



**Testimony of Carlos Castell Croke
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New York League of Conservation Voters**

**City Council Committee on Resiliency and Waterfronts
Oversight Hearing
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Good afternoon, my name is Carlos Castell Croke and I am the Associate for New York City Programs at the New York League of Conservation Voters (NYLCV). NYLCV represents over 30,000 members in New York City and we are committed to advancing a sustainability agenda that will make our people, our neighborhoods, and our economy healthier and more resilient. I would like to thank Chair Brannan for holding this important hearing and for the opportunity to testify today.

When Superstorm Sandy hit our city in 2012 it was dubbed a “one in a hundred year” storm, a misleading label that undervalues the growing threat climate change continues to impose on our world. We believe that in order to better protect our city from this threat we must establish a resiliency plan that preemptively protects us from another superstorm like Sandy.

To date, much of our resiliency work has been reactive and fragmented, relying on federal disaster response funds mobilized by devastation to help certain vulnerable neighborhoods recover and build back stronger. But in a city of islands, with 520 miles of coastline, this approach is inadequate. We need a comprehensive and anticipative citywide approach to resilience.

NYLCV supports the passage of legislation, such as Intro 1620, that would establish and implement a resiliency plan to protect us before another superstorm hits. This plan should build off of and work in tandem with existing community based plans such as the Special Initiative for Rebuilding and Resiliency, and the Local Waterfront Revitalization Plans to reduce redundancies in our resilience work. The plan should also accurately evaluate and report on the specific risks to waterfront properties, neighborhoods and developments and be updated regularly to reflect current storm and flood data so that we may develop clear, accessible, and equitable targets for risk reduction. This is critical for the low income communities and communities of color who too often bear the brunt of the effects of climate change. Lastly,

since our waterfront is home to so much critical infrastructure, from public housing to airports to power facilities to wastewater treatment plants, it is also important that the plan brings those relevant stakeholders into the planning process.

Our other priorities for a plan should include but are not limited to:

- Informed by the New York City Panel on Climate Change and regularly updated as new projections and plans are developed;
- Clarifies the agencies responsible for key functions of resiliency governance (communication, planning, implementation, maintenance);
- Dedicated funding;
- Upfront about the limitations and possibilities for resiliency in all areas at risk of flooding;
- Establishes flood districts and targets for flood risk reduction and long-term planning, based on logical hydrologic/topographic boundaries, including mechanisms for planning across state and municipal jurisdictional lines;
- Considers a more comprehensive approach to rezoning, based on the multiple challenges and opportunities facing the city;
- Better positions the City to prepare for and respond quickly to state and federal funding opportunities as they arise;
- Identifies opportunities to incorporate resiliency into “dig once” policies for maintenance and capital projects;
- Prioritizes low-income communities and communities of color, including siting of green infrastructure with an equitable planning process and investment strategy; and
- Develops clear, accessible, and equitable targets for risk reduction.

As climate change continues to intensify the magnitude and frequency of natural disasters, it has become clear that New York does not have the luxury of choosing whether or not to improve its resiliency - it is a requirement. Taking a proactive approach would get out in front of the problem before more lives and infrastructure are threatened. We will continue to work with the council and our partners in the Rise to Resilience Coalition for a more resilient future for our city.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.