



NYC Apollo Alliance testimony on Intro. 395-In relation to the creation and implementation of a comprehensive environmental sustainability action plan for the city of New York, September 26, 2006.

My name is Zoilo Torres and I am the Campaign Director for the New York City Apollo Alliance, a project of Urban Agenda. NYC Apollo is a coalition of labor unions, environmental justice advocates, businesses, educators, and community-based organizations that believe that New York City can become a locus of economic growth and high living standards by adopting a modern energy policy that promotes renewable energy and energy efficiency.

We applaud Intro. No. 395 and the steps it takes to codify into law a comprehensive environmental sustainability action plan for New York City. This Intro., if enacted, promises to bring together all the practical policy elements necessary to assure that our future economic development is environmentally safe, sustainable, and helps wean the country away from reliance on fossil fuels.

We are also encouraged by Mayor Bloomberg's newly initiated Department of Long term Planning and Sustainability and the Sustainability Advisory Board. We are especially optimistic given the prominent role that Councilmember Gennaro and Speaker Quinn are playing and the willingness of the Administration and the City Council to work together.

The passage of Intro. 395 will ensure that future Administrations will not deviate from the fine path this Administration and the City Council have taken with respect to protecting our environment and the economic development of this great city.

Intro. 395 creates a partnership between the Mayor and the Speaker of the Council in the formulation of a comprehensive environmental sustainability action plan that will contain specific goals, measurable indicators, and achievable targets with milestones and timelines that can be instrumental in evaluating the plan's effective implementation. The legislation also calls for the identification and eradication of rules, regulations, and practices that act as barriers to sustainable development policies and projects. All of this is direly needed for there is much work to be done that should not be delayed any longer.

This City Council has already cited in Local Law 86 that in New York City: "most of its electricity is produced locally and many of its buildings use oil or natural gas for their heating and hot water, energy consumption in building operation translates into greater local pollution, including emissions of sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, particulate matter, carbon dioxide, and mercury. These pollutants contribute to respiratory diseases, heart disease, smog, acid rain, and climate change. Moreover, as energy demand rises, so does our reliance on dirty, inefficient power plants, as well as our nation's dependence on foreign oil and natural gas."

Ladies and gentlemen of the Council: To your credit you have recognized that this situation is environmentally unsustainable, and economically untenable. We need a plan to build and rebuild our city that is driven by renewable power like solar , wind, hydro, geothermal, and biomass fuels. We need a comprehensive sustainability action plan with teeth attached to its implementation; one that all future City Administrations will be legally obliged to carry out. A piecemeal approach will only prolong the work that is already overdue.

We can not delay retrofitting the city's 1,300 buildings. The NYC Apollo Alliance calls on the City to lead by example and begin by immediately retrofitting the 100 least energy efficient buildings.

This would not only be a good beginning toward retrofitting our entire building stock, it will also send the proper message to the private sector that the era of sustainable development has arrived.

The plan should seek to accelerate the building or conversion of all city public schools to healthy and high performance status. This very important work should begin in communities where childhood asthma is unusually high like East and Central Harlem, the South Bronx, and Bushwick in Brooklyn. And the dollars that are saved should be reinvested in our children's education.

We need an action plan that ensures that all existing or newly constructed affordable housing be made quality "green" affordable housing.

All this and more will produce economic prosperity by creating skilled, well paid jobs in construction, manufacturing, and the building and maintenance trades. Economic development should be perceived as an integral part of a comprehensive environmental sustainability action plan.

In closing, the NYC Apollo Alliance is committed to the issues I've outlined. We look forward to working with the Council and the Mayor on this important work and applaud your effort to develop a comprehensive environmental sustainability action plan that is enshrined in law.

Thank you.