

On Bold Next Steps: Forward Together

New Yorkers are dealing with the tremendous impact of the COVID-19 healthcare crisis and its economic fallout. Our hearts go out to those who have lost loved ones and to the millions of people who have lost their jobs and are experiencing financial hardship. We deeply appreciate those doing the hard work to keep the rest of us safe, fed, informed, and as comfortable as possible.

NYC has been hard hit, creating immense strain on all of the systems which sustain us. The federal government has provided neither timely nor adequate support and is completely mismanaging the crisis. They are not only failing to protect us from the virus, but further shredding any safety net of environmental regulation, healthcare, workers' rights, and overall protection from an economy that has put corporate profits before the needs of people.

There are real connections between the COVID-19 crisis and the global climate crisis. Having lost much of their habitats from deforestation, bats were the likely origin of COVID-19 in humans ; with increasing deforestation and climate change we can expect more pandemics that we cannot control. The pollution in our atmosphere that causes respiratory diseases, particularly within communities of color, is now putting those very same people at greater risk in this pandemic. It is poor people, people of color, and Indigenous peoples already often living under difficult conditions, as well as the elderly, who are the most endangered. As extractive industries continue to degrade the environment and change the climate in blind pursuit of profit, we can expect changes to the ecosystem that result in the release of new viruses. Climate change, like COVID-19, is life-threatening and poses a risk to us all.

Just as epidemiologists warned the federal government that a pandemic was coming and advised it to prepare, scientists have long warned that climate change will create widespread devastation if we do not swiftly move to renewable energy. Indigenous peoples have for generations understood that we are out of balance with the natural world and have called upon us to start getting back in balance by protecting our water and air.

The federal government has largely ignored the warnings and is making things worse as they weaken the most basic EPA protections and continue to pour financial support into the fossil fuel industry and other polluting industries including factory farming. Our state and city governments have taken some steps, but much bolder and faster action is urgently required.

If we think COVID-19 is bad, runaway climate change will be much worse. We cannot let that happen. We have learned from this crisis that people can change what they do personally to help the health and welfare of others; people need to heed that lesson in addressing climate change policies and practices before it is too late. We have learned that governments can move quickly when the political will is there. When the current COVID-19 crisis begins to subside, we must harvest our collective energies to push our elected officials to act on the climate crisis as the emergency that it is.

In NYC, we will need our local government to be proactive in building a just and equitable recovery grounded in core principles:

- Centering the health and well-being of the most vulnerable communities by building a just transition that is focused on addressing race, gender, class, ethnic, sexual identity, religion, age and disability inequities.
- A commitment to eliminating carbon emissions as quickly as possible and moving to 100% publicly-owned renewable energy, with new energy sources built in the NYC

metropolitan area. This must include immediately halting all fossil fuel pipelines and dirty energy plants, and other such projects.

- The creation of new living-wage, unionized jobs, while integrating community resilience at the center of projects such as new hospitals, schools, day care centers, clinics, and renewable energy production.
- A just transition, led by the public sector and not privately-owned corporations, must include improving and expanding public transportation; building new and fixing existing public and truly affordable housing; strengthening health and education systems; expanding and protecting open spaces such as gardens, parks, and wetlands; and ensuring strong social safety nets.
- We are not naive about the cost of a just transition: it will require billions of dollars. The City must open up new revenue sources, such as taxing the rich, taxing stock transfers, making corporations pay their fair share and eliminating tax abatements and other tax breaks. This will mean mounting a campaign to make sure the NY State government lets this happen.

Central to this will be the need for the City to reframe its annual budget process. Every aspect of the budget - expenditures and revenues - must be looked at through the lens of climate. Environmentally-conscious budget decisions will translate into enormous savings over time.

There also must be a truly participatory, transparent, accountable decision-making process grounded in community involvement. For instance, the City needs to immediately expand its preparedness for other major epidemics and pandemics, starting right now by addressing the disproportionately high numbers of Black and Brown peoples infected and dying of COVID-19. In the same way, while different neighborhoods in NYC already experience the climate crisis in different ways, this is something the whole city must be involved in. Better decisions will be made when communities are fully engaged in the process.

We know we can accomplish these critical goals. It's up to us as the people who live and work in this great city to build a movement to make this happen. We call on our Mayor, City Council, Comptroller and Public Advocate to partner with us to do the necessary work.

When our city comes out of the current health crisis we will face a moment of reckoning. We can step back and lose all we love or we can step forward and create the world we need to survive and to thrive. Let's come together, as New Yorkers, and make it happen.

Carol Montgomery
Environmental Justice Working Group / CUNY

Good afternoon, my name is Amina Castronovo and I am with the NYC Climate and Resilience Education Youth Steering Committee. In this testimony, we ask that the City does not decimate its Climate Justice and Zero Waste plans and goals by eliminating opportunities for composting.

The Mayor's proposed budget would undercut much of the progress this City has made in diverting food scraps and yard waste from landfills -- a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. The Administration is slashing the DSNY budget by \$106.5 million, with more than \$28 million of that coming from a total elimination of all funding of recycling education and outreach and composting organic waste. This is short-sighted and has potential to have long-term implications, setting the City back further from its sustainability goals.

Today we urge the City Council to ensure that the City at least maintain the ability to continue some sort of composting, and not toss away the progress we have made in the past few years.

We are not asking that the Council restore all \$28 million of organics program cuts. Rather, we are asking that the cuts to the NYC Compost Project and partners, and to GrowNYC, be restored, with expansion for community outreach and education.

The cuts to the NYC Compost project and partners and to GrowNYC together represent approximately \$7 million, and with some additional funding, could go a long way to allowing New Yorkers to continue to source-separate food waste and preventing this major waste stream from going to landfill and emitting greenhouse gases.

This comparatively small amount of funding in the big picture would ensure that:

- At least eight non-profit organizations that rely on City-funding to provide organics collection and processing services, as well as community education, could continue their good work;
- At least 170 food scrap drop-off sites across all five boroughs can continue to divert this potent source of greenhouse gases from landfills;
- At least six community composting facilities can continue their work of processing the food waste to turn into usable compost to grow food in community gardens and urban farms during a time of food insecurity; and
- The City could continue vital education and outreach, needed to ensure that all New Yorkers, including all of our school children, understand why and how to compost and recycle – such training in the schools is a small investment that will pay off for decades by helping our children develop life-time habits of sustainable living.

We cannot understate the urgency of this ask to our neighborhood, and hope the Council ensures that this important priority not be left behind in the budget process. Thank you.

20 May 2020

Re: ESCR

To Whom it May Concern:

The ESCR should not move ahead at this point. We cannot afford to waste these badly needed funds right now on this blown up project. I give some recommendations below for consideration that would address flood control but at the same time, other critical issues:

We are facing an unprecedented pandemic that's killing people and destroying the very fabric of the city and it's economy. The city has however, budgeted and planned to destroy a beloved 57 acre neighborhood park despite local residents opposing the plan at a tremendous cost of \$1.1 billion. The city's proposed cutting much needed funding for after school programs, youth programs, summer camps, swimming pools, street tree planting and pruning to name a few of cost savings budget of \$3.4 billion. This is not enough to help us get through a difficult future. Still, there is a projected budget shortfall of billions after the dust settles from this extraordinary event. We think the monies allocated for this extravaganza can be prudently used for the following especially now by doing the following:

- Interim flood protection. Use the \$335 million allocated in Federal funds to keep us safe from storm surges now.
- Use some or all of the city money allocated for ESCR to maintain and add to the programs serving our neighborhood kids, elders, unemployed and homeless.
- Keep East River Park 100% open. This is vital for the community's mental and physical health. There are many of us here with serious respiratory conditions, that fresh air and exercise is imperative. Many people use the park including dog owners, students, seniors, workers, parents with children and anyone else living in and around the area.
- Redesigning the ESCR plan needs to cause minimal destruction to East River Park. We would like a revision of earlier, less drastic plans that included local residents input. One suggestion is to cover the FDR to create more not less parkland and will address air and noise pollution from the highway. It would protect the neighborhood from future flooding. Local residents would be more than happy to work with the city to find a cost efficient and robust plan that all stakeholders would agree with.

Spending the \$1.1 billion now on the ESCR would be folly in more ways than one after the pandemic.

Thanking you in advance,

I look forward hearing from you,

Sarah Anikin
570 Grand Street
H1807
NY, NY 10002

May 20, 2020

Ryan Gellis

ISA certified Arborist NY-5932A

Former Director of Gardening, the Old Stone House in Brooklyn

Former Supervisor of Arboriculture, Prospect Park Alliance

I am submitting testimony to the benefits of a citywide composting program sponsored and managed by the city of New York. With a background in working in environmental services for the city (parks department) and several of its environmental non-profits I can attest to the importance of composting as a way to reduce landfill waste, manage and eliminate rodent populations, and help foster an understanding of waste management for all citizens.

While managing a composting site in central Brooklyn I interacted with student groups, showing off our composting system and fielding questions about where things come from and where they go. This was an opportunity to educate students about the lifecycle of various organic and inorganic products and to discuss where trash goes when it is thrown away or how harmful litter can be to our environment.

Landfill waste takes up space and requires significant inputs of fossil fuels to cart off across the country. Mixing organic waste in with other garbage increases the volume of landfill waste and allows that waste to produce much more methane as organic waste breaks down in low oxygen landfill environments. Meanwhile, as mixed garbage sits in plastic bags on streets it is regularly torn into by rats, pigeons, starlings, pigeons and raccoons—the demographic of our wildlife population that is already well above comfortable carrying capacity. When food waste goes into separate, airtight, hard-plastic bins for green waste pickup it protects the waste from rodents, and reduces the volume of landfill waste.

Organic waste has the potential to be processed to collect its methane and many municipalities already use this byproduct to power aspects of their transportation network. On a larger scale green waste readily converts into rich finished compost, an important element for plants to grow. This compost can be distributed to citizens to encourage beautification or it can be sold to help fund the green waste program. As a former Prospect Park employee I can speak to the need all horticulturalists have for a steady supply of rich compost. Our park system and street trees would benefit from this byproduct.

In the long term there are few things that seem more like a win-win for NYC than a robust composting program. It helps us reach our Green New Deal goals quickly and with little negative effort. I worry that by eliminating the current composting programs it will set the behavioral patterns back by decades for the average New Yorker. Instead I recommend expanding the brown bin program throughout the city, offering incentives like free compost and disincentives such as less regular normal trash pickup and, most importantly, creating a mandatory educational unit for all public-school students from a young age on the techniques and benefits of composting.

Thank you

Good afternoon,

My name is Jason Phillips and I am an Urban Planning student at NYU Wagner. As a planning student, I ask that the City does not decimate its Climate Justice and Zero Waste plans and goals by eliminating opportunities for organics recycling and composting for the future of its waste management operations. A setback like this could spell out a detrimental future in the very short years to come.

The Mayor's proposed budget would undercut much of the progress this City has made in diverting food scraps and yard waste from landfills -- a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. The Administration is slashing the DSNY budget by \$106.5 million, with more than \$28 million of that coming from a total elimination of all funding of composting organic waste and recycling education and outreach. While I understand the need to fund COVID-19 related expenses, this decision has very negative long-term implications, setting the City back further from its sustainability goals.

I urge the City Council to ensure that the City at least maintain the ability to continue some sort of organics recycling and composting, and not toss away the progress we have made in the past few years.

