The Waterfront Alliance is a civic organization that brings together a diverse coalition of more than 1,000 stakeholders with ties to our regional waterways to inspire and enable resilient, revitalized and accessible coastlines for all communities. Waterfront Alliance has been a strong advocate for smart coastal policy since its inception, and is the developer of WEDG, or the Waterfront Edge Design Guidelines, a rating system and set of guidelines for catalyzing resilient, accessible, and ecologically-sound urban waterfront decision-making for major projects.

The Waterfront Alliance supports the Climate and Community Protection Act and the regulations to achieve statewide greenhouse gas emissions reductions.

We see tremendous potential in the New York region with the growth of the wind energy sector. The potential to harvest clean energy is enormous, both offshore and in the open ocean, as New York is one of the windiest states in the nation. The Waterfront Alliance supports efforts to build wind turbines off the shores of New York City in order to reduce the state’s carbon footprint. This effort will support thousands and thousands of waterfront-related green jobs from openings in traditional maritime trades like stevedores, deckhands, and tug captains to new positions in engineering, environmental monitoring, technology development, and turbine maintenance.

As part of any climate change legislation, resiliency adaptations - essentially protecting our harbor, communities, and natural and built infrastructure - is also critical. We urge the inclusion in this legislation of an actionable path towards adapting our region to sea level rise and coastal storms.
In 2012, Hurricane Sandy ravaged the East Coast, causing over $60 billion of damages to the region. How we ensure the safety of millions of lives and billions of dollars of property and infrastructure; how we finance and govern that protection; and how we communicate the urgency of the need are questions that beg better answers. The nation’s flood insurance program is more than $20 billion in debt. Climate change is increasing our vulnerability to flooding, by raising sea levels and causing an increased frequency of coastal storms. By 2050, more than one million people will be located within the floodplain regionally. Questions persist regarding our preparedness for the future. Progress has been made. And yet, it is grossly insufficient compared to the problem’s magnitude.

As we think about fossil fuel divestment and alternative energy sources, we should also be considering the variety of options to protect, replace, and redesign existing infrastructure—including flood proofing and flood protection through dikes, berms, pumps, integration of natural landscape features, elevation, or even relocation. These safeguards can help protect citizens, industry, utilities, recreation and so many other facets of our lives.

Investing in coastal infrastructure will also save the federal government money by reducing post-disaster recovery payments. And investment in adaptation infrastructure is likely to have positive effects on employment because it relies on engineers, geologists, and biologists as well as construction crews.

We need to aim our sights on a broad framework for planning, action, and financing of resiliency projects in a way that helps to lift all boats citywide, regionally, and nationally, particularly as many of our most vulnerable areas are also those with the highest rates of poverty.

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