



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

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**City Council Committee on Environmental Protection
Oversight Hearing on NYC's Air Quality and its Effects on Public Health
12.15.22**

Thank you Chair Gennaro and members of the committee for holding this hearing today. While I support all efforts to improve our city's air quality, I want to focus specifically on Intro 707, which I introduced last term and reintroduced this term with Council Member Alexa Avilés, whose Brooklyn community is deeply impacted by air pollution and associated health impacts.

My office is currently undertaking a comprehensive planning effort for Brooklyn. We are still in the information-gathering phase, but I can already tell you that looking at all kinds of data, a pattern emerges in which lower-income communities of color have worse outcomes than wealthier, white communities for nearly every metric we have measured.

Environmental factors such as air quality are no exception. According to DOHMH, no neighborhood in Brooklyn falls within the WHO's recommended target level for fine particulate matter (PM 2.5), but the worst levels occur in the environmental justice communities of Greenpoint, Williamsburg, and Bushwick; the BQE corridor including Gowanus, Red Hook, and Sunset Park; and the East Flatbush/Brownsville border along Linden Blvd. Unsurprisingly, asthma rates are high in all these neighborhoods, especially in eastern Brooklyn. As shown by the map below, concentrations of these pollutants are directly associated with truck routes and high traffic areas, which should be a surprise to no one.

This is not a small problem. DOHMH estimates that 1 in 20 premature deaths every year in NYC happen because someone's health condition was exacerbated by breathing PM 2.5. DOHMH notes that children are particularly impacted – because they breathe more air than adults relative to their body weight, their exposure is higher to the same amount of pollution, which can lead to both acute and chronic illnesses.

Unfortunately, the pandemic has led to an uptick in the use of personal vehicles and e-commerce delivery platforms, leading to a corresponding uptick in issues with air quality and truck traffic, per 311 data. In the last three years, the largest percentage of these 311 complaints came from Brooklyn's waterfront communities that also border the BQE, with the largest increase coming from neighborhoods where last-mile distribution facilities have sprung

up in industrial zones (specifically Brooklyn community districts 6, 7, and 3). We are working on solutions to that issue specifically, but in the meantime we must address health impacts now.

Consistent and accurate reporting leads to action, and the existing data is insufficient. The DOHMH data referenced here comes from projections based on limited monitoring; new efforts by the State focus only on specific disadvantaged communities; and EJ groups have spent too long doing this work on their own, covering limited geographies. This legislation will require the City to conduct consistent monitoring at heavy-use throughfares and adjacent parks and playgrounds citywide. The more information we have the better, because everyone deserves clean air to breathe.

Thank you for holding this hearing today, and for allowing me time to address why we all need to support Intro 707 and continue to put the health of New Yorkers and future generations first.