Restoring all \$28 million of organics program cuts would be a rather ridiculous ask, I agree. Rather, I ask that the cuts to the NYC Compost Project and partners, and to GrowNYC, be restored, with expansion for community outreach and education, totaling in about \$7 million for FY2021.

The cuts to the NYC Compost project and partners and to GrowNYC together represent approximately \$7 million, and with some additional funding, could go a long way to allowing New Yorkers to continue to source separate food waste and preventing this major waste stream from going to landfill and emitting greenhouse gases.

This comparatively small amount of funding in the big picture would ensure that:

- at least eight non-profit organizations that rely on City-funding to provide organics collection and processing services, as well as community education, could continue their good work;
- at least 170 food scrap drop-off sites across all five boroughs can continue to divert this potent source of greenhouse gases from landfills;
- at least six community composting facilities can continue their work of processing the food waste to turn into usable compost to grow food in community gardens and urban farms during a time of food insecurity; and
- the City could continue vital education and outreach, needed to ensure that all New Yorkers, including all of our school children, understand why and how to compost and recycle – such training in the schools is a small investment that will pay off for decades by helping our children develop lifetime habits of sustainable living.

I hope that you will take this into consideration and hope the Council ensures that this important priority is not left behind in the budget process.

Thank you and please stay safe,

Jason Phillips

May 21, 2020

To Whom it May Concern -

My name is Rob Spalding and I have been composting in New York City for 5 years. It has truly changed my life. I began composting in Prospect Heights (I dropped my compost off every Wednesday at the 7th Ave B/Q). At the time, my building had a mouse and roach problem. As soon as we started composting, the problem went away almost completely. The frequency we took out the garbage changed too - only once every two weeks, only when it was full! Previously it was every three days. It saved me money on garbage bags and saved the city the cost of moving and storing that food waste that could now be put to good use.

One year ago, I moved to Chelsea at the corner of 10th Ave and 23rd Street. Since the first day of my residency, I've been walking to the NYC brown composting bin at the corner of 23rd St and the West Side Highway. A few times, city workers have seen me dump my compost and cheered for me! It's a great feeling to do something for the earth, for my community and to make my apartment smell better! Since the bins were removed, I am constantly taking out my garbage. Not only is this wasteful but it's making my apartment smell bad.

I am a designer that works for a small start up. I know what the power of marketing can do for a small company like mine. I know that the composting program was not marketed correctly, if at all, upon it's introduction. I know this because every friend I convert to composting can't believe they weren't doing it before. I believe this is the reason for the program's underutilisation. When the composting program is reinstated, I truly believe it deserves a strong marketing push from the City of New York to be successful. I believe that once the majority of New Yorkers begin composting, they will see (and smell) the benefits not only in their own homes but in the gardens and public parks their food waste has fertilized.

Please reinstate the compost program to make New York City less wasteful, less stinky, and an even more beautiful place to live.

Sincerely,

Rob Spalding
8656967438

Good morning,

My name is Jessica Ekstein and I have been a resident of Brooklyn since 2012. In this testimony, we ask that the City does not decimate its Climate Justice and Zero Waste plans and goals by eliminating opportunities for organics recycling and composting.

The Mayor's proposed budget would undercut much of the progress this City has made in diverting food scraps and yard waste from landfills -- a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. The Administration is slashing the DSNY budget by \$106.5 million, with more than \$28 million of that coming from a total elimination of all funding of composting organic waste and recycling education and outreach. This is short-sighted and has potential to have long-term implications, setting the City back further from its sustainability goals.

Today we urge the City Council to ensure that the City at least maintain the ability to continue some sort of organics recycling and composting, and not toss away the progress we have made in the past few years.

We are not asking that the Council restore all \$28 million of organics program cuts. Rather, we are asking that the cuts to the NYC Compost Project and partners, and to GrowNYC, be restored, with expansion for community outreach and education. Composting is extremely important to me and my community because it helps provide jobs, helps the farms and supports the recycle of food.

The cuts to the NYC Compost project and partners and to GrowNYC together represent approximately \$7 million, and with some additional funding, could go a long way to allowing New Yorkers to continue to source separate food waste and preventing this major waste stream from going to landfill and emitting greenhouse gases.

This comparatively small amount of funding in the big picture would ensure that:

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- the City could continue vital education and outreach, needed to ensure that all New Yorkers, including all of our school children, understand why and how to compost and recycle – such training in the schools is a small investment that will pay off for decades by helping our children develop lifetime habits of sustainable living.

We cannot understate the urgency of this ask to Brooklyn, and hope the Council ensures that this important priority not be left behind in the budget process.

Thank you.

Jessica Ekstein

My name is Sigourney and I am disheartened to learn that the City is planning to eliminate funding for community composting and zero waste outreach programs.

Climate change feels like an impossible problem to solve, but community composting is an actionable step in the right direction. Also, it fosters a sense of community that we all desperately need as we rebound from the effects of COVID.

All these weeks of cooking at home have been a welcome change, but tossing food scraps in the regular trash has been more heartbreak during this devastating time.

Now more than ever, community composting programs are essential in NYC. Recognizing the urgent need for budget cuts and cost-savings due to COVID-19, we cannot afford to reverse progress on the larger, longer-term crisis: climate change. Composting is one of the most basic things that every person can do to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and have a positive impact on the environment. Maintaining funding for community composting will provide continued access to essential composting service for New Yorkers at the lowest possible cost by uplifting community-based networks and tapping into local expertise.

In this time of great uncertainty, we need programs that contribute to a more sustainable future. The City's Community Composting programs give people hope that through collective action, our individual choices can make a difference. We need this kind of hope during our current crisis.

I ask that the City restore funding to Community Composting and Zero Waste Programs.

Sincerely,

Sigourney Woodfork
30-94 34th Street
Astoria, Queens 11103



Tuesday, May 26, 2020

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Oral Testimony

Before New York City Council
Committee on Waterfronts and Resiliency
Jointly with the Committee on Consumer Affairs and Business Licensing,
Committee on Environmental Protection, and Committee on Health

Oversight Hearing

Taylor Morton
Environmental Health and Education Manager
WE ACT for Environmental Justice, Member

Good afternoon Speaker Johnson, Chairs and members of the Committees. Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding ConEd and the City's summer Heat plan.

My name is Taylor Morton and I'm the Environmental Health and Education Manager at WE ACT for Environmental Justice. I lead much of our NYCHA work. I'm here to discuss important emergency preparedness considerations for this summer.

Increased energy demand during extreme heat events can result in power outages. During the summer, indoor temperatures can surpass outdoor temperatures, especially for households without air conditioning and during blackout and brownout periods. This increases the risk of heat illness and poses an additional challenge to individuals that rely on electronic medical devices.

Low income neighborhoods are disproportionately impacted by power outages. Last summer when ConEdison shut off service to 33,000 customers to protect its equipment, two of the neighborhoods chosen were Canarsie and Flatlands. Both are majority-black (59 percent) and rank 4 out of 5 on the city's heat vulnerability index. Additionally, in 2003 there was a power outage in New York City that resulted in a 28 percent increase in fatalities and disproportionately impacted older populations.

Knowing the locations that have experienced these shutoffs in the past, knowing the neighborhoods with high heat vulnerability, and knowing the neighborhoods with high coronavirus cases, ConEd is well-equipped with information to prepare for summer heat ahead of time. It is vital that communities with people suffering from coronavirus do not experience shutoffs, brownouts, or any form of acute energy insecurity. ConEd and the City must plan ahead. There is no excuse.

Another way to protect vulnerable populations is to waive electricity costs for income-qualified New Yorkers during heat emergencies. This summer, many more people are staying at home, and many more people are suffering from unemployment. Affording electricity to cool homes is going to be difficult.





Additionally, the City could preemptively set maximum temperatures for large office buildings, especially considering most of not all are under capacity at the moment. Last summer, Mayor de Blasio signed Emergency Executive Order No. 97, directing owners and operators of large office buildings to set building thermostats to 78 degrees to conserve energy during the July heat wave. In an effort to save energy and combat global warming, max building temperature order could be in effect all summer.

Lastly, special consideration must be given to those living in NYCHA buildings. More than half of the city's public housing residents live in its most heat-vulnerable neighborhoods. There are at least 62,000 NYCHA residents that are 65 years of age and older and it's the fastest growing age group among NYCHA's tenants.

22,000 A/Cs is a great start but it is not enough. Residents need help paying their monthly electric bill for their A/Cs. And the City must be working now to ensure all elevators are working properly in all NYCHA buildings.

It is important that the city be planning for heat emergencies ahead of time to protect not just our most vulnerable populations, but everyone.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Taylor Morton

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Testimony from Yury Dvorkin, Assistant Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering at the New York University Tandon School of Engineering

before

The New York City Council Committees on Consumer Affairs, Environmental Protection, Health, and Resiliency and Waterfronts Joint Oversight Hearing on Consolidated Edison's Summer Preparations and the City's Cooling Needs

May 26, 2020

Good Morning Chairpersons Brannan, Cohen, Constantinades, Levine and all Council Members present. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today at this important oversight hearing regarding **Consolidated Edison's summer preparations and the City's cooling needs**. I am pleased to share with you and your constituents my experience as a professor and power engineering and smart grid researcher. I hope my insights prove valuable as we move towards a more efficient, reliable, sustainable and equitable electricity supply in New York City, especially during and beyond COVID-19 and the strain it has put on our public and private resources. I would also like to acknowledge the National Science Foundation (NSF) for supporting my ongoing research at New York University's Tandon School of Engineering, aimed at better understanding the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak on New York City's infrastructure systems and its ability to provide critical services¹.

This year, in addition to the usual challenges associated with running a major urban electric power distribution system, Consolidated Edison faces additional barriers and uncertainty imposed by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. In Summer 2020, the most significant of these will be social distancing norms and restrictions that can slow down the emergency response and thus increase outage durations². **Consolidated Edison must** revisit its protocols and practices to make sure that social distancing norms practiced by employees do not postpone scheduled maintenance and repairs, nor delay emergency response plans. Meanwhile, the uncertainty arises from two factors:

(i) Lack of accurate demand forecasting tools: Preliminary analyses carried out for the NYISO's system reveals that demand forecast errors have surged in the aftermath of stay-at-home orders. This data-driven analysis indicates that demand forecasting tools that largely use historical electricity consumption data cannot produce accurate forecasts for

¹ We gratefully acknowledge the NSF Award No. ECCS-2029158 "RAPID: RETrofitting REsiliency Against COVID-19! (RETREAT COVID-19!)" https://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/showAward?AWD_ID=2029158&HistoricalAwards=false

² As of April 23, 2020, more than 350 Consolidated Edison's employees were tested positively for COVID-19, in part due to a lack of personal protective equipment at early stages of the outbreak. <https://www.utilitydive.com/news/coned-covid-19-cases-grow-past-350-as-utilities-forced-to-adjust-pre-pandem/576606/>

this summer because consumption patterns have changed (e.g., shifts from the commercial to residential sector.)

(ii) Projected increases in residential demand: Due to stay-at-home orders, residential demand has changed its typical cyclic daily profile and, in many cases, has increased. Furthermore, the Mayor's current heatwave plan includes the installation of 74,000 additional air condition units for low-income senior citizens. These units, while providing necessary relief to a vulnerable population group, may further raise the electricity demand and cause additional stress on Consolidated Edison's distribution system.

