



**Memorandum of Support**  
**[S5056 \(Rivera\)/A755 \(Paulin\)](#)**

**S5056/A755 - An act to amend the public health law, in relation to requiring the department of health to examine heat vulnerability and heat-related deaths.**

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 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 by the coordination of campaigns 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.

**The New York City Environmental Justice Alliance would like to voice strong support for Bill S5056/A755. This bill requires the Department of Health to examine heat-related deaths in the state of New York and requires the department to issue a report to the temporary president of the senate and speaker of the assembly annually.**

Heat is a serious threat to New Yorkers and the risks to people will only grow as global temperatures rise and it gets hotter in New York State. New York State's annual average temperatures are projected to rise 4.1°F to 6.1°F by the 2080s. According to the New York State Climate Impacts Assessment, the number of days with a heat index above 95°F are expected to increase across the state, with the largest increases predicted to occur in New York City, Albany, and Buffalo.<sup>1</sup> Aside from causing heat stress, heat strokes, and potential death, exposure to extreme heat can lead to many other long-term health impacts like organ damage and exacerbation of chronic conditions such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes.<sup>2</sup>

Through our work, we have seen firsthand the disproportionate risk of heat-related illness and the devastating impacts of increasing heat stress on frontline communities that are hit first and worst by the effects of climate change. Extreme heat already causes the greatest number of fatalities of all weather-related deaths with some populations and geographies being more at risk than others. The anticipated increases in temperature will not be uniform across the state

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<sup>1</sup><https://nysclimateimpacts.org/explore-the-assessment/new-york-states-changing-climate/nysc-temperatu-re/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.niehs.nih.gov/research/programs/climatechange/health\\_impacts/heat](https://www.niehs.nih.gov/research/programs/climatechange/health_impacts/heat).

and some areas may be more affected by these changes than others.<sup>3</sup> Data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that certain population groups are more at risk to heat-related illness and death, including people above the age of 65, children, and non-Hispanic Black residents.<sup>4</sup> In New York City, Black residents face a higher risk of being part of a disadvantaged community and of heat-related illness and death when compared to White residents due to structural racism and inequities like access to home air conditioning and green space.<sup>5</sup> As climate change further drives heat, causing higher temperatures and more frequent heat emergencies, these impacts on frontline communities across New York will only increase.

This legislation will require the NYS Health Department to report on the number of heat stress deaths and heat-exacerbated deaths, similarly to how it is being reported in New York City ([2024 NYC Heat-Related Mortality Report](#)). This bill will expand the definitions of heat death classification to include heat-stress and heat-exacerbated deaths, ensuring that these fatalities are not undercounted. Instead of only counting heat strokes as heat-related deaths, the bill would require to also consider a death caused indirectly by heat aggravated by an underlying health issue.

Additionally, the data will be broken down by race and other demographics to distinguish the disparities related to marginalized communities such as disadvantaged communities experiencing extreme heat. This reporting will better highlight the impacts to disadvantaged communities, especially those in neighborhoods with a high heat vulnerability index (HVI), and understanding of how temperature impacts health at varying degrees.

In New York City, the annual heat-related mortality reports have helped to shed light on how dangerous heat is, as well as helping to highlight details we didn't previously have data to characterize. For example, the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene determined that heat-related fatalities start to occur on non-extreme hot days at temperatures as low as 82°F, not just on extreme heat days. The increased attention and quantitative data has helped to broaden and deepen the conversation about heat in NYC, and we believe it will have a similar impact at the state level.

**For the reasons mentioned above, NYC-EJA strongly supports S5056 (Rivera) / A.00755 (Paulin)**

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/administration\\_pdf/ccnys2021.pdf](https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/administration_pdf/ccnys2021.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.epa.gov/climate-indicators/climate-change-indicators-heat-related-deaths#ref9>

<sup>5</sup> <https://nyccas.cityofnewyork.us/nyccas2021v9/report/1>