



**Testimony of Carlos Castell Croke
Associate for NYC Programs
New York League of Conservation Voters**

**City Council Committee on Environmental Protection
Hearing on Intro 2149
December 15, 2020**

Good afternoon, my name is Carlos Castell Croke and I am the Associate for New York City Programs at the New York League of Conservation Voters (NYLCV). NYLCV represents over 30,000 members in New York City and we are committed to advancing a sustainability agenda that will make our people, our neighborhoods, and our economy healthier and more resilient. We would like to thank Chair Constantinides for holding this important hearing and for the opportunity to testify today.

As the years go by we continue to see the worsening effects of climate change. Storms and natural disasters are more extreme, temperatures rise amplifying the deadly heat waves in the summer, and the shore line inches further inland threatening our valuable properties and infrastructure. The only way that this city can effectively deal with these threats is through a multifaceted approach that tracks, mitigates and prevents these worsening conditions.

Intro 2149 intends to establish a climate resiliency indicator and monitoring working group to collect and convene data that is currently collected from multiple different sources. This data will be provided to the Mayor's Office of Long Term Planning and Sustainability and also requires them to develop two climate change indicator pilot projects.

We strongly believe that comprehensive tracking and management of climate change indicators is paramount if we are to effectively fight this crisis. Intro 2149 will push us in the right direction by bringing data together that currently is scattered and charging the Mayor's office with maintaining and sharing this data. A yearly report, as described in the bill, will provide advocates, government officials, and lawmakers with the tools they need to accurately assess the threat of climate change. Additionally, by establishing two pilot projects the city will be able to collect important data on climate change and resiliency that is not well tracked or does not currently exist. We fully support the expansion of indicator tracking and the passage of Intro 2149.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.



Tuesday, December 15, 2020

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Oral Testimony

Before New York City Council
Committee on Environmental Protection

Introduction 2149 & Oversight

Sonal Jessel
Policy & Advocacy Coordinator
WE ACT for Environmental Justice

Good afternoon Chair Constantinides and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding Introduction 2149 and the importance of climate change initiatives.

My name is Sonal Jessel, and I'm the Policy Director at WE ACT for Environmental Justice. Over the past 32 years, WE ACT has been combating environmental racism in Northern Manhattan. I myself have received my Master in Public Health from Columbia University. I am here to discuss the potential of Introduction of 2149 and the importance of tracking efforts related to climate change.

Passing Introduction 2149 provides a lot of opportunity for New York City. As a climate justice advocate who works with community, we use data from the City for public education, and to understand what needs to be done to address the climate crisis. Often, the City's open data is missing key information that will help move our work forward. For WE ACT's Heat Health and Equity Initiative, which is an initiative aiming to address extreme heat in Northern Manhattan, we created a number of public education materials to raise awareness and understanding about how extreme heat impacts our communities. It was difficult to find climate information, such as the number of heat advisories the City issued in 2019. Without an official number, we used temperature data, and past Notify NYC alerts to get an estimate.

There is a lot of data that feels missing from public access. Particularly, data about environmental justice neighborhoods. When collecting new items for reporting under Introduction 2149, we advise there be special attention taken to reporting the listed indicators for neighborhoods with environmental justice concerns.

Too often, we find the climate data is not given at the right spatial level to move our work forward. Micro-level data, which could be data by block, will be extremely valuable information for resiliency, adaptation, and mitigation planning for us. Especially in neighborhoods that have been under-resourced, formerly redlined, and have disproportionate placement of industrial sites. We ask this be considered for data items in Introduction 2149.

Additionally, we are excited to have climate monitoring indicator projects in the bill. It is important those projects are centered in environmental justice



communities and prioritize data missing in those communities. And, it is vital environmental justice communities are represented sufficiently in the working group.

Lastly, it is imperative we continue to work on climate justice in New York City and track its progress strictly. We were frustrated to see in the OneNYC progress report that the greenhouse gas emissions reduction rate has in fact increased. We understand it is due to increased use in A/Cs and winter heating, which is vital to ensuring residents stay healthy and safe in their homes. However, we think there is a lot that could be done to offset the increased energy use.

The Mayor in February, announced a plan to ban new gas hookups in New York City. Why has this measure not passed? Renewable Rikers Act is an extremely obvious pathway to providing communities with renewable energy. How come the City Council has not passed this yet? We must pass introduction 1591, 1592, and 1593 immediately. Furthermore, as we were increasing the use of A/C's this summer with the great GetCool program, did we ensure big electricity sucking office buildings increased their temperatures while everyone was at home, to reduce the City's energy use?