Given these two factors, it may be difficult to impossible for Consolidated Edison to accurately predict how electricity demand in their system will change in Summer 2020 and when, where and what the actual demand peak will be. Furthermore, one must be aware that demand reductions in one part of the system (e.g., in the commercial sector) does not necessarily enhance the ability to serve increased demand in another part of the system (e.g., in the residential sector) due to various network limits (e.g., voltage and power flow) on the ability to transfer power from one part of the system to another. **Consolidated Edison must**, therefore, must proactively analyze the impact of increased demand and reduced accuracy of demand forecasting tools on their system, including the available transmission capacity to exchange power between different parts of the system.

Electric power distribution infrastructure operated by Consolidated Edison is a complex engineering system and its reliability cannot be 100% guaranteed, despite the best efforts of engineers, managers, and planners. This is of particular importance in Summer 2020, when a large number of people with COVID-19 symptoms will likely not be hospitalized and therefore remain homebound. Hence, it is important to "what-if" every possible contingency and pre-emptively plan for mitigation and corrective actions. **Consolidated Edison must** make this planning transparent and open for public comment and evaluation. One possible approach to ensure transparency and increase Consolidated Edison's preparedness is to create a panel of rotating experts from a broad range of professionals and researchers with relevant expertise (e.g., from leading academic institutions, US DOE National Laboratories, professional organizations, etc.)

As the Mayor recently announced, Consolidated Edison has been involved in implementing the City's heatwave plan, which includes 60 portable generators for emergency deployment in case of outages. Although this backup capacity can be used as a corrective measure to compensate power losses in some local outages, it can hardly be enough to deal with large-scale power outages. For example, last year's outages in Manhattan, Staten Island, Brooklyn, and Queens affected over 100,000 customers in total, and revealed that full recovery of electricity supply under normal circumstances (i.e., without the social distancing that Consolidated Edison's repair crews will have to follow) takes from several hours to several days. While hardly acceptable in normal circumstances, should similar outages occur this year, they will imperil electricity-vulnerable (electricity-dependent) New Yorkers who do not have access to alternative electricity supply. (In general, electricity-vulnerable population groups include children and youth³, citizens with pre-

³See for details here:

https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0009922813482762?casa_token=ieDjR8ajLkQAA%3AP5eQr0JT0LyqK1ahg-7NzN-hVuUJ116Wb_6wXLFz4smfRDOhLiS87qUWSerSulY7h6itBtoEqzI-

existing health conditions⁴, and senior citizens⁵, especially from underrepresented groups.) Without thoroughly accounting for the needs of electricity-vulnerable populations groups in planning for contingency, it is impossible to balance the customer equity across the Consolidated Edison's service territory, which is among core principles in the current rate making practice in the State of New York⁶.

In order to further promote equity and social justice in urban resiliency planning, **Consolidated Edison must** proactively prepare to address the needs of these vulnerable population groups, in part by engaging with local communities to better understand their needs. This can be done by surveying existing customers while respecting their privacy (e.g., using regular mail and online billing) a project that can be expedited via city-wide community outreach led by Consolidated Edison to explore a broad range of local sensitivities characterizing electricity supply patterns and the resiliency needs of various socio-demographic groups. Based on this survey, **Consolidated Edison must** be prepared to immediately assist its customers from vulnerable population groups as soon as any power outage is reported. The outcomes of this outreach must then be incorporated in their pre-emptive planning for mitigation and corrective actions.

Taken together, these recommendations will not guarantee that there will be no events comparable to the outages of last summer, but they will help ensure that the adverse impacts of such outages are reduced, especially on vulnerable population groups.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my experience and recommendations. I would be happy to answer any questions the Committees may have. Should you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact me (yvd204@nyu.edu) or Associate Dean for Communications and Public Affairs Sayar Lonial, (sayar.lonial@nyu.edu).

⁴ See for details here:

https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0009922813482762?casa_token=ieDjR8ajLkQAAAAA%3AP5eQr0JT0LyqK1ahg-7NzN-hVuUJ116Wb_6wXLfZ4smfRDOhLiS87qUWSerSulY7h6itBtoEqzI-

⁵ See for details here: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5007208/>

⁶ See for details here: [file:///Users/yurydvorkin/Downloads/%7BA0BF2F42-82A1-4ED0-AE6D-D7E38F8D655D%7D%20\(1\).pdf](file:///Users/yurydvorkin/Downloads/%7BA0BF2F42-82A1-4ED0-AE6D-D7E38F8D655D%7D%20(1).pdf)



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Peggy M. Shepard

Oral Testimony

Before New York City Council
Committee on Waterfronts and Resiliency
Jointly with the Committee on Consumer Affairs and Business Licensing,
Committee on Environmental Protection, and Committee on Health

Oversight Hearing

Anthony Carrión
WE ACT for Environmental Justice, Member

Good afternoon Chair Brannan and members of the Committees. Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding the City’s Heat Plan for this summer.

My name is Anthony Carrión, and I’m a member of both Manhattan Community Board 9 and a member of WE ACT for Environmental Justice. I sit on WE ACT’s committee on Heat, Health, and Equity. I am a lifelong Harlem resident and I have been involved in heat related issues and its adverse impacts on communities like mine for over 3 years now. The coronavirus pandemic has made this issue more urgent than ever. I will be speaking today on our concerns regarding the Cooling Center Program for this summer.

Last summer, as part of a WE ACT initiative, I participated in an audit of all the cooling centers in Northern Manhattan. We found that the cooling centers were underutilized, unheard of, and some had broken cooling systems. The Cooling Center Report details ways to improve the program long-term with special considerations given to COVID-19 for this summer.



1. First, communication is key. Currently, cooling centers go underutilized due to poor signage and lack of education. The City must create a specialized communications plan by neighborhood to ensure people know when and where the Cooling Centers are open, and how it will be safe during the pandemic. And, the plan must include non-digital outreach to our most vulnerable New Yorkers. How will the City be doing that?
2. Second, we must install and upgrade cooling systems in designated spaces right now. The Mayor’s proposed budget in April, which cut funding for the installation of A/Cs in public school classrooms, undermines our preparedness against extreme heat now and in the future. Now is the perfect time to install and upgrade the cooling systems not only in schools but in other spaces such as Senior Centers, Youth Centers, and more. This work would also offer much needed jobs during the economic crisis born of this public health emergency.

Among other lessons, the COVID-19 pandemic is showing that we are not prepared for the heat. Extreme heat, like all consequences of climate change, hurt vulnerable populations the most. Extreme heat is a social justice issue; and, as such, it is



important for the City to have an equity-focused plan for opening Cooling Centers and to address the aforementioned issues in this testimony. We do not want the City to use resources opening Cooling Centers that are not used.

Therefore, I join other advocates in the WE ACT team calling for a comprehensive and environmental justice-focused effort to address extreme heat this summer.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Anthony Carrión

WE ACT for Environmental Justice
1854 Amsterdam Avenue, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10031
212-961-1000

Good morning/afternoon,

My name is Sophie Shaw and I am with Self. I've been using the curbside composting service GrowNYC since I moved to the city three years ago in 2017. In this testimony, we ask that the City does not decimate its Climate Justice and Zero Waste plans and goals by eliminating opportunities for organics recycling and composting. I rely on this service WEEKLY so that I do not contribute more methane and carbon emissions to NYC waste. To lose this essential and highly valued service would greatly change many New Yorkers' lives as well as drastically accelerate our downward spiral towards irreversible climate change.

The Mayor's proposed budget would undercut much of the progress this City has made in diverting food scraps and yard waste from landfills -- a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. The Administration is slashing the DSNY budget by \$106.5 million, with more than \$28 million of that coming from a total elimination of all funding of composting organic waste and recycling education and outreach. This is short-sighted and has potential to have long-term implications, setting the City back further from its sustainability goals.

Today we urge the City Council to ensure that the City at least maintain the ability to continue some sort of organics recycling and composting, and not toss away the progress we have made in the past few years.

We are not asking that the Council restore all \$28 million of organics program cuts. Rather, we are asking that the cuts to the NYC Compost Project and partners, and to GrowNYC, be restored, with expansion for community outreach and education. I would be very interested to know what I individually could do, if anything, to help with restoration of this service.

The cuts to the NYC Compost project and partners and to GrowNYC together represent approximately \$7 million, and with some additional funding, could go a long way to allowing New Yorkers to continue to source separate food waste and preventing this major waste stream from going to landfill and emitting greenhouse gases.

This comparatively small amount of funding in the big picture would ensure that:

- at least eight non-profit organizations that rely on City-funding to provide organics collection and processing services, as well as community education, could continue their good work;
- at least 170 food scrap drop-off sites across all five boroughs can continue to divert this potent source of greenhouse gases from landfills;
- at least six community composting facilities can continue their work of processing the food waste to turn into usable compost to grow food in community gardens and urban farms during a time of food insecurity; and
- the City could continue vital education and outreach, needed to ensure that all New Yorkers, including all of our school children, understand why and how to compost and recycle – such training in the schools is a small investment that will pay off for decades by helping our children develop lifetime habits of sustainable living.

We cannot understate the urgency of this ask to me and many of my fellow New Yorkers and hope the Council ensures that this important priority not be left behind in the budget process.

Thank you.

SOPHIE SHAW



Tuesday, May 26, 2020

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Oral Testimony

Before New York City Council

Committee on Waterfronts and Resiliency

Jointly with the Committee on Consumer Affairs and Business Licensing,
Committee on Environmental Protection, and Committee on Health

Oversight Hearing

Sophia Longworth

WE ACT for Environmental Justice, Member

Good afternoon Chair Brannan and members of the Committees. Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding the City’s Heat Plan for this summer.

My name is Sophia Longworth, I’m a member of WE ACT for Environmental Justice, and part of WE ACT’s committee on Heat, Health, and Equity. I am a Washington Heights resident who is acutely aware of the dangers of extreme heat on my vulnerable community members. I’m here to advocate concerns surrounding extreme heat in this time of the coronavirus pandemic – specifically, the City’s external cooling plans for this summer because it is important that this plan is equity-focused.

At WE ACT, we have been working with community members to understand the full nexus of their concerns for summer heat. We have learned that people feel there is not enough access to green space and cool external spaces uptown.

Firstly, the Mayor’s plan to create “oases” during extreme heat events:

- Will these only be set up during what the City constitutes a heat emergency? We must remain cognizant that many people are vulnerable to heat related health illness even during times that are not considered to be heat emergencies.

Secondly, access to green spaces:

- Our most vulnerable communities already lack access to adequate green spaces and are increasingly concerned that the few areas they do have access to may be closed due to the pandemic restrictions. It is imperative that the City’s plan includes keeping the parks open.

Thirdly, shade:

- We know that shade in the form of tree covering provides an extremely effective form of cooling and its implementation does not require energy. Naturally, it is necessary that the City’s plan includes increasing pedestrian shade covering, primarily in vulnerable communities that bear the highest heat burden.

Lastly, external cooling:

- Communities vulnerable to heat stress are also at high risk for coronavirus, and so it is vital that every precaution is taken to protect them from contracting the virus when designing external cooling – the parks, misting stations, and so forth.



