

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 4, 2022

Commissioner Basil Seggos
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
Attn. Office of Environmental Justice
625 Broadway, 14th Floor
Albany, NY 12233

Dear Commissioner Seggos:

As you finalize the criteria for the Disadvantaged Communities program to help New York State reach net-zero greenhouse gas emissions, we write to urge the Climate Justice Working Group to ensure that flooding in coastal, tidal, and inland areas receive added weight as indicators. As climate change continues to cause severe weather-related storms, the consequences of flooding must play a key role in ensuring our communities are protected.

Last year, the remnants of Hurricane Ida struck New York City and left a trail of disaster. Our borough of Queens tragically lost eleven members of our community in the storm, leaving countless others without their home, car, and possessions. Many of the victims were from lower income and immigrant backgrounds and struggled to recover from the storm's devastating effects. Ida also cost the city millions of dollars in property damage.

Nearly a year after the hurricane, Queens remains highly susceptible to flood damage. According to the New York City Flood Hazard Mapper provided by the New York City Department of City Planning, thousands of Queens residents live in low lying flood prone areas, including parts of Flushing, Rego Park, Elmhurst, Forest Hills, and more. To reduce the damage caused by future floods, our borough requires urgent infrastructure upgrades. Increasing stormwater management capacity will depend on how much Queens is able to benefit from the Disadvantaged Communities program, in addition to federal programs from the \$1.2 trillion Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

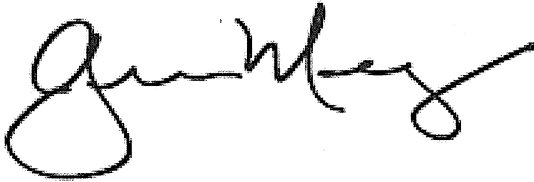
Furthermore, many of our low-income constituents live next to or near what can be considered environmental burdens. We have constituents that live near power generation facilities, freight rail lines, landfills, airports, and they endure toxic fumes, particulate matter, and loud noises. These are not only a major inconvenience, but they also pose serious health risks. Constant exposure to the noxious fumes and noises have been known to induce diminished cognitive performance, high blood pressure, hearing loss, heart and lung disease, and premature death.¹

The Disadvantaged Communities program is of paramount importance. As you finalize the criteria, please continue to take into account the devastating impacts of flooding. Hurricane Ida was part of a pattern of increasing storm frequency and severity that will continue to wreak havoc on our communities, disproportionately affecting those of low-income. We ask that you take the needs and concerns of our constituents under consideration and we hereby request that the floods occurring


¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/publications/books/housing/cha05.htm>

in Queens play a central role in the program's criteria. We look forward to working with you to provide relief for our constituents.

Sincerely,



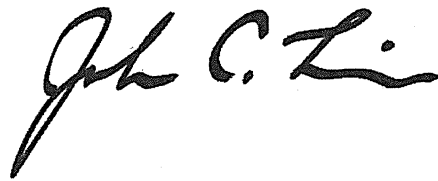
Grace Meng
Member of Congress



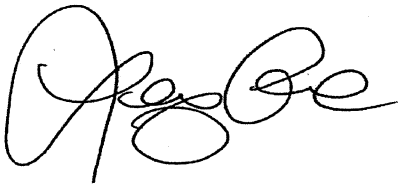
Donovan Richards Jr.
Queens Borough President



Jessica Ramos
NY State Senator



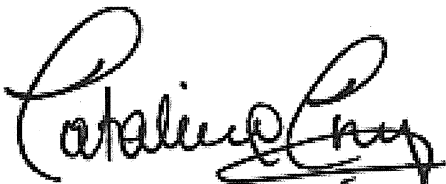
John C. Liu
NY State Senator



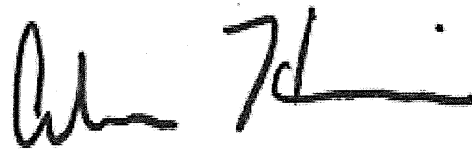
Leroy Comrie
NY State Senator



Brian Barnwell
NY Assembly Member



Catalina Cruz
NY Assembly Member



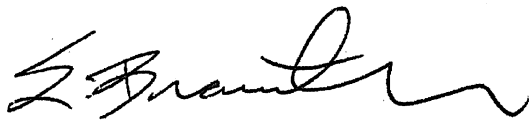
Andrew D. Hevesi
NY Assembly Member



David I. Weprin
NY Assembly Member



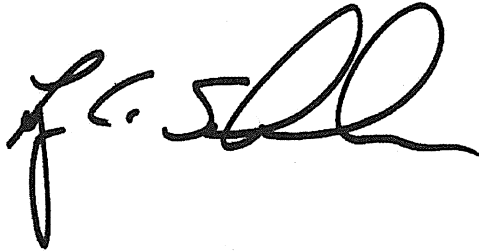
Jenifer Rajkumar
NY Assembly Member



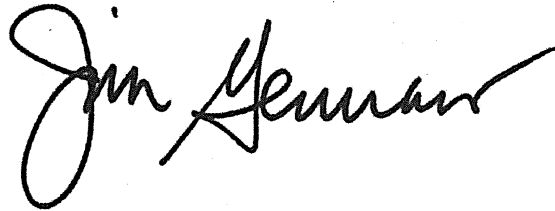
Edward C. Braunstein
NY Assembly Member



Linda Lee
NYC Council Member



Lynn Schulman
NYC Council Member



James F. Gennaro
NYC Council Member



Sandra Ung
NYC Council Member