



Legislation Text

File #: Res 0878-2015, **Version:** *

Res. No. 878

Resolution calling upon the City University of New York to divest from fossil fuel company investments and reinvest those funds in renewable energy, sustainability, and social-minded companies.

By Council Members Richards, Barron, Chin, Johnson, Mendez, Rose and Cohen

Whereas, The City University of New York (CUNY) is the public university system of New York City and the largest urban university in the United States, with more than 269,000 degree-credit students and 247,000 continuing and professional education students enrolled at 24 campuses located in all five New York City boroughs; and

Whereas, CUNY's Investment Office manages its Long Term Investment Pool, a diversified portfolio intended to serve the financial needs of the University and participating colleges interested in investing in both endowed and non-endowed assets and the Short Term Investment Pool, a diversified portfolio intended to provide the colleges and related entities with a centralized alternative to money market funds and other low-yielding investment vehicles; and

Whereas, According to the CUNY website, the Investment Pools operate under a CUNY Board of Trustees-approved Investment Policy and are governed by the Board and two Board Committees, Fiscal Affairs and its Subcommittee on Investments, and together with CUNY Investment staff and Pool consultants, are responsible for reviewing asset allocation, new asset classes, investment strategies and manager performance; and

Whereas, According to the CUNY Investment Policy (effective as amended on June 25, 2012), the Board of Trustees is responsible for approving the Policy and all its amendments as well as approving the selection of the Investment Consultant(s); and

Whereas, The Subcommittee on Investments (“Subcommittee”) is responsible for the total investment program and providing prudent oversight of the Portfolio in order to further the goals and mission of CUNY, its Colleges and the participating College Foundations; and

Whereas, Vice Chancellor for Budget and Finance Matthew Sapienza is responsible for overseeing and managing the finances of CUNY’s 24 colleges and professional schools and of the University’s central administration, including its investment portfolio; and

Whereas, According to multiple studies published in peer-reviewed scientific journals, 97 percent, or more, of actively publishing climate scientists agree that climate-warming trends over the past century are very likely due to human activities; and

Whereas, According to Professional Staff Congress-CUNY, the CUNY Long Term Investment Pool invests in mutual funds that own shares in the top 200 fossil fuel companies; and

Whereas, A major driving factor forcing climate change is the burning of fossil fuels, which have increased atmospheric CO₂ concentration by a third since the start of the Industrial Revolution; and

Whereas, The increasingly apparent negative effects of climate change have given birth to a movement, CUNY Divest, with a coalition of current students, alumni, and faculty that believe such investment supports continued degradation and destruction of the planet and are pressuring Vice Chancellor Sapienza and the CUNY Board of Trustees to end the University’s \$10 million investment in fossil fuel companies and reinvest those funds in renewable energy, sustainability, and social-minded companies; and

Whereas, Fossil fuel divestment is now a full-fledged student-led movement at over 350 colleges and universities across the United States, nine of which have committed to divestment; and

Whereas, The CUNY Board of Trustees has twice approved divestment in the past, once in 1984, divesting from companies conducting business in apartheid South Africa, and again in 1991, divesting from tobacco companies; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the City University of New York to

divest from fossil fuel company investments and reinvest those funds in renewable energy, sustainability, and social-minded companies.

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5/11/2015
CGR