Therefore, I join other advocates in the WE ACT team calling for a comprehensive and environmental justice-focused effort to address extreme heat this summer.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Sophia Longsworth

WE ACT for Environmental Justice
1854 Amsterdam Avenue, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10031
212-961-1000



Tuesday, May 26, 2020

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Oral Testimony

Before New York City Council

Committee on Waterfronts and Resiliency

Jointly with the Committee on Consumer Affairs and Business Licensing,
Committee on Environmental Protection, and Committee on Health

Oversight Hearing

Liz McMillan

WE ACT for Environmental Justice, Member

Good afternoon Chair Brannan and members of the Committees. Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding the City’s Heat Plan for this summer.

My name is Liz McMillan, and I’m a member of WE ACT for Environmental Justice, and part of WE ACT’s committee on Heat, Health, and Equity. I myself am a Central Harlem resident and am a graduate student of Nonprofit at The New School. I’m here as an advocate concerned about the impact that extreme heat will have on my Northern Manhattan community, in this time of the coronavirus pandemic. I’m speaking today on our concerns around the City’s communication and public education plans for heat this summer.

At WE ACT, we have been working with community members to understand the full nexus of their concerns for summer heat. In these conversations, we have learned that there is inadequate communication between our most vulnerable community members and the City.

First, the communications about heat, COVID-19, cooling centers, and other related items are heavily digital. I live in a community where some experience lack of access to information whether from TV, digital news outlets or signage where there may be a prompt to contact a website for additional information. So many WE ACT members do not have access to internet, computer, phone. Or, they are homebound so do not see public signage. Especially, the number of people that don’t have digital access or are homebound is higher due to the pandemic. How is the City addressing these obstacles? It is vital that there be signage posted in buildings, particularly in NYCHA buildings, with neighborhood-specific information about heat safety, resources to protect themselves, and about Cooling Centers. We recommend the communications having a distinct icon that signals to New Yorkers that the topic is heat-related. We also recommend the City not rely on Notify NYC texts for phone alerts. Is there a plan for the many at-risk residents that receive important information from TV?

Second, there is a lack of trust of government by many different communities around New York City. How will the City work with other entities, such as trusted key community members and community-based organizations to share important information about heat and health? The COVID19 pandemic is showing us how consistent and highly accessible communications is extremely important for



people's health and wellbeing. Many people trust information if it comes from a more familiar source.

Third, we know that about 400 people go to the ER or are hospitalized for heat-related illness every year in New York City. We are concerned that this year people will not seek medical care for fear of contracting coronavirus at the hospital, or for fear of overloading the system. Without adequate understanding of heat safety, how to detect signs of heat stress and heat stroke, and an understanding of COVID-19 hospital safety, we are concerned that more people will avoid the hospital, and that may lead to an increase in summer mortality. How will the City communicate information to ensure that New Yorkers will feel safe seeking care for heat-related illness?

As our WE ACT panel has said, extreme heat is a big issue, because it is the most vulnerable populations that suffer the most. It is important that the City have an equity-focused plan for heat communications.

Therefore, I join other advocates in the WE ACT team calling for a comprehensive and environmental justice-focused effort to address extreme heat this summer.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Liz McMillan

WE ACT for Environmental Justice
1854 Amsterdam Avenue, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10031
212-961-1000



Department of Biology

Room J526
City College of New York
Convent Ave. at 138th St.
New York, NY 10031
Tel: 212 650-6800
Fax: 212 650-8585

25 May 2020

Dear Committee on Resiliency and Waterfront Members:

My name is Dr. Amy Berkov. I am a faculty member in the CCNY Dept. of Biology.

It never made much sense to spend 1.45 billion dollars on an ESCR plan designed to offer flood protection for just a few decades. The Deltares ESCR Project Review, (Oct. 2019, p. 46) pointed out: *"Elevating the park with an additional two feet in 2050 would require the removal of all biodiversity and fully-grown trees... sea levels are rising faster than previously predicted (as reported in the September 2019 IPCC report⁶)." What seemed like an irresponsible folly in Oct. 2019 is now morally reprehensible, given that, in May 2020, "nearly one in four New Yorkers needs food" (Mayor de Blasio, NY Times, May 25).*

The City's environmental impact statement included three alternatives that offered the community exactly the same flood protection and were less destructive than the preferred plan: at 32, 52, or 82% of the cost. We need to revisit these, and other less destructive, less costly alternatives now.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Amy Berkov".

Dr. Amy Berkov
Director, CCNY Biology Master's Program
Marshak J526, Convent Avenue @ 138 Street
New York, NY 10031 USA

Extreme heat in nyc. Partnering with We ACT

I am a Professor in the Department of Mechanical Engineering and Earth System & Environmental Engineering at CUNY City College of New York. I am also an affiliate of NOAA CREST Center. Board Member of American Meteorological Society on Urban Climate. I served as a science and technical member of on NYC Mayor's Urban Heat Initiative and contributed to New York Panel on Climate Change

My research is in the field of urban climate and have done extensive work in this area. I have particularly studied heatwaves and how cities in the North East are uniquely vulnerable to it. In one of our past work where we collaborated with WE ACT and WNYC, we found that several homes in Upper Manhattan area that had no or little access to Air Conditioning experienced extremely high indoor temperatures. Till then most of the research in this field were on outdoor extremes. Our work showed that not only residents in non-air conditioned houses experienced extreme heat and humidity throughout the day but the indoor heatwave also extended for several days after the government warning expired. It is normally unhealthy to be continuously exposed to temperatures above 75-78°F but residents in some of these houses were exposed to temperatures exceeding 85-90°F continuously.

It thus extremely important that the Government take initiatives to address this critical issue. It can cause serious physical, emotional and mental trauma to vulnerable New Yorkers.

Prathap Ramamurthy
CUNY

Introduction

Dear Council Members, it is with great esteem that I present some remarks in support of New York City's COVID-19 Heat Wave Plan.

I am an Assistant Professor of Sociomedical Sciences at the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University and an appointed member of the NYC Environmental Justice Advisory Board. My research focuses on the social and environmental determinants of health. As a scholar at the forefront of research on energy, equity, housing and health in the US, I have developed an original conceptual framework called, "*energy insecurity*," which consists of physical, economic and coping dimensions and is defined as the inability to adequately meet household energy needs (*Soc Sci & Med*, 2016). Energy Insecurity has clear links to health and the preservation of life.

It is estimated that 1 in 3 households in the US are [energy insecure](#), meaning that they reduce or forego food or medicine (trade-offs); they have received a disconnection notice or keep the home at an unhealthy temperature. In the context of COVID-19, with the grave economic consequences, the number of energy insecure households is likely to increase and the demonstration of coping strategies such as trading-off between basic needs or denying oneself and safe and comfortable indoor temperatures are likely to be more pronounced among those already impacted but also those newly impacted by energy insecurity.

Much attention has been paid to cold weather issues and the lack of heating, especially here in NYC. There are a wide array of policies intended to protect residents against the lack of heat and complaints can be issued through the 311 system holding landlords accountable. By comparison, cooling issues are understood to be the responsibility of tenants. Because the building codes in NYC do not require the installation of air-conditioning units, tenants are responsible for acquiring the equipment, installing it and paying for its use. It is no surprise then that the poorest households are also the ones with the least air conditioning penetration rate.

As is shown in this map produced by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, almost a third of residents in communities such as Brownsville and the South Bronx lack an at-home cooling option. These are also areas marked by high poverty and poor health. These are the same populations most at risk for deadly consequences of COVID-19 and also extreme heat.

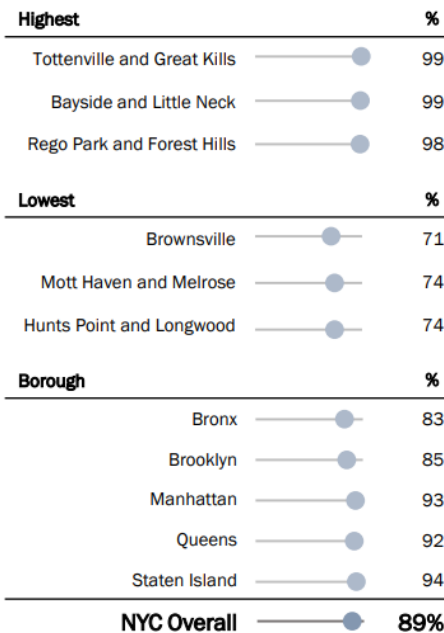
Heat waves are the deadliest type of extreme weather we face, [killing an average of 130 New Yorkers each year](#), and hospitalizing many more. The risk of heat-related illness and death is amplified for the hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers who lack an air conditioning unit at home or do not have the means by which to pay the 20-30-percent higher electricity bills for running one.

Much like COVID, exposed and exacerbated stark racial, social and health inequities, the same is true for the populations most adversely impacted heat-related mortality. Previous research has shown that [deaths from heat waves in New York City](#) between 2000-2011 were more likely to occur among Black individuals, to happen at home and in disadvantaged neighborhoods.

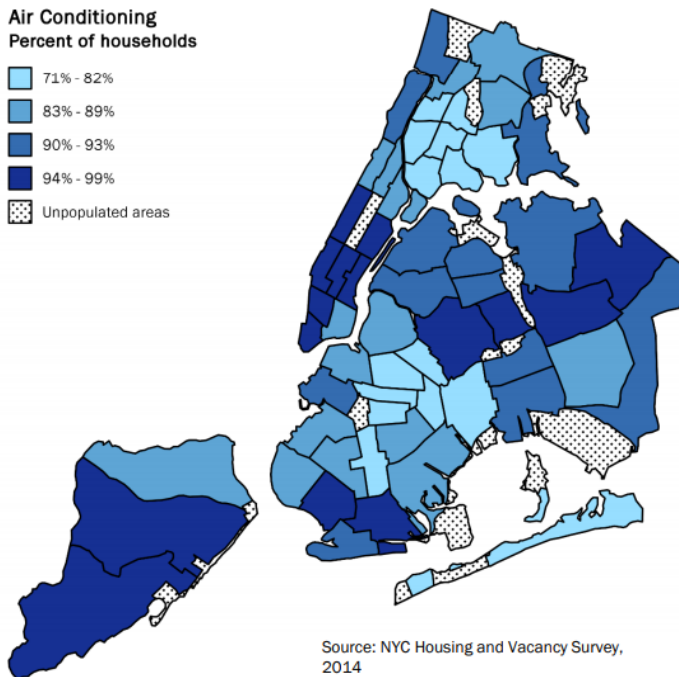
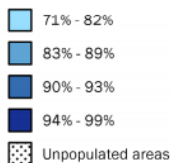
Air Conditioning



Percentage of households that reported having functioning air conditioning.



