tenant laws that still exist and *need* to exist.

You see where I'm going with this. "The environment" is not some abstract thing. It is the air we breathe and the water we drink and all this affects our health and health costs. Polluted air doesn't stop at the border of, say, East Harlem and the Upper East Side. And sure enough, asthma rates on the Upper East Side bordering East Harlem are higher than other parts of that district.

Don't be like the City Council of the 19th century and wait for diseases to spread to the whole city before action is taken to improve the environment of the poorest parts of the City.

Solutions: I applaud the Council's recent decision to look into putting solar panels on all city-owned buildings. That's a great solution to keep from creating asthma and other respiratory diseases by burning stuff for electricity. By the way, ten years is too short a time to look at the energy savings of solar panels. Solar cells are warranteed for 20 to 30 years, so use <u>that</u> as your standard. We also need to improve the energy efficiency of our buildings so we don't have to burn so much oil and gas.

When the air or water are clean, thank an environmentalist. If not, become one. 'Nuff Said! Thank you. nuffsaid@riseup.net January 28, 2016

<u>New York City Council Hearing - Int. 359 & Int. 886 - Environmental Justice</u> January 28, 2016, City Hall 1:00; Testimony of Catherine Skopic, UN Rep.; Legislative Committee Co-Chair, The People's Climate Movement-NY; Chair Legislative Committee, Steering Committee, Shut Down Indian Point Now

Thank you Chair Costa Constantinides and NYC Council Members for this legislation regarding environmental justice communities. My name is Catherine Skopic; and I'm an artist/activist who has been working on environmental issues for several decades through my art, teaching, the UN, faith groups, the People's Climate Movement-NY, Shut Down Indian Point Now, 350nyc, United for Action, Food & Water Watch and more.

I'd like to make 3 points: 1) congratulations on addressing EJ community needs; 2) stop carbon energy usage - fossil fuel, methane and nuclear power; 3) install renewable energy sources wherever possible as quickly as possible.

1) Low-income, disadvantaged communities are frequently located in areas most vulnerable to extreme weather events and are historically the siting locations for the most pollution-causing infrastructure such as incinerators with heavy truck traffic causing high incidence of asthma, COPD, cancer and other pollution-related diseases. Legislation addressing these problems bringing equity to all is overdue and welcome.

2) Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary of the UN Climate Change Secretariat says that carbon = poverty - or, carbon in the atmosphere = poverty. A recent UN report shows that during the past 20 years, 4.1 billion people have been injured in extreme weather events (that's almost half the planet's population) and 600,000 people killed; and this trend is worsening. The most critical task we have before us is to stop burning fossil fuels. 195 countries signed the agreement in Paris December 12, 2015 to do just this. It was an historic moment - a turning point. The world recognized our role in causing climate change and our role, ability and responsibility in stopping it. Commitments have been made. Final signing will take place here in New York City, Earth Day, April 22, 2016.

3) In alignment with this UN COP 21 Paris climate agreement, National climate goals, New York State climate initiatives such as REV - Reforming the Energy Vision - and our own OneNYC, the New York City Council has, over the years introduced outstanding environmental legislation to address problems and create solutions - implementation of renewable energy being the most significant at this point in time. Impediments to solar installation in the city need to be removed and the pace of solar installation hastened, as well as the realization of offshore wind and the closing of the Indian Point nuclear power plant that is neither clean not green and whose replacement energy is available.

I also suggest more coordination between the state and city, as in the case of Fresh Direct who requested the location of a truck depot in the Bronx that was greatly protested by residents of the Bronx, receiving support from members of the NYC Council. Although several options for this garage other than in the Bronx were available, the Bronx resident protest fell on deaf ears as, on February 19, 2015, the Empire State Development RE-VOTE granted Fresh Direct the truck garage in the Bronx. This over-burdened EJ community would have yet another barrage of truck traffic in the already heavily polluted air. The case is ongoing, as far as I know. Could this legislation have prevented this situation and will it prevent such abuses in the future? You have my full support in doing so. Thank you for your exemplary and much needed legislation.

