



Statement on Mayor de Blasio’s OneNYC 2050
by NYC Environmental Justice Alliance Executive Director Eddie Bautista

April 22, 2019: NYC Environmental Justice Alliance (NYC-EJA) applauds Mayor de Blasio’s announced commitment to reducing New York City’s carbon footprint. In the wake of last fall’s stunning announcement by the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that fewer than 12 years remain for serious emissions reductions to stave off the worst impacts of climate change, the current political moment calls for both urgency and ambition.

Today’s announcement contains both good and troubling initiatives for the City’s communities most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. We are gratified at the Mayor’s support of last week’s Climate Mobilization Act, the most ambitious climate plan by any U.S. City targeting the greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) generated by buildings 25,000 square feet and above – which represent 70% of our total GHG pollution. The Mayor’s championing of commercial waste zones for the City’s commercial waste system also promises significant reductions of vehicle miles traveled, and his recent support for congestion pricing will deliver the twin benefits of improved air quality and much needed transit improvements.

However, there are warning signs in today’s announcement for the City’s most environmentally overburdened communities – communities of color that are disproportionately vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. These troubling initiatives include:

Carbon neutrality & emissions trading – NYC’s goal should be the elimination of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, rather than a goal of carbon-neutral or net zero carbon emissions, which would leave the door open for consideration of carbon “offsets.” Carbon offsets enable companies, agencies, and individuals to compensate for pollution they produce by preventing a similar amount of pollution from happening elsewhere, or by pulling a similar amount of carbon from the atmosphere. For example, a power company burning fossil fuels in the Bronx can “offset” their carbon pollution by paying to plant trees in Putnam County that will consume an equivalent amount of carbon, or by investing in a wind farm in Columbia County that will produce an equivalent amount of green energy. While such projects such as land conservation and forestry are important, these projects should not be considered an excuse to continue local fossil fuel-based pollution - or experimenting with an unproven energy efficiency

trading scheme for buildings. Favoring carbon-neutrality over zero emissions fails to recognize and address the economic and health impacts pollution has on frontline communities and communities of color that bear a disproportionate burden of pollution. Offsets make it permissible for polluters to continue shifting environmental burdens to nearby communities that are primarily low-income and people of color. Offsets have been identified as a key contributor to pollution hotspots in environmental justice communities in other cap-and-trade schemes.

Heat Plan – The most dangerous of climate impacts, excessive heat kills more Americans than all storm surges combined. According to several different studies, a range of New Yorkers (anywhere from 198 – 638) die annually from excessive heat exposure. By the 2050’s, the average NY summer will see 90 degree days double, with heat waves tripling or even quadrupling. According to the NYC Panel on Climate Change, heat death projections may exceed 3,000 by the 2080’s. Low income communities are disproportionately vulnerable from heat impacts, with more than 50% of NYCHA residents live in the city’s highest heat risk neighborhoods, based on information from the official [NYC Heat Vulnerability Index](#). Yet the City’s current *Cool Neighborhoods* heat plan still relies on inconsistent operation of cooling centers, with little to no advanced notification and no overnight hours, and promises no expansion of green infrastructure and street trees – which this announcement overlooked.

Coastal Protection: Mayor de Blasio recently announced a \$10 Billion coastal resiliency plan for Wall Street, but made no commitments to coastal protection for climate vulnerable frontline communities. NYC must prioritize the resiliency of critical facilities, including the Hunts Point Food Distribution Center in the South Bronx that is at-risk for storm surge and flooding. NYC’s coastal protection projects must be equitable, use nature-based solutions, and create new local job opportunities, while abiding by community priorities that demand co-benefits like accessible waterfront parks and greenways.

It is important to remember that there is nothing “new” about the Green New Deal – low-income communities of color first pioneered this frame as “Climate Justice” and “Just Transitions” campaigns. NYC-EJA looks forward to working with the de Blasio Administration and City Council on reducing the disproportionate climate vulnerabilities of low-income communities of color. NYC-EJA will also monitor and critique those climate initiatives that either continue to leave our communities behind – or worse yet, increase those vulnerabilities.

[About the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance \(NYC-EJA\)](#)

Founded in 1991, the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance (NYC-EJA) is a non-profit, 501(c)3 citywide membership network linking grassroots organizations from low-income neighborhoods and communities of color in their struggle for environmental justice. NYC-EJA empowers its member organizations to advocate for improved environmental conditions and against inequitable environmental burdens through the coordination of campaigns designed to inform City and State policies. Through our efforts, member organizations coalesce around specific common issues that threaten the ability for low-income communities of color to thrive.

###