Air Conditioning
Percent of households

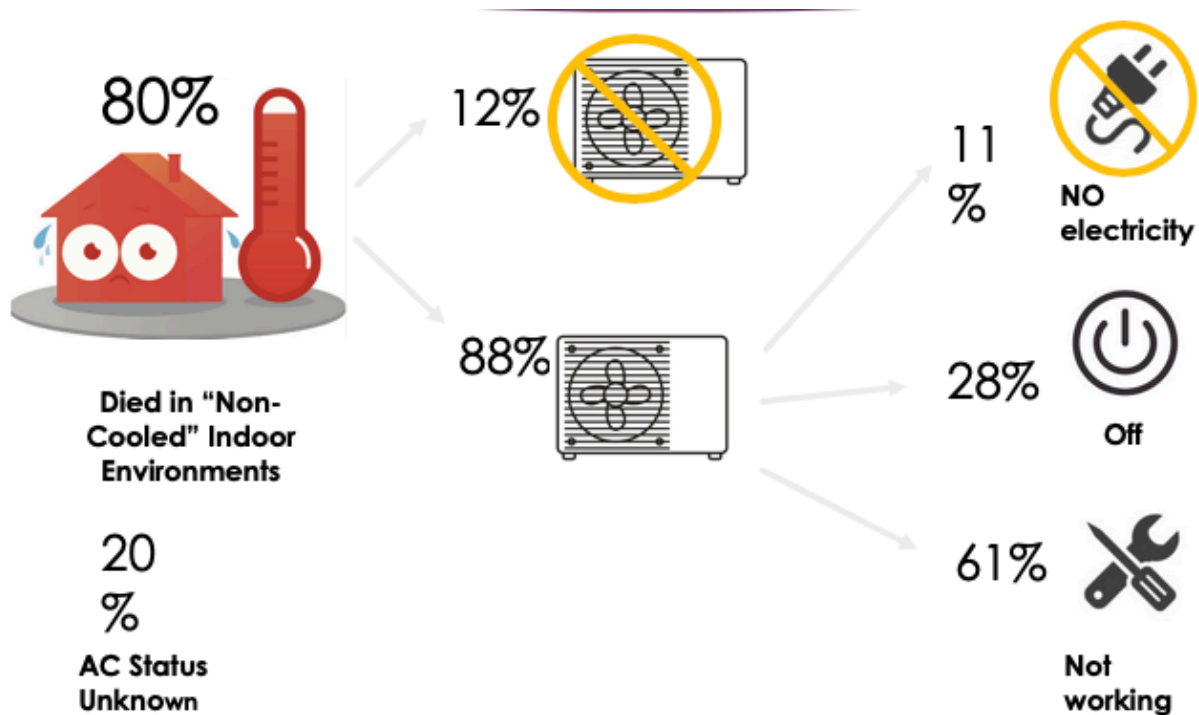


Source: NYC Housing and Vacancy Survey, 2014

Source: NYC DOHMH [Community Health Profiles 2018 Map Atlas](#) (Page 27)

We now have the opportunity to support energy insecure residents in New York City by leveraging and expanding existing policies to deliver air conditioning units and bill relief to those most in need. Starting with the elderly is important given that even in non-emergency contexts, those over the age of 65 and living with chronic illness are the most likely to die due to extreme heat. However, because poverty and chronic illness are so deeply connected, we also need support for the medically and economically vulnerable regardless of age.

Also, the provision of air-conditioning units is not enough. Bill assistance is also needed to ensure use of the cooling equipment. Here, I will use an illustration provided by the Maricopa Department of Health, which has done extensive work investigating the root causes of excess heat-related death. What they found is that 80 percent of the deceased, perished in non-cooled environments, of those, 88% had an air-conditioner however 11% lacked access to electricity services due to disconnection for non-payment, 28% of ACs were found in the off position and 61% were not working. This indicates the need to ensure that people have access to working AC units, have proper protections against service disconnections and are able to afford the use of cooling equipment.



Source: Maricopa County Department of Health (Arizona)

In conclusion, NYC must create a pathway to ensure that cooling assistance through the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is expanded to include bill assistance along with the provision and professional installation of AC units to those in need. Decision-makers must also consider revising the eligibility requirements and streamlining the application process to ensure those with demonstrated need can more efficiently access assistance. This can be done through automatic enrollment for households that receive safety net services such as WIC, SNAP, Medicaid, unemployment benefits and housing subsidies. Another important imperative is to provide support to non-elderly households to address needs stemming from poverty including COVID-related income losses.

Staying at home has never been more important due to COVID-19. Whereas aspects of this pandemic were unknown and newly emerging and decisions needed to be made in a timely and unprecedented fashion, we know a lot more about heat waves and heat-related deaths. They are preventable and with the right measures in place, we can save lives and ensure those most in need of physical distancing due to COVID-19 can shelter in place in comfort and safety.

Diana Hernandez
Columbia University

SAVE COMMUNITY COMPOSTING in NYC

To: Honorable Robert E. Corgney Jr.
district36@council.nyc.gov
CC: financetestimony@council.nyc.gov
Re: Community Composting

My name is **Terese Wadden** and I am disheartened to learn that the City is planning to eliminate funding for community composting and zero waste outreach programs. I have been a community garden member in Prospect Heights, Brooklyn for 15 years and am now a GROWNYC Foodbox customer in Bedford Stuyvesant, Brooklyn. I have been composting in NYC for almost 20 years. In Bed Stuy we have never actually gotten the city compost pickup that was afforded to richer neighborhoods like Park Slope and Boreum Hill. Why? With all the garbage on the street, the lack of political will, and the general ignorance/apathy about the climate crisis the GROWNYC compost drop off at the Foodbox pickup site has been a ray of hope in these dark times.

Now more than ever, community composting programs are essential in NYC. Recognizing the urgent need for budget cuts and cost-savings due to COVID-19, we cannot afford to reverse progress on the larger, longer-term crisis: climate change. Composting is one of the most basic things that every person can do to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and have a positive impact on the environment. Maintaining funding for community composting will provide continued access to essential composting service for New Yorkers at the lowest possible cost by uplifting community-based networks and tapping into local expertise.

In this time of great uncertainty, we need programs that contribute to a more sustainable future. The City's Community Composting programs give people hope that through collective action, our individual choices can make a difference. We need this kind of hope during our current crisis.

I ask that the City restore funding to Community Composting and Zero Waste Programs.

Sincerely,

Terese Wadden
196 MacDonough Street Apt 4
Brooklyn, NY 11216

To: Honorable Mr. Cornegy Jr.

CC: financetestimony@council.nyc.gov

Re: Community Composting

My name is Alexandra Byer and I am disheartened to learn that the City is planning to eliminate funding for community composting and zero waste outreach programs. These programs allow me to manage my food waste and give back to local gardens and farms that use the compost to maintain their soil.

Now more than ever, community composting programs are essential in NYC. Recognizing the urgent need for budget cuts and cost-savings due to COVID-19, we cannot afford to reverse progress on the larger, longer-term crisis: climate change. Composting is one of the most basic things that every person can do to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and have a positive impact on the environment. Maintaining funding for community composting will provide continued access to essential composting service for New Yorkers at the lowest possible cost by uplifting community-based networks and tapping into local expertise.

In this time of great uncertainty, we need programs that contribute to a more sustainable future. The City's Community Composting programs give people hope that through collective action, our individual choices can make a difference. We need this kind of hope during our current crisis.

I ask that the City restore funding to Community Composting and Zero Waste Programs.

Sincerely,

Alexandra Byer

740 Madison Street

Brooklyn NY 11221

May 26, 2020
New York City Council - Committee on Resiliency and Waterfronts

Testimony:

My name is Fannie Ip and I am a resident of the Lower East Side. I want to remind this Committee that it has been 8 years since Hurricane Sandy and we have yet to receive any type of flood protection in my area, as well as in the area directly north of us, the East Village, where it was one of the hardest hit neighborhoods in New York City. However, the areas directly south and adjacent to us, Two Bridges and the Seaport, have temporary flood protection installed for quite some time now.

Construction for the East Side Coastal Resiliency project is supposedly set to begin in the fall and estimated to last at least 5 years without any plans for interim flood protection in place. It was also recommended in the independent analyst's report¹, hired by Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, that flood risk may be higher during construction as a result of clearing the park of vegetation and deconstruction of the bulkhead, so interim flood protection measures should be considered.

We have been promised by the City that they will look into the feasibility of interim flood protection back in November² and we have yet to receive any updates or status on this study as we approach hurricane season. With top hurricane forecasters predicting sixteen named storms and warning of potentially up to four major Category 3, 4, or 5 storms this year, a hurricane hit in the midst of a pandemic is likely.³ Should we have a hurricane, approximately 110,000 residents would have to evacuate from our areas. Where would people go? Large shelters would be a petrie dish for the spread of COVID-19.

I would also like to take this opportunity to remind the Committee that the ESCR project costs \$1.5 billion and there is currently close to a billion dollars slated in the current budget for its construction, beginning with the demolition of East River Park in the fall. While social distancing will be necessary for the unforeseeable future, the demolition of the Park, where it serves as a refuge for everyone during this pandemic, should be delayed. Additionally, the demolition of the Park would cause bad air quality all around the project areas. Harvard specialists recently found that coronavirus patients in areas with heavy air pollution are more likely to die than patients elsewhere.⁴ With an \$8 -\$10 billion budget deficit, it's obvious the ESCR funds should be diverted to much pressing issues such as restoring funding for education and social issues, help feed the less fortunate and assist in the survival of small businesses. Not to mention, it will most likely costs a lot less to install immediate flood protection as soon as possible.

I am urging your Committee on Resiliency and Waterfronts, to please help provide immediate flood protection in the ESCR project areas as soon as possible. It will be detrimental and lives will be lost when another Superstorm hit during this pandemic.

Thank you.

Fannie Ip
25 Montgomery St. #12B
New York, NY 10002
fipper@gmail.com

¹ East Side Coastal Project Review <https://www.manhattanbp.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/East-Side-Coastal-Resiliency-Project-Review-final.pdf>

² Council Members Chin, Powers and Rivera Reach Agreement on Construction Plans, Community Investments for East Side Coastal Resiliency Project
<https://council.nyc.gov/carolina-rivera/2019/11/12/council-members-chin-powers-and-rivera-reach-agreement-on-construction-plans-community-investments-for-east-side-coastal-resiliency-project/>

³ Coronavirus Will Make The 2020 Hurricane Season More Dangerous. America Isn't Ready
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/craighooper/2020/04/20/america-is-not-ready-for-the-2020-hurricane-season/>

⁴ In The Shadows of America's Smokestacks, Virus Is One More Deadly Risk
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/17/climate/pollution-poverty-coronavirus.html?action=click&module=Top%20Stories&pgtype=Homepage>

Dear New York City Council,

Thank you for your service to New York City, and for helping New York City more resilient with flood protections as part of the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project.

During this Coastal Resiliency work, please consider allowing the Lower East Side Ecology Center (LESEC) to operate in its current location, and when construction is imminent for that location (in 2023), please help find a nearby and same-sized, convenient location for them to continue the important work they do in fighting climate change with community solutions and decreasing NYC's waste stream.

It's essential to support LESEC's work, and their proximal location to their collection sites, so as not to disrupt the existing recycling infrastructure, knowledge and habits that will be difficult to rebuild after a difficult move to a more distant and less efficient location.

In this time of great uncertainty, we need programs that contribute to a more sustainable future to continue in the manner that they have been proven to work for so long. The people of LESEC, and the work they do make a huge difference. Please help LESEC resume their operations in the most efficient, time-proven manner and allow them to continue their important work in their current location, it would be very meaningful for my family (that faithfully drops off food scraps for more than 10 years now), for the communities LESEC serves, as well as for New York City as a whole.

Sincerely,

Alison Masick
252 7th Avenue
New York, NY 10001
(917) 202-2027



Tuesday, May 26, 2020

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Oral Testimony

Before New York City Council

Committee on Waterfronts and Resiliency

Jointly with the Committee on Consumer Affairs and Business Licensing,
Committee on Environmental Protection, and Committee on Health

Oversight Hearing

Sonal Jessel
Policy & Advocacy Coordinator
WE ACT for Environmental Justice, Member

Good afternoon Speaker Johnson, Chairs and members of the Committees. Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding ConEd and the City's summer Heat plan.

