



Legislation Text

File #: Res 0190-2026, **Version:** *

Res. No. 190

Resolution calling on the New York State Legislature to pass, and Governor to sign, legislation to create a permanent, citywide voluntary buyout program to mitigate flood risk

By Council Members Gennaro and Louis

Whereas, Flooding caused by extreme weather threatens to damage or destroy thousands of homes in New York City (the City); and

Whereas, In 2012, Hurricane Sandy hit the City with a storm surge that flooded 17 percent of the City's landmass, which included more than 300,000 homes and critical infrastructure such as hospitals and the Brooklyn-Battery tunnel; and

Whereas, The storm surge was especially devastating in coastal areas, such as the Coney Island peninsula, where the flood waters reached a depth of 11 feet above ground level, and on the South Shore of Staten Island, where they reached a depth of 14 feet; and

Whereas, These conditions damaged over 69,000 residential units, killed 44 New Yorkers and cost an estimated \$19 billion in lost economic activity and property damage; and

Whereas, To repair the damage from Hurricane Sandy, the City received over \$17 billion in federal relief spending, which included \$9.9 billion from the Federal Emergency Management Agency Public Assistance program and \$4.2 billion from the Community Development Block Grant Disaster Relief (CDBG-DR) program; and

Whereas, The City's Build it Back (BIB) Single Family Program, which used CDBG-DR dollars to pay contractors to rebuild single family homes damaged by Hurricane Sandy, had begun assisting only 686 of the roughly 20,000 program applicants by August 2014, nearly two years after the storm struck the City; and

Whereas, Some BIB Single Family Program repairs were not completed until 2021, nearly 10 years after Hurricane Sandy occurred; and

Whereas, Climate change will likely cause extreme weather like Hurricane Sandy to occur more often and with greater intensity; and

Whereas, The New York City Panel on Climate Change has warned that the City will likely experience an increase in chronic tidal flooding and coastal storms over the course of the next century; and

Whereas, These trends may increase the frequency with which extreme weather forces New Yorkers living in high-risk flood zones to rebuild their homes; and

Whereas, Many New Yorkers struggle to rebuild their homes after damage from extreme weather despite federal assistance; and

Whereas, New York State (the State) can mitigate the monetary and human costs of extreme weather by offering to purchase homes at high risk of flooding through voluntary buyout programs, which allow homeowners to resettle in low-risk flood zones and escape the cycle of rebuilding and displacement caused by extreme weather; and

Whereas, Voluntary buyout programs also safeguard communities against future storms, as purchased properties are typically transformed into natural, open space storm water management systems; and

Whereas, Although the State administered the voluntary New York State Acquisition for Redevelopment buyout program after Hurricane Sandy, the program was limited and offered to purchase homes located in only two neighborhoods in the borough of Staten Island; and

Whereas, Homeowners in all five boroughs live at high risk of flood damage and should have the choice to mitigate their risk by selling their property to the State; and

Whereas, The State could likely fund a permanent, citywide voluntary buyout program with new state and federal grant and loan programs; and

Whereas, In November, 2022, New York State voters approved the Clean Water, Clean Air and Green

Jobs Environmental Bond Act, which will raise \$4.2 billion to pay for climate change mitigation and greenhouse gas abatement projects, up to \$250 million of which may be spent on voluntary private property buyouts; and

Whereas, The federal Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities program, which received \$1 billion in funding from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 (IIJA), and the federal Safeguarding Tomorrow through Ongoing Risk Mitigation act, which received \$500 million in funding from IIJA, can help states pay for the mitigation of natural hazards through measures such as voluntary buyout programs; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls on the New York State Legislature to pass, and Governor to sign, legislation to create a permanent, citywide voluntary buyout program to mitigate flood risk.

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LS #12719
Res. #0084-2024
12/31/2025 9:52 AM