We look forward to continue working with our partners in City Council, the Mayor's Office, and other City agencies to answer these questions, and to continue to push for major changes. The COVID-19 crisis has made it even more clear that we need to ensure people's homes are safe and healthy. A focus on retrofitting, electrifying, and ultimately decarbonizing our household energy is vital to ensuring people have access to adequate energy that does not increase greenhouse gas emissions. That is why WE ACT has launched our Out of Gas pilot project to prove moving away from gas stoves is healthy for our residents and our climate. We believe it is vital the city move forward with project like ours and expand this to a large scale in the City quickly.

We support Introduction 2149. It is an important step for addressing the climate crisis. But we believe there is much much more that needs to be done much more quickly than we are doing now.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Sonal Jessel, MPH
Director of Policy



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**To: The New York City Council
Committee on Environmental Protection**

From:
Dr. Shimrit Perkol-Finkel
Co-founder ECONcrete Inc

Testimony in support of Int 2149-2020

Dear members of the committee, citizens and residents of New York City, and participating legislators,

We thank you for the opportunity to share ECONcrete's testimony.

ECONcrete Inc is a science-based company providing ecological concrete solutions for coastal and marine infrastructure. We provide environmentally sensitive alternatives to hard coastal defenses like seawalls and piers. Conventional concrete infrastructures create immense pressure on shallow-water ecosystems, and are the source of 8% of global CO₂ emissions; ECONcrete regenerates marine life on concrete infrastructure while increasing their structural performance. Our resilience-building roots in NYC run deep. Since our first deployment in Brooklyn Bridge Park in 2014, we have prioritized the safety of New York City residents and ecosystems. We collaborate with the NY Harbor School, Billion Oyster Project, and the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance's WEDG and Rise to Resilience initiatives. Projects on Huron St, Randall's Island, and Brooklyn Bridge Park are demonstrating ecological benefits. As private sector stakeholders, ECONcrete unequivocally supports this legislation, and commends the committee for their foresight and proactivity.

To build on the comprehensiveness of this bill, ECONcrete is testifying to the importance of resiliency-building from the shoreline's edge and beyond, and enlisting shallow-water ecosystems in the climate-combatting arsenal. Coastal ecosystems are integral partners to the climate change indicators delineated in this legislation (land inundated by coastal flooding and total economic losses from climate related events annually). For example, oyster reefs and marsh beds can diminish wave action from storms, thereby reducing flooding and total economic losses. Resiliency indicators enumerated in this legislation may also account for regeneration of in-water ecosystems to compliment restoration of coastal wetlands. In order to increase returns on total resilience expenditures and support restoration efforts, the miles of coastal defenses erected should be constructed with nature-inclusive designs and ecologically-sensitive materials. ECONcrete aims to be a significant partner in commensurating the legislation's targets by bridging development and sustainability.

To capture the value of coastal ecosystems as climate resilience builders, we propose the addition of one indicator and the amendment of another. We propose adding the resiliency indicator of *marine biodiversity*, demonstrated by richness and abundance of keystone and/or ecosystem engineering species, such as oysters, as a diverse ecosystem is a resilient ecosystem. Furthermore, biodiversity is critical to reducing the magnitude of ‘land inundated by coastal flooding,’ as well as increasing the effectiveness of ‘acres of restored coastal wetlands.’ Secondly, we propose an amendment to ‘miles of coastal defenses erected’ to specify ‘miles of *Nature Inclusive* coastal defenses erected.’ Nature-inclusive infrastructures are able to both mitigate and adapt to climate hazards by taking advantage of processes like bioprotection: a process where marine fauna and flora generate a protective layer that strengthens the structure, reduces erosion and corrosion, and serves as an active carbon sink. By designing coastal defenses for habitat value, miles of nature inclusive infrastructure would make our coasts more adaptive and resilient to climate change over the long term.

We thank this committee for proposing legislation to monitor climate indicators, and incentivize responsible development. We are grateful for your time and attention to this hearing process, and look forward to continuing collaborating with the city on coastal protection projects.

New York City Council

Committee on Environmental Protection

Hearing on Res. No. 1469: Resolution calling on nations around the world to implement, the United States Senate to approve, and the president to ratify a fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty and other matters.

December 15, 2020

Statement of Carroll Muffett in support of Res. No. 1469

Thank you, Chair Constantinides, members of the Committee, for the opportunity to speak with you.

