



March 31, 2025

The Honorable Amanda Farías
Majority Leader and Council Member for District 18
New York City Council
250 Broadway, Suite 1833
New York, NY 10007

Dear Council Member Farías,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we write to express our strong support for [Int. No. 1143](#), A Local Law in relation to a feasibility study of zero-emission port operations, introduced by Council Member Alexa Avilés in December 2024. Many of our organizations have been working to advance climate action and clean air for communities impacted by port and industrial pollution in New York City and beyond. This bill is an important step towards the much-needed transition of New York City ports to zero-emissions, which would reap timely public health and environmental benefits for New Yorkers.

Int. No. 1143 would require that the Mayor’s Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability conduct a study in consultation with the city Economic Development Corporation on transitioning all city ports to zero-emission port operations, including whether this can be completed by 2040, the technology and investments required to make such a transition, and whether any additional workforce development would be necessary to complete the transition.¹ The study would also evaluate whether it would be possible to provide shore power to all commercial maritime vessels by 2027, as well as whether incentives can be provided for the use of low to zero-emission vessels. The office would be required to complete this study and publicly report on it within one year.

¹ “A Local Law in relation to a feasibility study of zero-emission port operations,” Legistar, New York City Council, accessed March 10, 2025, <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?From=RSS&ID=7075817&GUID=B5FAF5D0-9723-4CCC-982F-13FE65CFDC3D>.

Your support for moving this bill forward to a hearing and vote would help the city address how it can improve longstanding challenges to New Yorkers' air quality. The fossil-fueled maritime shipping sector is a huge polluter, exposing portside residents to asthma and cancer-causing air pollutants such as particulate matter, nitrogen oxide, and sulfur oxide. Globally, fossil-fueled shipping pollution leads to nearly 265,000 premature deaths and 6.4 million cases of childhood asthma annually.² Across the New York metro region, air pollution is estimated to cause over 21,000 new cases of childhood asthma per year.³ The International Council on Clean Transportation finds that port electrification would bring significant benefits to the New York metro region, especially Brooklyn which would reap over \$60 million in public health benefits per year.⁴

In addition to improving New Yorkers' health, transitioning New York City ports to zero-emission operations would greatly benefit our climate in an era of global warming. If shipping were a country, it would be the sixth largest climate polluter in the world, emitting 1 billion tons of carbon dioxide into our atmosphere annually.⁵ Ocean shipping climate pollution is the equivalent of 3% of all global greenhouse gas emissions, but this could rise to as much as 17% by mid-century if the sector is left unregulated due to our increasing reliance on global logistics in a globalizing economy.⁶ Transitioning New York City port operations to 100% zero-emissions by 2040 would align with the Paris Agreement's goal of a 1.5°C global warming trajectory that avoids the worst impacts of climate change.⁷

Recognizing the increasingly undeniable impacts of climate change on New York, in 2019, the New York City Council declared a climate emergency, calling "for an immediate emergency mobilization to restore a safe climate."⁸ Indeed, without swift climate mitigation mobilization, average annual temperatures in New York City are projected to increase between 4°F and 6°F by

² Natalie Mueller, Marie Westerby, and Mark Nieuwenhuijsen, "Health impact assessments of shipping and port-sourced air pollution on a global scale: A scoping literature review," *Environmental Research* 216, no. 1 (2023), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S001393512201787X>; Mikhail Sofiev et al., "Cleaner fuels for ships provide public health benefits with climate tradeoffs," *Nature Communications* 9, no. 406 (2018), <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-017-02774-9>.

³ "EDF mapping reveals where traffic pollution harms children's lungs," Global Clean Air, Environmental Defense Fund, 2025, <https://globalcleanair.org/traffic-pollution-harms-childrens-lungs/>.

⁴ Zhihang Meng and Bryan Comer, *Electrifying ports to reduce diesel pollution from ships and trucks and benefit public health: Case studies of the Port of Seattle and the Port of New York and New Jersey* (International Council on Clean Transportation, 2023), <https://theicct.org/publication/marine-ports-electrification-feb23/>.

⁵ Zoe Schlanger, "If shipping were a country, it would be the world's sixth-biggest greenhouse gas emitter," Trade and Investment, World Economic Forum, April 18, 2018, <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2018/04/if-shipping-were-a-country-it-would-be-the-world-s-sixth-biggest-greenhouse-gas-emitter/>.

⁶ "Shipping emissions 17% of global CO₂, making it the elephant in the climate negotiations room," Transport and Environment, November 23, 2015, <https://www.transportenvironment.org/articles/shipping-emissions-17-global-co2-making-it-elephant-climate-negotiations-room#:~:text=Shipping%20could%20be%20responsible%20for,to%20a%20new%20scientific%20study>.

⁷ Bryan Comer, "Zero-emission shipping and the Paris Agreement: Why the IMO needs to pick a zero date and set interim targets in its revised GHG strategy," International Council on Clean Transportation, September 8, 2021, <https://theicct.org/zero-emission-shipping-and-the-paris-agreement-why-the-imo-needs-to-pick-a-zero-date-and-set-interim-targets-in-its-revised-ghg-strategy/>.

⁸ "Resolution declaring a climate emergency and calling for an immediate emergency mobilization to restore a safe climate," Legistar, New York City Council, accessed March 10, 2025, <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3940953&GUID=506493D1-9DF1-4289-8893-4AF892557355>.

the 2050s and between 5.6°F and 9.8°F by the 2080s compared with the 1981–2010 average.⁹ This would mean 14 to 32 days per year of over 95°F temperature by mid-century and 17 to 54 days per year by the end of the century.¹⁰ Bold action is needed to avoid higher levels of precipitation and sea level rise associated with global warming, which would make New York increasingly more prone to catastrophic flooding.

New York’s future depends on a hopeful vision of climate action, and portside communities need relief. Hence, from both climate mitigation and public health perspectives, we urge you to support Int. No. 1143, including by bringing it to a hearing and vote.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

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⁹ “Climate Impact Spotlight: New York City,” New York State Climate Impacts Assessment, 2025, <https://nysclimateimpacts.org/explore-by-region/new-york-city/>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

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