

CUNY BoT Testimony

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According to *Inside Climate News* on June 26, 2022, “When it Comes to Reducing New York City Emissions, CUNY Flunks the Test,” CUNY is one of eight city agencies that have seen emissions increase instead of decrease: from 2014 to 2019 carbon emissions intensity across 117 CUNY buildings *rose 15 percent*, while in comparison, carbon emissions *dropped 9.6 percent* in other City government buildings.

On top of that, *only 8% of all CUNY buildings were found to be in “good repair”*. People in this room could easily offer dozens of stories of dilapidated buildings, freezing or overheated buildings, leaky roofs, rodent infestations, strange odors, and dangerous conditions at myriad CUNY buildings.

The good news is that the new federal Inflation Reduction Act provides billions of dollars over the next ten years for decarbonization efforts, including that of public universities. The IRA will provide 50% or more of all funding for decarbonization projects, including replacing old carbon spewing infrastructure with new renewable energy, solar roofs, geothermal networking, new energy saving windows, microgrids, etc. We cannot leave that federal money to improve CUNY on the table nor can we ignore the massive future decrease in CUNY’s utility bills with these changes.

More good news is that NY State just passed the Build Public Renewables Act which empowers the NY Power Authority to build and deliver renewable energy to public buildings, including CUNY, and beyond. CUNY needs to utilize both the IRA funds—millions of dollars on the table for renewable energy and energy-saving projects that CUNY desperately needs—and for the NY Power Authority to build that infrastructure and do that energy-saving work for CUNY. This will provide safer, healthier environments for CUNY students, faculty and staff and for the members of communities surrounding CUNY campuses. Most of those communities are low-income communities, whose lives and health are significantly affected by their neighbor campuses.

So, please BOT members, please press your Chancellor and his management staff to access those generous IRA funds, utilize the expanded capacity of NYPA to deliver that clean energy and enhanced energy-saving improvements to be better citizens of our City and of our planet. We are trying our best to educate our students to create a livable world that they can thrive in. We need to create liveable campuses that are examples of smart utilization of federal funds and state agencies to clean up our collective act. While increased capital funds from the state will go a long way, they won't go far enough. We need federal help—and it's available—and we need the agency—NYPA—to make it happen. Thank you.