My name is Sonal Jessel and I am a Policy & Advocacy Coordinator at WE ACT for Environmental Justice. We've been fighting environmental racism in Northern Manhattan since 1988. I am a public health expert who leads our work on heat and health. I'm here to outline how heat and coronavirus are connected, as a precursor to my WE ACT panelists who will share important recommendations for this summer.

Summers are getting hotter and the heat is lasting longer. With that, there will be more ER visits, hospitalizations, and deaths from heat-related illness. A 2016 Columbia University study projected that by 2080, up to 3,300 New Yorkers could die each year from intense heat made worse by climate change. Clearly, we are at the start of a big problem.

And not all neighborhoods in the City are equally vulnerable. The Department of Health found that neighborhoods such as East and Central Harlem have high heat vulnerability indexes, a measurement of heat-related illness or death risk. It also found that between 2000 and 2012, 50 percent of the heat-related deaths in New York City were Black/African American people, even though they only comprise about 25% percent of the City's population.

This summer is especially scary. Neighborhoods with high heat vulnerability closely overlap with high COVID-19 rates. So, those dealing with the most COVID-19 cases also have the highest heat vulnerability. The heat will compound COVID-19 issues.

Much of the inequity in heat illness and death comes from structural racism, where low-income and people of color:

- live in poorly maintained buildings
- live in crowded apartments with intergenerational living
- live with less green space access
- live in neighborhoods with more air pollution



- and stretch their resilience and their means across many hardships - food, rent, chronic illness and more

These are the same hardships that increase coronavirus susceptibility. It's more important than ever for the City to do all it can. More people will be staying home, will have compromised immune systems, and will need safe spaces to be cool.

Culturally, many communities of color turn to one another for support. On a hot day if you don't have A/C in your home, you may go to your aunt's house who does. Maybe you barbecue in the park together. So many minority communities consider family beyond the "nuclear" household, where we lean on one another as a primary means for increasing resiliency. This summer, households that would've relied on one another are left without an important social, emotional, and material support line. The City must consider the mental AND physical impacts of this loss in planning for the heat.

It is imperative the City and ConEd create a heat plan that protects the populations struggling the most, and that it be holistic and preemptive. The next WE ACT partnered panelists will outline important needs and recommendations for this summer.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Sonal Jessel

WE ACT for Environmental Justice
1854 Amsterdam Avenue, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10031
212-961-1000

Committees: on Consumer Affairs and Business Licensing and Resiliency and Waterfronts

Date: Tuesday, May 26 at 10:30am

Topic: Consolidated Edison's Summer Preparations and the City's Cooling Needs.

- Good morning/afternoon, my name is Richard Berkley, Executive Director of the Public Utility Law Project of New York (PULP)
- PULP is a 40-year old statewide nonprofit legal organization that educates, litigates and advocates on behalf of New York State's low & moderate income utility customers – seniors and disabled households
- Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committees today on these three extremely important issues – Con Edison's readiness to keep the lights on and Airconditioning working during what is forecast to be yet another record breaking hot summer; Councilmember Brannan's legislation requiring annual reporting on heat vulnerability and heat related deaths; and Councilmember Salamanca's legislation requiring a comprehensive cooling and communications plan
- We applaud those two pieces of vital legislation that will grow in importance each year global warming makes our summers worse
- Not to sound like a broken record, but PULP shares the Council's concerns about how New Yorkers will be able to weather the hot summer months during the COVID-19 pandemic

I. Con Edison's Readiness for Summer in the City

- As you know, the Public Service Commission at its Session on May 13 heard from its staff about electric companies' preparations for summer, as it does every summer, and the PSC's staff suggested that electric companies were ready for the forecast of record breaking heat, and the COVID-19 changes of use patterns that do not match the systems design characteristics
- And you also know that while this summer is different than every summer since 1918's Flu pandemic, and 1930's first summer of the Great Depression, there is one thing that remains the same – the economic health of the City and lives of countless thousands of heat-vulnerable and medically-vulnerable New Yorker households depend upon Con Edison's keeping power on and restoring it as quickly as possible when the inevitable brownouts and black outs occur.
- Over time, Con Edison has spent many billions of dollars on its electric system, but over time we have also seen it is not enough when faced with the unexpected, or sometimes even when faced by something as expected as a heatwave
- So yes, this summer is the same as most in that we can expect a number of small brownouts and blackouts and other symptoms of an electrical system under great stress from the heat
- And no, this summer is different because the great everyday areas of use – Manhattan's office towers and New York's large commercial buildings are and will be largely empty and using only a fraction of their normal load, while the millions of New Yorkers working from home and staying safe through sheltering will be using significantly more electricity on airconditioning and at times of the day that the system and its engineers did not anticipate

- In a press release on May 20, Con Edison said it has invested in anticipation of keeping the lights on during this summer's heat waves, and it anticipates that if the City's large businesses remain largely closed, electric use will not hit a spike large enough to trigger the sort of mass blackouts NYC has seen in the past, but even when the system fails, the Company believes it can deploy its highly trained union workers in a manner that will maintain safety and social distancing for them and consumers
- Additionally, the Company noted that it has suspended shutoffs and late fees during the pandemic and state of emergency, and is working with customers on deferred payment agreements, while this is nowhere near everything PULP would hope for in these circumstances – particularly since it is likely that evictions and foreclosures will restart at the same time as collections, shutoffs and meter seizures by Con Edison – it is a good start
- PULP agrees with Con Edison it is important to remember that the grid is designed for peak summer months, and that while last July's blackouts and brownouts raise rightful concern about the resiliency of the grid and its reliability, since overall use is due to people are staying at home, we may get lucky this summer and not see major outages like in so many previous hot summers, especially with the drop in use by Large industrial and commercial customers, until NYC "reopens"
- But, we have seen system failures like last Summer's when the system was not at peak use, and when despite the investment of billions in resilience and reliability, the design that was supposed to stop blackouts from spreading did not function
- Finally, the Company showed it still has some room to improve its communications with customers and their elected representatives, as shown

by Con Edison's decision to blackout sections of Brooklyn for understandable engineering reasons, but with an unconscionable lack of prior warning and apparent consideration for its impact upon neighborhoods being suddenly thrust into darkness and heat without air conditioning

II. PULP has numerous concerns and recommendations, some of which are unique to this first summer of COVID-19, and some echoing issues previous years:

- **To begin, there is a concern that individual New Yorkers will be bearing their entire energy burden this summer**
 - After daily messaging, urging and encouraging New Yorkers to stay inside to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 health pandemic, and to protect their and their family's lives, thousands of residents are expected to remain inside during the hot temperature days, even if or when the City is able to get cooling centers up and running safely
 - Residents remaining inside means that New Yorkers will be bearing most, if not all of their energy use and billing during the upcoming months while running air conditioning units almost non-stop, and unanticipated cost during a time of the greatest loss of jobs in almost a century, and when people have already used their savings to live on
 - The City and NYSERDA have thought ahead to this problem of cooling centers and the need for a/c, and PULP applauds NYC and NYSERDA's joint efforts to provide air conditioning units to low-income seniors, assisting with access and instillation of essential cooling in preparation for summer 2020
 - As we have said before though, that is not enough, and the State Office of Temporary Disability Assistance (OTDA) must create

a cooling plan that will help with paying bills, and New York's Public Service Commission must immediately provide additional assistance for low-income household and vulnerable New Yorkers such as the elderly, blind and disabled customers of Con Edison

- PULP also wishes to continue to spread the word here that the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) has a cooling program to which HEAP eligible households can apply, and that provides, if financially eligible, a subsidy when purchasing a window Air conditioning unit
 - But, while assistance purchasing an AC unit is helpful, PULP remains concerned that the program is flawed because it does not offer financial assistance for low-moderate income utility customers to help pay the electricity bill
 - Due to the expected hot weather and likelihood many people, especially New York's most vulnerable, will be planning to remain at home this summer we must acknowledge that their electricity utility bills will likely skyrocket. This arises from lack of mobility, caused by COVID-19, limiting visitation to: local senior centers, libraries, cooling centers, buses, subway lines, or even visiting friends and family
 - Historically and "newly" low-income New Yorkers' energy burden and electricity bill will be all their own to pay. Even if they receive an AC unit through HEAP, they

will find themselves unable to afford to keep the unit running, exacerbating their risk.

- And as we all know, those neighborhoods with residents least likely to be able to pay their electric bills are also “heat islands” within the City and far warmer and for longer than wealthier neighborhoods
- PULP filed comments with the NYS Office of Temporary Disability Assistance regarding its HEAP plan and encouraged that changes be made to the cooling program to address these financial concerns and to help customers pay their electric bill due to the increase use from these AC units
- PULP also filed with the PSC, as did the City, to get immediate added assistance for the City’s low-income residents this summer
- PULP also encourages the Council and the City’s agencies to consider financial assistance programs to help customers cover the increase cost of electricity usage due to COVID-19, and to join in advocating increased low-income bill assistance and energy efficiency spending to bridge these needs
-

III. Moving now to the two pieces of legislation

- First, we applaud the move toward collecting data on heat vulnerability and heat deaths; PULP has advocated for 40 years to collect more granular data on consumers' needs from the electric, gas, telecommunications and water systems in New York because we believe evidence-based policy is best
- We also believe that in this first Summer where Con Edison has agreed not to shut off electric customers during extreme heat events, it is important to collect the data on how many lives were at risk, and how many might be saved (we also note that similar data must also be collected for water customers and heating customers)
- In a City that has adopted the use of objective and comprehensive data as thoroughly as NYC, it is appalling that we are only moving forward to collect this life saving data now, but we are glad and approving
- We also suggest the Council have its research arm examine the City's petition for additional discounts for low-income seniors' energy bills in case 20-M-0231, and additional low-income discounts in case 14-M-0565 at New York's PSC, and PULP's petition for immediate rate relief, utility spending reductions and greater consumer protections in case 20-M-0198
- Second, the need for the type of comprehensive cooling and communications plan that must be deployed this summer is obvious; what is not so obvious is that even with a deadline for the first comprehensive of June 20, whether the City can deploy these vital needs in a timely way
- Nonetheless we must try, and thus we suggest that the NYC Office for the Aging and the Administration for Children's Services be added to the list of agencies working on the report so that their vulnerable client populations' needs be advocated for by subject-matter experts

- We also suggest that the Council open a dialogue with OTDA to request at least a pilot program for discounts on cooling bills for low-income households; as summers continue to get warmer, such a program will no longer be able to be put off to the future

Once again, PULP appreciates the opportunity to testify here today, and to share our concerns and recommendations with the Committees on Consumer Affairs and Business Licensing and Resiliency and Waterfronts.

