



New York City Environmental Justice Alliance Testimony to the NYC Council Committee on Environmental Protection, Waterfronts and Resiliency

March 1, 2024

Good afternoon, thank you councilmember Nurse for chairing this hearing today on behalf of Chair Gennaro. My name is Shравanthi Kanekal and I am the Senior 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 the City's goal to install 100 MW of solar PV systems on municipal buildings and structures. We are very supportive of Intro 0353, legislation that will ensure that this goal is **not just a promise** but a **commitment** to a cleaner, more resilient future for New York City.

NYC has been far too reliant on fossil fuel infrastructure for too long. Peaker power plants are some of the MOST expensive, LEAST efficient ways to produce electricity. In addition, they add to the burden utility rates create for low- and moderate-income families.

As we move toward a more sustainable future, environmental justice should stand at the forefront of our commitments because we know that not all communities have been equally affected by environmental challenges. We are glad to see language in this legislation that would require the city to prioritize the installation of solar pv systems in public schools, city-owned properties, and structures located in historically disadvantaged communities across the city.

We also support Intro 0354 that requires the City to identify much needed areas for energy storage systems. It is essential for us to focus on energy storage as we make the transition towards renewable energy. The City should prioritize the deployment of these energy storage systems in grid constraint or blackout prone neighborhoods.

Decarbonizing our energy grid will be critical to reducing air pollution that comes from fossil fuel infrastructure that we are currently so heavily reliant on. This shift can play a life-saving role in environmental justice communities across the city in addition to creating a number of good green jobs. By prioritizing these projects in EJ communities, we ensure that they are not only equal participants in our city's sustainable future but also reap the benefits of reduced energy costs, improved air quality, and job opportunities in the green economy.

Installing these systems would not only create good green jobs, but also allow us to maintain reliability while reducing the huge economic and public health costs associated with a dirty, fossil fuel-based energy grid.

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