I am Carroll Muffett, president of the Center for International Environmental Law and a member of the Steering Committee for the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty sends the simple, incontrovertible message that we cannot end the climate crisis without eliminating the fossil fuels that are driving that crisis.

To have any hope of keeping global warming below 1.5C, humanity must cut its emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases by 45% by 2030 and reach net zero emissions by 2050. Fossil fuels account for more than 75% of those emissions, including nearly 90% of the CO2 emitted globally.

Were countries to burn only the oil, gas and coal already developed, it would eliminate any hope of staying below 1.5C and, indeed push the world far beyond 2 degrees of warming. In a report released last month, the United Nations Environment Program concluded that limiting warming to 1.5C requires the world to cut fossil fuel production by 6% every year from 2020-2030, and accelerate the phaseout from 2030 onward.

But on our present trajectory, production of fossil fuels is actually increasing by 2% per year. According to UNEP's Production Gap Report, the level of global fossil fuel production currently planned or projected is 50% greater than would be consistent with 2°C and more than twice what we can afford to burn in a 1.5°C world. This fossil fuel "production gap" is putting the world on a trajectory for 3 degrees of warming or more, and a climate catastrophe almost unthinkable in its scale and scope.

As Hurricanes Sandy, Katrina and Harvey show in the starkest terms, cities are on the frontlines of the climate crisis, with the poorest and most vulnerable populations at greatest risk. As city leaders, you understand the gravity and urgency of that crisis because you're responsible for putting the pieces and the lives back together when disasters strike.

In 1979, faced with the existential threat of nuclear weapons, New York City took a stand and called on the US and other nations to end the escalating nuclear arms race that threatened humanity with nuclear annihilation. In doing so, New York inspired action by other cities across the country and around the world.

New York has the opportunity and the urgent responsibility to show that same leadership today. In endorsing the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, New York City can send a message to the United States and the world that the era of unchecked fossil fuel expansion must end, and will end, so the era of real and rapid climate action can finally begin.

Public Testimony

December 15, 2020

New York City Council Hearing Committee on Environmental Protection

Re: Intro 2149, A local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to establishing climate indicators

Submitted by Kate Boicourt, Director of Resilience, Waterfront Alliance

I would like to thank Chair Constantinides and Councilmembers Ulrich, Levin, Menchaca, and Yeger for the opportunity to testify today.

Waterfront Alliance is a non-profit civic organization and coalition of more than 1,100 community and recreational groups, educational institutions, businesses, and other stakeholders. Our mission is to inspire and enable resilient, revitalized and accessible coastlines for all communities.

We support the Councilmember's intent in Intro 2149 to develop climate indicators, identified previously as a need by the New York City Panel on Climate Change. Climate indicators can help us to both understand the impacts of climate change on our City and its residents, and our progress toward reaching climate goals.

We encourage the Council to consider this bill as part of a broader decision-making framework for addressing climate resiliency Citywide. An analysis of climate indicators is one piece of a larger strategy. Indicators are critical to understanding vulnerabilities and climate trends. We must use that information to support a government decision-making framework regarding how the City designs, maintains, monitors, and replaces assets and infrastructure. We also encourage allowing in the bill for more flexibility so that the administration can define and refine the indicators specifically with stakeholder involvement.

Working with the Rise to Resilience coalition, we will call on our elected leaders in 2021 to support the development of such a framework to guide government decision-making and capital budgeting, pursue resilience funding and financing opportunities, provide public transparency, provide tools for more equitable investment, and reduce the City's risk and financial vulnerability to climate change over time.

Ultimately we need a climate resiliency package, much like the City Council championed a climate mitigation package with the green buildings bills. We think that by building upon three bills introduced by the Council over the past year, we can establish such a framework. They include: 1) Intro 1620, the Council's bill to establish a comprehensive resilience strategy; 2) Intro 2149, the subject of today's discussion; and 3) Intro 2092, a bill that would require resiliency design guidelines to be followed for all capital projects.

We look forward to working with the Council to develop this package of legislation into a resilience strategy that benefits all New Yorkers, prioritizing those who are most at risk.

Testimony for the New York City Council Committee on Environmental Protection Hearing

Jason Hartke, Executive Vice President, External Affairs, International WELL Building Institute

December 18, 2020

I would like to start by thanking the members of the New York City Council Committee on Environmental Protection and specifically to Committee Chair Costa Constantinides for the opportunity to testify. We are honored to be part of this important discussion as you consider Chair Constantinides' recently introduced **Intro 2149**, which would "establish a climate resiliency indicator and monitoring working group" for the City.