Respectfully and in PEACE, Catherine Skopic

African American Environmentalist Association

Testimony of Norris McDonald

President

African American Environmentalist Association

Before the

THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COUNCILMEMBER COSTA CONSTANTINIDES, CHAIRMAN

Public Hearing On

Int. No. 886 Environmental Justice Law Int. No. 359 Environmental Justice Study

January 28, 2016, Time: 1 p.m. Location: 250 Broadway, 16th Floor

1629 K Street, NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20006 **New York** 203 W. 107th Street, Suite 2A, New York, NY 10025 (443) 569-5102

Introduction

My name is Norris McDonald and I am the founder and president of the African American Environmentalist Association (AAEA). We are the nation's oldest African American-led environmental group and we are dedicated to protecting the environment, promoting the efficient use of natural resources, enhancing human, animal and plant ecologies, promoting increased African American ownership of energy resources and infrastructure and increasing African American participation in the environmental movement.

We support both bills and recommend that the New York City Council pass both bills immediately. Passage of these bills will represent a historic leap forward in protecting vulnerable communities that currently have no protection from environmental injustice. We are making recommendations to improve both bills. We seek a balance. Some promoters of black business development are concerned that such EJ legislation could restrict business development in minority communities. Other industries and industry representatives will fret that business will be restricted by such legislation. Our recommendations include a provision that protects the interests of business developers while protecting vulnerable communities.

I would like to thank Environmental Protection Committee Chairman Costa Constantinides, former New York City Councilman Charles Barron and New York City Councilwoman Inez Barron for their efforts in guiding this legislation to approval so that it can protect vulnerable communities.

Background

I drafted the Environmental Justice Bill for Councilman Charles Barron in 2003 and Councilmember Charles Barron introduced the bill (Int. No. 404) in 2004 with seven cosponsors. After meeting with Councilwoman Inez Barron in 2014 to request re-introduction of the legislation and after much review and revisions by the Committee on Environmental Protection, Councilwoman Barron introduced the legislation that we are considering today. The legislation has numerous cosponsors and I sincerely hope that the legislation will be passed by the council and signed into law by the mayor.

The New York EJ legislation is patterned after a national EJ bill I drafted that we still need to get passed in the U.S. Congress. I formed the Environmental Justice Coalition to work for the passage of the national legislation. The national bill, New York bill, Maryland bill and Mt. Vernon bill are listed in the Environmental Justice Coalition blog.¹

I drafted EJ legislation that would applied to the City of Mount Vernon at the request of then Mt. Vernon Councilman Richard Thomas in 2014. Mr. Thomas is now the Mayor of Mount Vernon and I encouraged him to testify at the hearing today. He will comment in support of the legislation. It is our hope that Mount Vernon Mayor Richard Thomas will encourage the Mt. Vernon City Council to pass EJ legislation for that city. The New York City EJ legislation could serve as an important template for the Mt. Vernon legislation.

<u>The Bills</u>

Int. No. 886 is a local law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to identifying and addressing environmental justice issues. Int. No. 886 sets up an interagency task force to develop agency-wide plans to assure that environmental justice in incorporated into the planning and implementation of agency duties. The legislation also creates an associated environmental justice advisory board, reflecting geographic balance, comprised of pertinent committee chairs or their designees, appointments from environmental justice community boards health or environmental committees, at least seven appointees who are directors, members or employees of environmental justice organizations and at least two appointees who are

¹ http://ejcoalition.blogspot.com/

directors, members or employees of organizations engaged in research related to human health.

Int. No. 359 is a local law to amend the New York City charter and the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to requiring a study of potential environmental justice communities in New York City and the publication of the results of such study on the city's website. Int. No. 359 calls for a study of potential Environmental Justice communities in New York City, an identification of pollution sources, recommendations to mitigate adverse environmental impacts and a publication of the results of the study on the city's website.

Recommendations

AAEA supports both bills and we have specific recommendations that would improve the legislation. Although we like the Environmental Working Group and the Advisory Board provisions of Int. No. 886, the bill needs additional protections for vulnerable communities. The additional protections from our national legislation that should be included in Int. No. 886, include:

Providing a citizen lawsuit provision to allow potential victims of environmental race discrimination to enforce the EJA and the regulations promulgated thereunder.