- PULP's hotline is available to assist utility customers with any problems they are experiencing: 877- 669 - 2572

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE UTILITY CONSUMER ADVOCATES
Resolution 2020-01

NASUCA Recommendations Concerning the Effects of the Public Health and Economic Crises Resulting from COVID-19 upon Utility Rates and Services Provided to Consumers by Public Utilities

Whereas, on January 30, 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the novel coronavirus outbreak (COVID-19) a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC)ⁱ. By March 11, 2020 the WHO characterized COVID-19 as a world pandemic; and

Whereas, on January 31, 2020 the Secretary of the United State Department of Health and Human Services declared a public health emergency related to the COVID-19ⁱⁱ. On March 13, 2020 the President of United States declared that the COVID-19 outbreak in the United States constituted a national emergencyⁱⁱⁱ; and

Whereas, during this national emergency, extraordinary actions have been instituted by State Governors and the federal government to reduce social contact with the goal of preventing the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Many businesses have been declared non-essential during the crisis and temporarily closed. Many states have issued temporary orders for citizens to shelter-in-place and avoid all non-essential movement away from home. Schools have been closed in many states. These emergency actions have resulted in record unemployment, widespread financial hardship and severe contraction of state economies; and

Whereas, to reduce the economic impact of this national emergency the United States Congress has passed, and the President has signed, several laws that offer financial support for states, citizens and businesses, some of which specifically include funding for essential utility services; and

Whereas, State governors and state public utility commissions and consumer advocates have taken steps to order or request voluntary compliance, and utilities and communications providers have taken steps either voluntarily or pursuant to orders, to stop disconnecting consumers that are unable to pay for service during the national emergency, to reconnect service for consumers that were disconnected prior to the national emergency, and to cease other collection activity temporarily; and

Whereas, the national crisis caused by COVID-19 is extraordinary in its breadth and depth, and the speed of its onset. While the ultimate depth and duration of the economic crisis is unknown, the initial impact of the economic crisis has been severe, resulting in closed businesses, disruption to the economy and millions unemployed,^{iv} many of whom are struggling to meet basic needs such as buying food and medicine, paying for shelter and paying for vital utilities; and

Whereas, the end of the COVID-19 virus public health emergency, however defined, will not correspond to the end of the economic crisis. Many utility consumers are already behind on, or will fall behind on their utility bills, and will need uniform programmatic assistance and financial

help getting back on their feet. This includes payment arrangements covering much longer time periods than normal, discount/assistance plans where none currently exist or expansion of existing plans; and

Whereas, access to electricity, water, natural gas and communications networks are essential for the health, safety, and welfare of all people, and that particularly during this unparalleled crisis broadband communications has played a vital role in protecting and furthering the health, safety and welfare of the States and their peoples; and

Whereas, small water and wastewater utilities have unique liquidity and infrastructure needs that must be addressed. Due to the lack of population density and the lack of economies of scale, small communities often face hurdles in supporting water and wastewater systems. Urban and rural water systems may also have issues with lead and other contaminants, and face other infrastructure challenges; and

Whereas, one of the goals of regulation besides protecting consumers is to serve as a proxy for the positive results of competition, and competitive enterprises have sought or will seek to reduce costs during this economic crisis.

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved: Every effort must be made to ensure that universal access to and affordability of utility services are not diminished during this public health and economic crisis. Utilities, regulators and consumer advocates should work together to craft evidence-based solutions that address the unique challenges and burdens faced by all consumers and other stakeholders during this crisis. Such solutions should ensure the continued safe and adequate provision of utility services at affordable rates and under terms and conditions that are reasonable within this new environment; and

Be it further resolved, that: When utilities, states or consumer advocates are communicating with consumers during this crisis, effort should be made to focus on the following:

- Consumers who are having trouble paying their utility bills should be urged to communicate with their utilities early and frequently;
- States, utilities and other service agencies should work together to communicate with utility consumers to ensure access to low income bill payment assistance, weatherization or other energy efficiency programs and any other resources available to help consumers pay arrearages, reduce bills and maintain service;
- Utility consumers should be urged to continue to pay their utility bills if possible, and if they cannot pay in full, to pay some portion of the bill to minimize any balance that will accumulate and be due at a later date; and

Be it further resolved, that: With regard to disconnection moratoria and communication rules between utilities and consumers during this crisis:

- Congress should respect state jurisdictional and decision-making authority to determine the extent and duration of any shutoff moratoria and to control any rules related to disconnections and reconnections, utility communications, payment programs and revenue collection activities;

- State public utility commissions should revisit utility tariffs and other terms and conditions applicable to disconnections, reconnections, late payment penalties and deposits in proceedings to address the economic impacts upon consumers of the ongoing economic crisis and to adopt policies applicable after the crisis ends to protect continued access to vital utility services by providing more time for repayment of past due amounts and reducing the burden of collection-related charges on consumers;
- Utilities should track and publish detailed information about consumer arrearages and shutoffs in a standardized format,^v while maintaining consumer privacy. Such information should be shared with state commissions and consumer advocates and be publicly available; and

Be it further resolved, that: To help consumers pay utility bills during this crisis, NASUCA believes:

- Congress should provide supplemental funding for fiscal year 2020 and increase funding for subsequent fiscal years through the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Programs (LIHEAP) and other funding mechanisms to address heating and cooling bills for consumers impacted by the COVID-19 crisis;
- Congress should create and fund a LIHEAP type mechanism to assist low-income water and wastewater utility consumers in paying their bills;
- Congress should consider providing direct support to utilities to assist consumers that may not otherwise qualify for LIHEAP assistance, including providing direct funding to utilities to reduce consumer arrearages and provide bill credits to help consumers maintain service;
- States should review and relax LIHEAP income eligibility standards to allow a wider range of consumers to qualify for assistance;
- States should consider adopting or strengthening bill payment assistance programs such as discounted rates, Percentage of Income Payment Plans (PIPPs) and arrearage management or arrearage reduction programs; and

Be it further resolved that: Accounting and utility operating cost:

- State commissions are urged to identify cost reductions when evaluating utility requests to defer COVID-19 cost increases as a regulatory asset;
- Congress should eliminate the normalization requirement contained in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 associated with the flowback of excess protected accumulated deferred income taxes to allow state commissions more flexibility to use these consumer-supplied funds to offset expenses; and

Be it further resolved, that: Broadband, telephone and cable:

- To facilitate the additional capacity necessary to support telemedicine and education and commerce, Congress should work with states and increase funding to appropriate state government agencies or create incentives for investor-owned broadband internet access providers to expand broadband capability and availability in all areas, but with additional focus on unserved and underserved areas to reduce the impact of the digital divide;
- Communications providers should sign the FCC's Keep Americans Connected Pledge and should extend the protections of that Pledge through August 2020;

- Communications providers should consider additional protections and relief programs for consumers that extend beyond the terms of the FCC’s Keep Americans Connected Pledge, including, among other things, making every effort to find workable arrangements to allow consumers to pay any arrearages caused by the COVID-19 crisis over a reasonable period of time after the crisis eases;
- To ensure consumers have access to local news and community television channels—which may be the only sources of COVID-19 or other emergency-related information for certain consumers, cable television providers should consider extending the protections of the FCC’s Keep Americans Connected Pledge to basic cable service and consider allowing consumers that cannot pay their bills for other levels of service to downgrade to basic cable service, without additional costs or fees, in lieu of disconnection, through August 2020 or 60 days after the end of the public health emergency, whichever is later;
- NASUCA affirms its historic support for universal service and affordability, service quality and the need for telephone service to reach as close as practicable to 100% of low-income households in the United States, as was originally provided for by the Communications Act of 1934 and the 1985 Lifeline amendments thereto, and as such programs are consistent with NASUCA policy positions taken over time in its resolutions and legal action(s); and NASUCA supports the uncapping and increasing of the Lifeline program funds so that for the duration of this public health and economic crisis the funding of such program is sufficient to meet need, provided that such reasonable protections against waste be retained to protect the public and NASUCA supports the expansion of the provision of voice minutes, text messages and broadband internet access over wireless Lifeline phones such that vulnerable families will retain full and reasonable access to online education, government, health/telemedicine and public safety services; and

Be it further resolved, that: Consumer access to utility-supplied water and wastewater services is critical to consumer health and safety:

- NASUCA affirms its support for legislation to fund critical water and wastewater infrastructure technical assistance and workforce development needs especially for small systems and systems burdened by lead and other nationally recognized contaminants. And all such action should focus upon maintaining or creating affordability, safety and potability of drinking water.

Be it further resolved, that NASUCA authorizes its Executive Committee to develop specific positions and take appropriate actions, consistent with the terms of this resolution and the needs of its Members and their utility consumers. The Executive Committee shall notify the membership of any action pursuant to this resolution.

Submitted by the COVID-19 Response Subcommittee
Passed by Membership Vote May 12, 2020

Abstained
Kentucky AG Ohio Oklahoma AG
Tennessee AG Texas

Endnotes

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- i <https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/27-04-2020-who-timeline---covid-19>
- ii <https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2020/01/31/secretary-azar-declares-public-health-emergency-us-2019-novel-coronavirus.html>
- iii <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/proclamation-declaring-national-emergency-concerning-novel-coronavirus-disease-covid-19-outbreak/>
- iv The U.S. Department of Labor reports that 16.4 million Americans are unemployed as of April 18, 2020 <https://www.dol.gov/ui/data.pdf>.
- v <https://www.nasuca.org/nwp/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/2019-07-NASUCA-Data-Collection-Resolution-Joint-with-NARUC-Final.pdf>; <https://www.nasuca.org/2018-04-data-collection-resolution/>



New York City Environmental Justice Alliance

166A 22nd Street, Brooklyn, NY 11232 | www.NYC-EJA.org

On the ground – and at the table

New York City Environmental Justice Alliance testimony to NYC Council Committee on Consumer Affairs and Business Licensing jointly w/ the Committees on Resiliency and Waterfronts, Environmental Protection and Health on Consolidated Edison’s Summer Preparations and the City’s Cooling Needs.

My name is Jalisa Gilmore and I will be testifying on behalf of the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance. Founded in 1991, NYC-EJA is a citywide network of grassroots organizations from low-income communities and communities of color in environmentally overburdened neighborhoods – including those on the front lines of climate change and its impacts such as extreme heat, which results in more deaths than any other weather-related event.

NYC-EJA commends Mayor de Blasio and his team on the COVID-19 Heat Wave Plan to keep vulnerable New Yorkers cool and safe at home. As NYC-EJA advocated in our *NYC Climate Justice Agenda 2020*, released last month on Earth Day, and in our COVID Heat Mitigation Plan Campaign (#Covid19HeatCampaign), which also launched last month, low-income communities of color are especially vulnerable to extreme heat impacts as the climate warms. Low-income New Yorkers, who are also disproportionately vulnerable to COVID-19 – and whose best defense is to stay in their homes – will be able to take comfort that they now can do so safely and with relief from extreme heat. However, there is still more that the City can do to protect vulnerable New Yorkers from extreme heat.

The administration has taken an important step towards preparedness with their announcement for the use of schools as cooling centers to provide for more social distancing than typical cooling centers can. There still are necessary improvements that need to be made to the City’s Cooling Center program, such as publicizing cooling center locations prior to an extreme heat event, which are only accessible online once there is a heat emergency. We commend Speaker Corey Johnson for acknowledging the need for building-specific cooling centers for vulnerable populations in his 2020 State of the City. Furthermore, these building-specific cooling centers and general cooling centers should ensure extended and overnight hours to address high nighttime temperatures due to the Urban Heat Island effect.