My name is Jason Hartke and I am the Executive Vice President of External Affairs at the International WELL Building Institute (IWBI). I appreciate the opportunity to testify.

First, on behalf of IWBI, I would like to acknowledge and applaud the leadership of this Committee and its work to date to address climate change as a public health issue. As you move forward to consider this bill and other ways to strengthen OneNYC, I would urge you to consider and utilize key strategies and tools to advance building health and safety in tandem with your efforts to advance climate resilience. In fact, health and safety should undergird all on New York's climate resilience efforts, particularly in light of the current pandemic and the population health disparities laid bare by fighting COVID-19 – health disparities that will no doubt be further challenged by the effects of climate change.

Our organization is leading the global movement to transform our buildings and communities in ways that help people thrive. IWBI delivers the cutting-edge WELL Building Standard™, the leading global rating system and the first to be focused exclusively on the ways that buildings, and everything in them, can improve our comfort, drive better choices, and generally enhance, not compromise, our health and wellness. Launched in October 2014 after six years of research and development, the WELL Building Standard is the premier standard for buildings, interior spaces and communities seeking to implement, validate and measure features that support and advance human health and well-being. WELL was developed by integrating scientific and medical research and literature on environmental health, behavioral factors, health outcomes and demographic risk factors that affect health with leading practices in building design, construction and management. The WELL Building Standard underwent a comprehensive expert peer review process, which included three phases - scientific, practitioner and medical review.

Local officials have recognized and acknowledged the significant role that buildings play to advance human health. This past summer at the 88th U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM) annual conference, the nation's mayors passed a seminal policy resolution, "**Advancing Healthy Buildings in the Fight Against COVID-19.**" The resolution outlines and commits to policy recommendations to deploy and position our buildings as a key part of the solution to the global pandemic.

In March, our team at IWBI set out to position all buildings in the fight against COVID-19 and help organizations get back to business with confidence. Based on the critical input from nearly 600 experts who participated in our global **Task Force on COVID-19**, we introduced **the WELL Health-Safety Rating for Facility Operations and Management**, an evidence-based, third-party verified rating for all facility types, focused on operational policies, maintenance protocols, emergency plans and stakeholder education to address a COVID-19 environment now and broader health and safety-related issues into the future. In just over five months, the market has embraced the WELL Health-Safety Rating, making it the leading building rating system for leaders in both the public and private sectors responding to

COVID-19. **To date, owners and operators of more than 9,000 spaces are enrolled in the WELL Health-Safety Rating** to help their organizations get back to business and instill confidence in employees, customers and visitors as well as the broader community, **including Fairfax County Public Schools, Citi, CBRE, Orville Public Schools, JLL, JPMorgan Chase, Goldman Sachs, Lendlease, and others.** The science-backed program provides an efficient and effective opportunity to inform, validate and reward the efforts of owners and operators to mitigate acute health threats. The third-party review process ensures integrity and consistency: a WELL Health-Safety seal on the outside means we can all feel more confident going inside. Iconic buildings like [Yankees Stadium](#) and the [Empire State Building](#) were amongst the first to be rated, and now spaces totaling more than 600 million square feet of real estate across more than 20 countries are working towards their designations.

In addition, in November, IWBI joined with the National League of Cities (NLC), the voice of cities, towns, and villages, representing more than 200 million people, announcing a multi-year partnership focused on supporting cities in their efforts to create safer, healthier spaces and help accelerate systems change to integrate health and well-being across the foundation of their communities. This is particularly important as the effects of climate change continue to wreak havoc on cities across the country. The partnership will focus on collaborating on the development of strategies, tools and resources that will enable city leaders to effectively navigate in a post-COVID-19 world. Developed to support the implementation of city-scale actions, the effort will help cities demonstrate leadership in advancing health, well-being and social equity in everything from municipal buildings to public spaces and from programs to policies.

Lastly, as cities develop more sophisticated and more integrated strategies to combat a changing climate, health and safety concerns will continue to be a top priority for local governments. Deploying solutions that both mitigate climate change while simultaneously addressing how buildings promote and protect health and add to human resiliency will be vital to any policy agenda. We would love to serve as a resource to you and the Committee as you navigate the path forward and strive to prioritize the health and well-being of residents and visitors to your city. We would enjoy the opportunity to engage more with you and provide a deeper briefing about how other cities are leveraging the WELL Health-Safety Rating and other WELL programs to deploy their buildings as vehicles for public health.

Thank you again for the leadership of this Committee and the opportunity to testify.