Providing a citizen endorsement provision to allow potential beneficiaries of nonpolluting economic development to enforce the EJA and the regulations promulgated thereunder.

Establishing the criteria for determining potential violations and endorsements based on comparative community health statistics, comparative community pollution sources and comparative community economic development.

Addressing: acts of discrimination and investigating all community complaints and recommendations related to development projects, whether filed before or after issuance of construction and operating permits.

Empowering citizens, and DEP at the request of citizens, to obtain injunctions to prevent construction and operation of discriminatory polluting facilities and operations that violate the EJA regulations.

Empowering citizens, and DEP at the request of citizens, to endorse the construction and operation of nondiscriminatory nonpolluting facilities and operations that do not violate EJA regulations.

Providing a definitive permitting process regarding demographics for citizens, developers, government agencies and investors.

Directing the DEP to develop EJA regulations.

Int. No. 359 should include types and amounts of pollution at the sources called for by the bill. AAEA produced pollution studies² for Washington, DC that included types and amounts of pollution at each facility listed as an emitter. It will be very helpful to affected citizens to have this sort of information at their disposal.

Conclusion

We support both bills and recommend that the New York City Council pass both bills with all deliberate speed. Int. No. 886 and Int. No. 359 are historic bills that will serve to protect communities that, to date, have absolutely no protection from environmental injustice. Federal, state and city laws do not currently protect these communities and the leadership exhibited by the supporters of this legislation is groundbreaking. We salute you all.

² Our Unfair Share 3: Race and Pollution In Washington, DC, 2000, http://www.cfece.org/Ous3.htm



Testimony of Cecil Corbin-Mark Deputy Director of WE ACT for Environmental Justice Before the New York City Council Committee on Environmental Protection Costa G. Constantinides, Chair Thursday, January 28, 2016

Good Afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Intro 886, sponsored by Council member Inez Barron and Intro 359, sponsored by Chair Costa G Constantinides. WE ACT for Environmental Justice wants to affirm our support for both of these bills, and we thank both Council member Inez Barron and our Chair Costa G. Constantinides for introducing the bills that if passed by this Council and signed by the Mayor will provide a clear roadmap as to what the challenges are in Environmental Justice communities, where those communities are located, create formal plans by the various city agencies to address environmental justice and establish a Mayoral task force to review agency environmental justice plans and provide guidance and advice to the administration about environmental justice matters. In short, these bills will take what the vision the Mayor and his team so eloquently laid out in OneNYC and provide an infrastructure and a clear set of plans and timelines by which that vision will be realized.

At the outset it is important to set forth that even in the best City in the world, New York City, still today we are not immune from the negative impacts of the reality that in this country environmental laws, regulations and policies have not been applied fairly across all segments of the population. There are far too many people-of-color and low-income who live in communities that receive far less protection than others and bear a disproportionate burden of the city's environmental hazards, pollution problems and polluting facilities. The consequence of these practices has been that the same communities year in and year out are the ones with the worst health indicators, the poorest educational outcomes and the bleakest socio-economic indicators. Despite the best intentions these communities remain the places that lag behind the more affluent and prosperous parts of our city and serve as the poster child for the tale of two cities.

Let me offer some statistics to support the picture I painted in the paragraph above. I will start with East Harlem/El Barrio in my neck of the woods where I was at a community planning session around the East Harlem Rezoning until 10 p.m. last night. East Harlem is a diverse neighborhood of predominantly Latino and African-American residents with a rich culture and

history that includes the likes of Tito Puente and many others, but sadly according the New York City Department of Health Environmental Health Tracking portal East Harlem has the highest rates of asthma hospitalizations for children ages 0-4 and 5-14 years of age. While we don't know what causes asthma we do know what triggers it and poor air quality and allergens like mold are on the list. We also know from the city's Health Department records that East Harlem registers some of the highest levels for concentration of fine particulates. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, fine particulates- produced by vehicle exhaust and certain types of heating oil- can lead to aggravated asthma symptoms, decreased lung function and irregular heartbeat. Mold is a known trigger for asthma as well and for those of us who work in East Harlem it is no surprise to find out that based on a review of 311 complaints that East Harlem also ranks among the highest neighborhoods for complaints about mold. We also know that parents frequently miss days of work to care for their children who have asthma and those asthmatic children loose days at school or have reduced activities as a result of the disease.

