



Legislation Text

File #: Res 1197-2019, **Version:** *

Res. No. 1197

Resolution calling upon the New York City Department of Education to install air conditioning in school auditoriums, gymnasiums and cafeterias with highest priority in school districts where there is a high rate of asthma and other respiratory illnesses

By Council Members Cabrera, Treyger, Louis, Kallos, Yeger and Chin

Whereas, In New York City (NYC), extreme heat events are defined as periods when the heat index is 100°F or higher for one or more days, or when the heat index is 95°F or higher for two or more consecutive days; and

Whereas, During the summer, NYC usually experiences one or more periods of extreme heat, which can cause dehydration, heat exhaustion, heat stroke, and in extreme cases, death; and

Whereas, Extreme heat events can produce poor air quality and can often cause or worsen respiratory problems; and

Whereas, Asthma is a common respiratory disease in which the lungs become swollen, making breathing difficult; and

Whereas, According to research, poor indoor air quality can worsen asthma symptoms and may also be a factor in the development of asthma in those who are more susceptible, like small children; and

Whereas, According to the NYC Environment and Health Data Portal, asthma is a leading cause of emergency room visits, hospitalizations and missed school days in the City's poorest neighborhoods and is more common among low-income Black and Latino children; and

Whereas, Nearly 70,000 public school children aged 5-14 years old have a diagnosis of asthma that has been reported to NYC Department of Health and Mental Health; and

Whereas, A healthy indoor air environment is supported with properly functioning Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC), which contributes to adequate air flow, proper filtration and humidity control; and

Whereas, While HVAC does not filter the air, it alleviates asthma symptoms as keeping doors and windows shut help to keep out pollens and other outdoor irritants and allergens; and

Whereas, Further, research provides evidence that cumulative heat exposure hinders cognitive skill development and that school AC can offset nearly all of the damaging impacts of cumulative heat exposure on academic achievement; and

Whereas, In 2017, the de Blasio administration announced the Air Conditioning Initiative, which funds air conditioning (AC) for every public school classroom in NYC and prioritizes schools that have summer school; and

Whereas, At the time of the announcement, 80% of all classrooms had AC and under this initiative, over 16,000 additional classrooms will receive AC; and

Whereas, The Proposed Five-Year Capital Plan for Fiscal Years 2020 through 2024 for the NYC Department of Education includes plans to complete installation of AC in all classrooms, but this plan does not include AC in other needed learning spaces; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the New York City Department of Education to install air conditioning in school auditoriums, gymnasiums and cafeterias with highest priority in school districts where there is a high rate of asthma and other respiratory illnesses.

LS #4219
10/23/19
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