It’s likely that NYC is significantly underestimating the actual number of annual heat related mortality because deaths from other illnesses that may have been exacerbated by an extreme heat event are not counted. It is absolutely necessary to ensure current and future numbers are as close to accurate as possible so that the scope of this issue is not underestimated and the appropriate amount of resources can be directed towards reducing heat related vulnerability, morbidity, and mortality. NYC-EJA appreciates City Council Speaker Johnson’s call for legislation requiring DOHMH to re-evaluate its metrics for counting heat related deaths, as we have long championed. We also recommend that this legislation call for data transparency by making daily-level heat mortality data available.

The NYC Panel on Climate Change projects by the 2050's New York City can expect to see the number of 90-degree days to double, and the number of heatwaves to either triple or quadruple, which puts increasing strain on our energy grid and causes the most polluting peaker power plants to be fired up, worsening air quality and increasing electricity costs. As Con Ed considers their implementation plan for their Climate Change Vulnerability study, they need to specify a clear plan for how to protect NYC's most heat vulnerable communities from extreme heat in the event of brown and black outs, in the future and in the present. These same communities also should be prioritized for investments to make the energy grid more resilient. Furthermore, NYC must invest in resilient, clean and distributed energy to reduce strain on the grid. There was a missed opportunity for local green job hiring throughout Central Brooklyn when Con Ed pursued the Brooklyn Queens Demand Management Program in 2016-2017. This time around, both Con Ed and NYC must ensure that clean, renewable distributed energy investments commit to a Just Transition framework, where green local jobs are stimulated and maximized for frontline communities, residents threatened on three fronts by COVID-19, climate change and a devastated economy.

NYC-EJA calls on Governor Cuomo and New York State officials to also protect low-income New Yorkers from extreme heat impacts exacerbated by COVID-19. Through the federal CARES Act, New York State received an additional \$28.8 million in federal funds for the HEAP program, which provides winter heating and summer cooling assistance for low-income families. Governor Cuomo needs to immediately dedicate those funds to include utility assistance, waive or remove medical eligibility requirements, expand eligibility to households receiving federal housing subsidies, and allocate a larger percentage of funds for cooling assistance. These funds should go where the need is greatest: to low-income NYC neighborhoods that have been ignored for decades.

NYC-EJA generally supports Council Member Brannan's bill, "Annual reporting of heat vulnerability and heat-related deaths." and Council Member Salamanca's bill "Comprehensive cooling and communication plan." to address extreme heat, but we look forward to ensuring that these bills address all of NYC-EJA's long standing priorities related to extreme heat. As the climate continues to warm, we will see increased social consequences of more frequent and severe extreme heat events, which disproportionately impact low-income communities, communities of color, socially-isolated populations, and the elderly. NYC needs to ensure that we are protecting the most vulnerable by properly preparing for heat emergencies, prioritizing nature-based solutions like green infrastructure to cool the City, and reducing GHG emissions that are causing the climate to change.

Tuesday, May 26, 2020

Dear City Council member,

I am once again writing to advocate some form of city-wide composting.

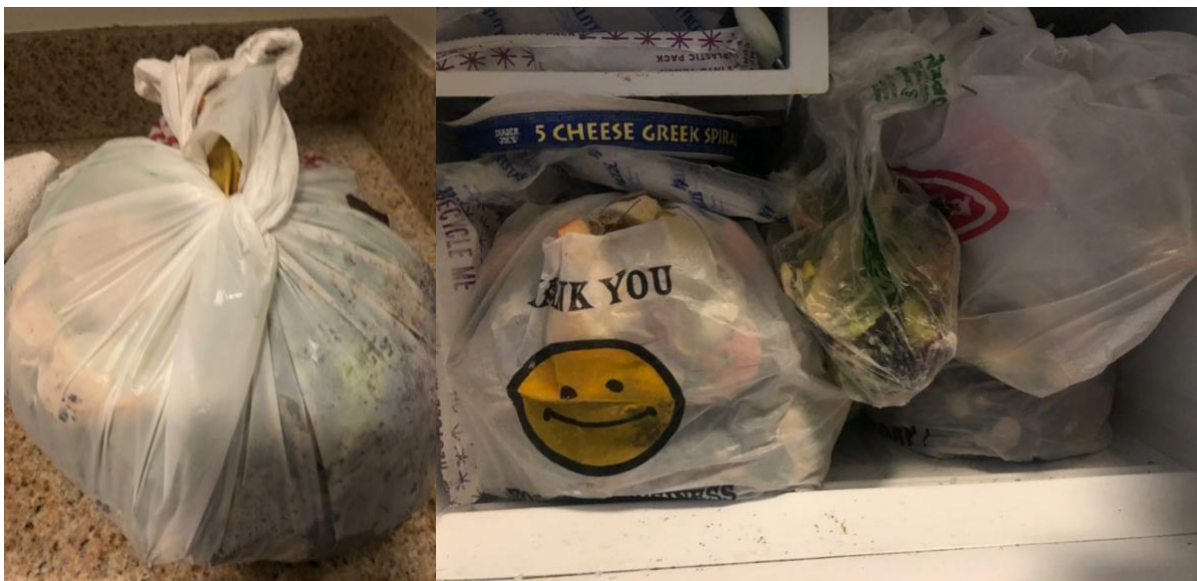
Not only is my freezer so full it won't shut, I have a bag of compost sitting on my counter. And it is off-gassing. Imagine this much food waste in landfills off-gassing when it could be re-used for new food. Locally grown food will be more important than ever in the upcoming times, we must work towards a more independent and smarter future. This means returning nutrients back into the earth.

Please work with community-based centers to re-open drop-off composting. I have been searching for alternatives but they all seem to have closed early May unfortunately before I was aware of the danger of losing compost until next year.

Attached is the compost I'm keeping in faith that this will be move forward in all our best interest.

I thank you for your time.

Catherine Nguyen
15 Park Row
New York NY 10038



To protect vulnerable New Yorkers from deadly heat exposure this summer heat, access to air conditioning must be rapidly expanded

Testimony of Thomas D Matte, MD, MPH, Independent Consultant, and Adjunct Senior Lecturer in Environmental Health, Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University.

New York City Council Hearing, Committee on Consumer Affairs and Business Licensing jointly w/ the Committees on Resiliency and Waterfronts, Environmental Protection and Health, 5/26/2020

Good afternoon council members. I am grateful to speak with you today.

Until 2016, I was an assistant commissioner at the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and led the Climate and Health Program. Studies by that program inform several brief points I want to make about heat waves, the deadliest type of extreme weather, and how to reduce the risk to vulnerable New Yorkers.

First, there is an urgent need to expand access to home air conditioning. Most serious heat-related illness and death in our city is among seniors and others with chronic health conditions exposed at home without air conditioning. Some people are unable to maintain a safe body temperature and succumb to heat stroke. Even more are hospitalized or die when underlying health conditions are exacerbated from the strain of too much heat exposure. Survey data shows that roughly 500,000 New Yorkers have a health risk for heat illness AND lack home air conditioning or the means to pay the electric bill.

Helping these vulnerable New Yorkers stay cool this summer is especially urgent. Public places to get cool, like libraries and senior centers, have been one strategy to give people a break from the heat. But even before COVID-19, roughly half of vulnerable people reported they stay home, even though they can't stay cool. With this same population at increased risk from COVID-19, even more will shelter at home.

To expand home air conditioning access quickly, the City's COVID-19 Heatwave Plan to provide 74,000 air conditioners to low income New Yorkers 60 and older is an important step. Two other strategies mentioned in that plan need action at the state level. First, the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (or LiHEAP), a federal program managed by the state, needs to greatly expand its cooling assistance budget, which has remained too low (only 1-2% of all assistance) while climate change caused the need for air conditioning use in NYC to rise by 30% in just the past 10 years. Requesting this change from the state was part of the administration's

2015 OneNYC plan, but no adjustment has been made. Had LiHEAP reform occurred years ago, the crisis posed by COVID-19 and our cooling gap, might be much less daunting. Second, the City's petition to the state Public Service Commission for electric bill relief for vulnerable New Yorkers must be approved. These LiHEAP and PSC bill relief mechanisms can be quickly implemented and scaled. As with many large challenges facing our city, effectively implementing the three pillars of the Heatwave Plan will require close collaboration between the City and State, in this case on planning, outreach and enrollment assistance.

There are many other changes needed to adapt our city for summer heat: Greening streets, changing building design and retrofitting buildings for more passive cooling, stopping wasteful overcooling and much more. But the most urgent need today is expanding access to home air conditioning.

Thank you

Testimony Spring 2020

I write from a personal point of view to let you know how shocked I am that you (The City of New York) plan to close parts of East River Park for demolition/flood control/reconstruction this Fall. This park is already resilient, and we, having been through September 11th, Super storm Sandy and now COVID 19, are resilient. This park plays a huge role in both our community's resilience and physical resilience to environmental challenges. But the East Side Coastal "Resiliency" plan which requires bulldozing and digging up 60 acres of parkland including 1,000 trees and every shrub and blade of grass within it does not fall into this citizen's definition of resilience.

I have lost neighbors and friends to the COVID 19 virus and as an elderly vulnerable person who regularly uses this park for my physical and mental health I feel that the park has saved me during the time of COVID. It is one of the few places I actually feel safe, walking beneath old shade trees wearing my mask and seeing so many other individuals and families feeling/acting the same way I do after weeks of confinement.

Our neighborhoods, the lower East Side and Chinatown have been designated as "Environmental Justice" neighborhoods which specifically mandates that making sure that low income, minority, and other vulnerable groups are engaged and included. Yet, for the most part, we have not been engaged and included. The decision to demolish the park and change the plan from the original Big U plan (in which some of us WERE engaged and included) was made behind closed doors and then a charade of community engagement commenced through a ULURP process where our voices were ignored. We testified tirelessly to no avail.

Today, those who I encounter in the park have assumed that the plan to destroy the park has been "paused" and there has been no communication with the community that this is not the case. This is not happening with this process due to CV19.

The DEC has issued guidance that in EJ neighborhoods, ongoing actions should include printed informational guidance delivered to the home of every impacted resident; this has not happened. We remain truly in the dark about this project to destroy the park and we have never been given any information on how this destructive plan will impact our health, in particular those of us who already have COPD or asthma.

Digging up fill underneath a large municipal park that may contain contaminants that could affect our lungs, cardio-pulmonary and nervous systems, while we are all sheltering at home in a public health emergency and trying to manage our CV19 issues does not seem rational at all. In fact, this is why we didn't realize that this plan was going ahead as scheduled until very recently. (See "Pavement Pieces," Izzie Ramirez, May 12, "During Wednesday's City Council executive budget hearing, Commissioner Lorraine Grillo, of the city's Department of Design and Construction, said there will be a "shovel in the ground" in Fall 2020.)

Further adding to our vulnerability is the news that we are approaching a very active hurricane season with minimal flood protection EXCEPT THIS PARK which during Super

storm Sandy absorbed around 250,000 gallons of water. Thousands of residents will be asked to evacuate and go to shelters—only this time COVID 19 will still be here or will have come back as a second wave. I personally will be terrified to evacuate and go somewhere where I certainly will not be able to maintain a social distance.

Before COVID 19 this plan did not seem ethically or environmentally like the best option.

Post COVID it seems akin to murder.

Harriet Hirshorn

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(https://pavementpieces.com/first-sandy-now-covid-lower-east-side-activists-grapple-with-construction-for-climate-project/?utm_source=East+River+Park+ACTION&utm_campaign=c95097dc27-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_05_12_04_13&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_bd55105095-c95097dc27-132205581)