I could paint a similar picture for the South Bronx, Jamaica, Flatbush, Bushwick or Stapelton on the North Shore of Staten Island. These neighborhoods are the asthma belt, the lead belt the low birth weight belt or said another way they are the forgotten/ignored sacrifice zones of our city. I live in one of those neighborhoods and I hope today that this committee will quickly pass Intro 886 and Intro 359. So that the city can get to conduct the necessary studies to define these neighborhoods as Environmental Justice communities and the respective city agencies can develop plans to address this legacy of pollution and disparate health and socio-economic outcomes.

The Mayor in OneNYC recognizes that equity and environmental conditions are inexorably linked. Environmental hazards translate into poor health, loss of wages, and diminished quality of life, particularly for residents of low-income communities that have historically been burdened with a disproportionate share of environmental risk.

OneNYC promotes environmental policies addresses the sources of disparities in health outcomes such as asthma and cardiovascular disease, as well as the environmental impediments to economic opportunity and neighborhood stability. It calls for a more equitable and targeted approach to a broad variety of City services, such as solid waste and storm-water management, tending our open spaces, and environmental remediation.

Through OneNYC, the Mayor has said that we are committed to:

Improving air quality in vulnerable communities through reduced and diverted truck trips resulting from implementation of Zero Waste increased barging of waste under the Solid Waste Management Plan, and a freight strategy to shift the movement of goods to rail and water transport. Air pollutant emissions will also be reduced through the accelerated conversions of boilers in buildings and the targeted expansion of mass transit and pedestrian and bicycle networks (Visions 1 and 3)

Addressing indoor health hazards in homes through initiatives such as New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) mold remediation (Vision 2)

Improving parks that have received little capital investment and are located in areas of high need, based on higher-than-average poverty, density, and population growth (Vision 3)

Advancing an aggressive and participatory brownfields redevelopment program that protects human health for those living in close proximity while creating new opportunities for affordable housing development and job creation (Vision 3)

The federal agencies have adopted the elements proposed in both of these bills, and a report produced by the University of California Hastings School of Law, *Environmental Justice for All: A Fifty State Survey of Legislation, Policies and Cases* describes actions and cases that have advanced in all fifty states. Several states, New York, New Jersey and California, to name a few, have enacted similar measures to those proposed in Intro 886 and 359. We at WE ACT believe that Intro 886 and 359 represent a clear path to operationalizing the ideals set forth in OneNYC and we urge the committee and this council to pass both of these bills without delay.

Thank you.

January 28, 2016

Dear Chairman Constantinides:

My name is Ling Tsou. I'm a co-founder of United for Action, a grassroots group in New York City advocating for renewable energy.

Thank you for holding a hearing on Int. 359 and Int. 886. We welcome and support both bills. It is important to study potential environmental justice communities in the city and to identify and report on environmental factors and health consequences and environmental justice issues in those communities. It is also important to make sure that the voices of these communities are really heard when something impacts the health and well-being of these communities. We have all been hearing and reading about the water crisis in Flint, Michigan. This is a man-made disaster and a public health catastrophe. Many local children have been found to have elevated blood lead levels, a circumstance putting them and anyone else that drank the city's tap water at risk of brain damage. Michigan government and elected officials ignored for the last two years complaints from the local residents about the discoloration, foul odor and bad health effects of their water supply. The majority of the population in Flint, Michigan is African American and poor. I cannot help but wonder if the Michigan government and elected officials would have responded and acted much sooner if the complaints came from a non-minority and more affluent community.

We would like to suggest that the New York City government make every effort to ensure that environmental justice communities have affordable means to access renewable energy sources such as solar and wind so that residents in these communities can enjoy the benefit of lowering their energy cost as well as improving health from reduced air and environmental pollution. We would also like to suggest that programs be developed to encourage private sector to build and develop renewable energy technology companies in New York City and to provide training to residents in the environmental justice communities for good paying renewable energy related jobs.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Ling Tsou United for Action

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