

NYC Council Members, Unions Highlight Opportunity of Carbon Free and Healthy Schools Initiative

30 NYC Council Members Sent Letter to Mayor Adams to Support Union-led Initiative to Install Solar on 150 Schools Per Year

NEW YORK CITY—Today, 30 members of the New York City (NYC) Council voiced their support to NYC Mayor Eric Adams of the Carbon Free and Healthy Schools Initiative, a union-led campaign that is advocating for the decarbonization of NYC public schools through deep energy-efficiency retrofits paired with installation of renewable energy sources, such as solar power, with strong labor standards attached.

The councilmembers, led by Chair of the Committee on Civil Service and Labor, Carmen de la Rosa, sent a letter to Mayor Adams urging his administration to take advantage of available Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding to accelerate the installation of solar panels on NYC public school buildings and complete energy-efficiency retrofits for all existing school buildings by 2030. [\[LINK TO LETTER\]](#)

NYC Public Schools is the largest public school district in the United States, presenting an opportunity for New York City to lead the nation in the decarbonization of public schools. Climate Jobs NY, a coalition of labor unions fighting for the advancement of pro-climate, pro-labor policy and investment in New York, estimates that making all NYC public school buildings carbon-free and healthy through solar installation and deep building retrofits by 2030 would create 45,000 good union jobs across a number of trades, save the City's schools \$8.5 billion in energy costs over 30 years, and help the City meet its emissions reduction targets. And, through the initiative can help advance environmental, racial, and economic justice by prioritizing those schools and communities that have been historically under-resourced and marginalized.

With the passage of the IRA, NYC has an historic opportunity to bring in significant federal funding to help pay for this investment in our public school buildings and communities, and jumpstart building emissions reductions and energy cost savings - money that can then be reinvested into NYC Public Schools to help fund on-going programming, services, and staffing needs. However, this funding must be spent over the next ten years. Inflation Reduction Act funds could help finance up to 40% of solar installation costs, and 20% of building retrofits. This is federal funding that, if not taken advantage of quickly, will result in cost savings and economic development potential left on the table.

NYC council members said:

"I believe New York City can lead the nation in creating healthy schools for our children and strong union jobs for our workers by investing in the future of our communities and supporting the Carbon-Free and Healthy Schools Initiative," says **Labor Committee Chair Carmen De La**

Rosa. “Supporting strong labor standards while building strong public school buildings will benefit our children and communities for generations to come.”

“Every day we hear about our crumbling school buildings. We have the workers, we have the funding, and we have a plan. All we need is the will to support a meaningful investment into the City’s infrastructure,” says **Buildings Committee Chair Pierina Sanchez.**

“The City must commit to an action and investment that matches the scale and urgency of the climate crisis if we want to ensure a future for the next generation,” says **Environmental Protection Committee Chair James Gennaro.**

“By making an investment today in reducing our carbon emissions, we are making improvements in the daily lives for all New Yorkers for the future,” says **Public Health Committee Chair Lynn Schulman.**

“The Carbon Free and Healthy Schools Initiative will ensure our students and teachers learn and work in the safe and healthy schools they deserve,” says **Education Committee Chair Rita Joseph.**

NYC labor leaders said:

“More than ever before, we need to continue funding clean energy projects that combat climate change and create opportunity and stability for the tradesmen and tradeswomen who are fundamental in achieving our energy-efficiency goals,” said **Gary LaBarbera, President of the Building and Construction Trades Council of Greater New York.** “The ambitious, pro-worker climate action plan put forward by Climate Jobs NY is an initiative that will generate millions of union careers, reduce the racial wealth gap, and help New York City maintain our leadership in sustainability. We look forward to working with Mayor Adams and the City Council to create carbon free and healthy schools that benefit all New York City communities.”

“Our schools have the potential to significantly advance the fight against climate change. By investing in energy-efficient upgrades for our school system, we can create good paying, green union jobs, advance the resiliency of our communities, and strengthen the neighborhoods hit hardest by climate crises,” says **AFSCME District Council 37 Executive Director Henry Garrido.**

“Investing in carbon-free, healthy schools will advance a just and worker-centered energy transition, make schools healthier, create thousands of good union jobs, and advance racial equity,” says **32BJ Service Employees International Union President Manny Pastreich.** “32BJ’s 5,000 members in NYC Public Schools work hard around the clock to ensure safe and clean schools for the City’s students. Investing in Carbon Free and Healthy Schools supports that dedication, while improving school conditions and helping the environment.”

“New York City has the opportunity to reverse decades of underinvestment in our public school infrastructure while at the same time creating thousands of new “green” jobs in our communities,” said **Michael Mulgrew, President of the United Federation of Teachers**. “This should be a priority for our city.”

“School leaders know firsthand the critical role that our schools play in sustaining our communities and protecting our environment,” said **Henry Rubio, President of the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators**. “With the passage of the Inflation Reduction Act last year, it is clear that we can feasibly transform our public schools into the carbon-free and healthy facilities our city deserves while saving millions of dollars in energy costs and creating thousands of union career opportunities. We thank the City Council members for their support of the initiative, and urge the Mayor to take advantage of this moment in time where there is financial support and New York City schools will be better prepared for the climate challenges to come.”

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Climate Jobs NY is a growing coalition of labor unions representing 2.6 million working people at the center of New York’s economy. Climate Jobs NY is committed to building a clean energy economy at the scale climate science demands, creating good union jobs, and supporting equitable communities and a more resilient New York. Learn more www.climatejobsny.org