Testimony for Local Law 97 Hearing

Nov. 14, 2022

The rapid changes we need to make to address the climate crisis asks a lot of us all. And since those changes include ensuring that our buildings are no longer the cause of the worst pollution in our city, we need to ask a lot of the owners of those buildings. Every industry will need to step of and make real sacrifices, yes, that dirty word *sacrifice*. It’s easy to take the position that, “Hey, we’re only human, we’re only trying to make a living and we should follow sound business practices which generally means incremental change”. And there was a time when that was a winning argument, but that time was about 30 years ago.

As a resident of Manhattan, as a father raising 2 kids here, and perhaps more importantly as a person of faith, I’m calling on the mayor to hold to the full force of Local Law 97. There is no moral ground for letting the real estate industry dodge the responsibility of cleaning up the city’s most polluting large buildings through the purchase as many REC’s as possible.

The profitability of a large office tower or apartment complex matters not a damn to an 8-foot rise in sea level and heaven help us if we fail to figure that out very, very quickly. So let me put it as a question directly to the reps of the real estate industry who want to undermine a law designed to protect my children’s future; Do you want to be the villains of this story or the heroes? I know what I want to see when I look in the mirror. What do you want to see?

Today that argument could lose the planet as habitable for humans of any nature.

There is a saying that the best time to plant a tree is 30 years ago; and the second best time is now… not tomorrow… now. Because human nature is more nuanced and complicated than pure self-interest. We are also spiritual creatures who have been gifted with the greatest gift imaginable; the gift of life for ourselves and the responsibility to protect life for all living things… except maybe mosquitoes. We can work to fulfill that more fundamental part of our nature and anything less than that is aaquiesing to the worst part of our nature; greed and self-interest. We can do better. We must do better.