



September 10, 2020

Honorable Bill de Blasio  
Mayor  
City of New York  
City Hall  
New York, NY 10007

Re: The Green Roof Tax Abatement

Dear Mayor de Blasio:

As New York continues to suffer through stifling summer temperatures, we are writing to request that you implement a crucial program to encourage the development of green roofs in neighborhoods suffering from extreme heat, combined sewer overflows, or a lack of green space. The new Green Roof Tax Abatement, passed into law last year, incentivizes the construction of green roofs by tripling the tax abatement in areas of the city that are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Your executive order is required to give the Mayor's Office of Sustainability the authority to implement the tax abatement and to designate areas that are most in need of the tangible reductions in air pollution and heat stress that green roofs offer. While we are of course sensitive to the City's precarious financial situation, we believe this program, capped at \$1 million per year, offers a valuable opportunity to spur the creation of green jobs and address ongoing environmental and health inequities that put our most vulnerable communities at risk.

The Green Roofs Tax Abatement was restructured and reauthorized last year with the goal of catalyzing the development of green roofs across the City's 62 miles of roof space. A previous iteration of the credit was woefully under-utilized and failed to meaningfully encourage the development of green space. According to research undertaken by the Nature Conservancy, less than 0.1% of New York City's one million buildings boast green roofs, and the bulk of existing green roofs are concentrated in Manhattan. The new abatement aims to forgo subsidizing corporate Midtown roof gardens and instead offer an enhanced credit to areas most in need of green infrastructure. The new program promises to help bring crucial green space to communities in Eastern Queens, the South Bronx, Central Brooklyn, and other neighborhoods on a rotating basis.

Green roofs are a crucial tool in the City's fight for a more sustainable future. Green roofs drink up stormwater, reducing runoff by more than 50 percent, and can help avert combined sewer overflows or localized flooding. Green roofs insulate buildings, helping cut energy use in buildings and associated carbon emissions. Indeed, green roofs can assist building owners in achieving compliance with Local Law 97 of 2019 and its emissions reduction mandates. Crucially, green

roofs help to mitigate the urban heat island effect, which can increase temperatures by as much as 20 degrees more than surrounding areas – imperiling seniors and others that are susceptible to heat stress. Green roofs not only keep individual rooftops 30 to 40 percent cooler than conventional roofs, they can also help reduce temperatures across entire neighborhoods. In some cases, green roofs can be turned into community assets that provide opportunities for New Yorkers to enjoy their urban environment and witness wildlife.

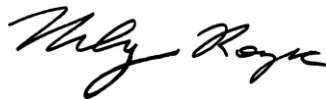
While we appreciate the constraints on the City’s finances, we believe the abatement will generate significant economic and social benefit. The program will help drive the development and retention of the green infrastructure jobs that will form a critical part of our economic recovery and the City’s future. Further, every dollar invested in green roofs is believed to generate an estimated two to three dollars in societal return.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has offered a preview of the coming climate crisis and a stark reminder of environmental inequities that already plague low-income communities and communities of color. It is crucial that New York City seize every opportunity to forge progress toward a more sustainable future and that the City does all it can to help create a more livable, sustainable city. Helping green our most vulnerable neighborhoods will pay major dividends for the City’s health and environment. We urge you to sign an executive order to implement the law without delay.

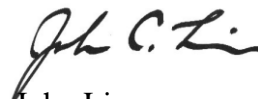
Sincerely,



Scott M. Stringer  
New York City Comptroller



Nily Rozic  
Assemblymember



John Liu  
State Senator