



Testimony on Intro. 378 before the New York City Council Committee on Environmental Protection
October 23, 2014

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Rick Bell FAIA
Executive Director

Good afternoon, Chairman Richards and members of the Committee on Environmental Protection. My name is Rick Bell, and I am the Executive Director of the American Institute of Architects New York Chapter (AIANY). I am here to offer testimony on Intro. 378, a Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to reducing greenhouse gases by eighty percent by two thousand fifty.

The AIA New York Chapter was founded in 1857 and is the largest AIA chapter in the country with more than 5,000 practicing architects, allied professionals, students, and public members with interest in architecture and design. AIANY and its members are dedicated to the structural integrity and health impacts of our buildings by protecting the health, safety, and welfare of the public through design. We believe that Intro. 378 can help advance those goals. Architects will also play a key role in reducing carbon emissions 80% by 2050.

Following the UN Climate Summit and Mayor de Blasio's pledge to overhaul the energy-efficiency standards of all NYC public buildings, Architecture 2030 founder Ed Mazria, AIA, addressed a full house at the Center for Architecture on September 23, 2014. Architecture 2030's mission is to transform the built environment from the major contributor of carbon emissions to part of the solution. Over the past decade, Mazria's seminal research into the sustainability, resilience, energy consumption, and greenhouse gas emissions of the built environment has redefined the role of architecture, planning, design, and building in reshaping our world. He outlined the blueprint for a carbon-free and just built environment by 2050, and he emphasized the critical role that architects and designers must play in securing a livable future for New York City.

On August 8, 2014, at the 2014 International Union of Architects (UIA) World Congress, member organizations – representing 124 countries at over 1.3 million architects – voted unanimously to phase out CO2 and adopt the 2050 Imperative, a decision to eliminate carbon dioxide emissions in the built environment. Cities are responsible for more than seventy percent of carbon dioxide emissions worldwide, most of which are from buildings. Architects are now charged with helping to reduce fossil fuel emissions to zero.

The implementation of sustainable design, in consort with principles of resilient design, is required to effectively address both the cause and effects of climate change over the long term. AIANY believes that assiduous efforts on the part of the building community can result in a significant impact towards halting the damage of climate change. We cannot overstate the importance of implementing both mitigation policies and adaptation measures; adaptation alone cannot protect our city's residents from the anticipated effects of climate change.

AIANY commends the City Council's pledge to drastically reduce the City's greenhouse gas emissions by focusing on building design. AIANY has long advocated for local laws and code changes that support energy conservation. Upgrades to public buildings, including housing, that concentrate on renewable energy sources and innovative design solutions, will benefit all NYC residents and set a powerful example for the private sector and the rest of the world. NYC's architects stand ready to help carry out this work.

Best regards,

Rick Bell, FAIA