

PSC RESOLUTION ON HOUSING AND CLIMATE JUSTICE IN NEW YORK CITY

WHEREAS, coastal areas in New York City and the region are increasingly at risk of flooding and storm surges resulting from global climate change; and

WHEREAS, many of the communities at risk of displacement due to climate-related flooding are low-income communities of color, including areas in lower Manhattan, south Brooklyn, Queens and Staten Island; and

WHEREAS, New York City government has promoted plans and policies to promote resiliency and the protection of vulnerable areas; and

WHEREAS, New York City government has simultaneously encouraged luxury high-rise development along the Brooklyn-Queens waterfront and other flood-prone areas while changing its building codes to require elevation of new buildings and their mechanical systems above predicted flood levels; and

WHEREAS, it is widely recognized that the federal flood plain maps and projections of the magnitude of sea-level rise in coming decades are likely to underestimate the exposure of vulnerable areas to storm damage; and

WHEREAS, the city's long-range plans to build barriers to protect these areas are extremely expensive and may very well be too late to protect the most vulnerable; and

WHEREAS, the luxury waterfront development is resulting in dramatically increased rents and home prices which are triggering the displacement of low-income communities of color in these areas; and

WHEREAS, many low-income communities of color, including multiple public housing complexes, that are located in flood-prone areas are not receiving the capital improvements needed to protect against extreme weather events, and government is not providing equitable and fair housing alternatives for these communities; and

WHEREAS, this fundamentally inequitable support for luxury housing combined with the failure to protect the city's vulnerable areas is reinforcing racial and economic segregation and inequalities in the city; and

WHEREAS, the city's land use and zoning policies that encourage this pattern of waterfront development are not based on long-term planning that extends beyond the short term recovery of developer investments; and

Whereas, the NYC Environmental Justice Alliance (NYC-EJA), a network of grassroots community organizations has developed a N.Y.C. Climate Justice Agenda that protects tenants and communities; and

WHEREAS, the faculty, staff and students of the City University of New York are paying more for housing and transportation while salaries stagnate and tuition rises; and

WHEREAS, the critical problem facing the city is not simply sea-level rise and climate change but the creation and protection of exclusive waterfront enclaves while the most vulnerable residents and businesses are displaced;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the PSC use its resources to inform its members of the risks of further development in the flood plain and how these developments will raise housing costs for the surrounding community, fostering displacement and homelessness; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the PSC encourage CUNY to expand its climate education programs across the campuses; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Professional Staff Congress calls on the City of New York to:
Adopt a long-range plan that is founded on solid principles of economic and social justice and that protects tenants and homeowners facing displacement;

Allocate funds to community-based organizations in low-income waterfront communities to develop plans and projects that protect them from adverse climate events and that sustain their long-term futures;

Support projects in these communities that generate clean energy, reduce waste, and provide green jobs.