



## **New York City Environmental Justice Alliance Testimony to the NYC Council on LL97 Green Workforce Pipeline**

**June 27, 2022**

Good afternoon Chairperson De La Rosa, Chairperson Sanchez, Chairperson Gennaro and members of the Council. My name is Shrvanthi Kanekal and I am the Resiliency Planner for the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance (NYC-EJA). Founded in 1991, NYC-EJA is a non-profit citywide membership network linking 11 grassroots organizations from low-income neighborhoods and communities of color in their struggle for environmental justice.

NYC-EJA, through the Climate Works For All Coalition, has been an ardent supporter of Local Law 97 (LL97), and has strongly advocated for the complete and equitable implementation of the law since its introduction.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the following economic crisis and ongoing climate crisis, the successful implementation of LL97 provides an incredible opportunity to create thousands of good green jobs, move us towards our climate goals, and directly invest in reducing harmful localized pollution levels in environmental justice communities.

David Hsu from MIT has projected that LL97 has the potential to create 140,000 good green jobs by 2030.<sup>1</sup> New York City should take this opportunity to invest in successful union-linked pre-apprenticeships, apprenticeships, and certification training programs to fully support the growing clean energy industry and expand access to good green jobs to workers who have experienced pandemic job-losses. We've seen some success with previous programs such as the Build it Back Better program that was launched after Hurricane Sandy, and now we have to do more.

The City can and should require community hiring for public building upgrades, and there should be incentives for community hiring for private infrastructure projects. These efforts should be tracked and reported. Workforce development coupled with project labor agreements and community hiring will expand opportunities for traditionally underrepresented groups in the green workforce including women, immigrants, and Black and brown New Yorkers.

Additionally, we are concerned that the allowance for building owners to use an unlimited number of Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) as a means for compliance, may allow for continued localized

---

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.urbangreencouncil.org/sites/default/files/urban\\_green\\_retrofit\\_market\\_analysis.pdf](https://www.urbangreencouncil.org/sites/default/files/urban_green_retrofit_market_analysis.pdf)

emissions while purchasing in renewable energy that may be sited outside of city limits, for example from the Champlain Hudson Power Express project (CHPE). The Administration must tightly limit the use of RECs. With CHPE and Clean Path likely to proceed in 2025 and in the years to follow, there will be a flood of RECs available in Zone J, the city's electrical grid zone. Unless the Administration sets clear rules for owners' use of RECs that tightly limit their use as a vehicle for Local Law 97 compliance, the volume of RECs available will become a huge loophole in the law allowing building owners to "buy out" of upgrading their buildings on-site. If building owners can buy cheap RECs instead of upgrading their buildings, New York City will lose thousands of green jobs and air pollution levels will remain high in many communities. The law needs proper regulation in this area to maximize jobs and pollution cuts.

Energy efficiency will play a bigger, life-saving role in environmental justice communities across the city. Decarbonizing buildings will be critical to reducing local pollution from fossil fuel power plants and fossil gas infrastructure disproportionately located in environmental justice communities. It can also lead to immediate health benefits like improving indoor-air quality in environmental justice communities.

Now is the time to prioritize LL 97 implementation to ensure the communities that have been hit the hardest by both COVID-19 and long standing environmental racism have access to good, green jobs. We must move forward with the implementation in a fair, equitable way to advance New York City's climate and economic recovery goals.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to testify today.