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The Council of the City of New York  
Council Member Costa Constantinides, District 22

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# Elected Officials Call for Resiliency Investment at Outset of Hurricane Season

*Comes in Light of Early Start to What's Forecast to be a Dire Storm Season*

**New York, NY** — City elected officials representing parts of New York City's more than 500 miles of coast and advocates today called for a series of actions and investments to make the Big Apple more resilient ahead of a dangerous hurricane season. Their call to action comes on the first day of the 2020 Hurricane Season, which is forecast to be more devastating than normal and has already seen two named storms.

"New York City is at greater risk every hurricane season as storms strengthen and our infrastructure falls apart," said **Council Member Costa Constantinides, Chair of the Committee on Environmental Protection**. "The White House must stop playing with New Yorkers' lives and restore the Army Corps of Engineers study, and the City must guarantee we adapt our coastlines to the challenges of climate change. These are the things that will put people back to work and make our communities safer."

"New York City has 520 miles of coastline. Four of the five boroughs are islands or connected to one," said **Council Member Justin Brannan, Chair of the Committee on Resiliency and Waterfronts**. "As I visit communities still dealing with the aftermath of Sandy, most are concerned little progress has been made and we aren't ready for the next one. A full study from the Army Corp of Engineers will help change that. The White House must stop playing games with our neighborhoods and fund that study."

"Right now is not the time for the federal government to cut back on funding that may protect New York City from the next hurricane headed our way. Every New Yorker remembers superstorm Sandy; the lives we lost, the destruction to our City, and the financial costs," said **Council Member Ben Kallos** who represents a coastal district. "The threat that climate change poses has only increased with time, and with a busier than usual hurricane season expected we need to take every precaution possible."

"As we continue to face new crises every day, we cannot let the climate crisis fall to the wayside," said **Council Member Keith Powers**. "When the City Council voted on the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project last year, we made a commitment to protect our neighborhoods from future hurricanes. All New Yorkers along the water should have this guarantee—we must invest

in resiliency measures across our city. I am glad to support my colleagues in these efforts.”

“Climate change and the pandemic share fundamental similarities: both seem far away until they’re at our front door, and both impact people of color and low-income communities first and worst,” said **Kate Boicourt, Director of Resilience for the Waterfront Alliance**. “As our elected leaders proceed with addressing the climate crisis, the events of this past weekend amplify the message - that we must develop every policy through a lens of justice. The reality is that climate change is here already; as we enter hurricane season, we can’t wait any longer to meaningfully act to build our regional resilience. That is why we are coordinating the Rise to Resilience campaign, which has gathered over 50 members representing thousands of people across the region just this month- to hold elected leaders accountable and ensure that we have a just- and solutions-oriented approach to addressing the climate crisis in flood-prone communities.”

New York City neighborhoods face dire threats from rising levels without a massive mobilization to save our shorelines. Hurricanes have increasingly hit New York City, which in turn has exacerbated already crumbling infrastructure. Today, these leaders called for:

- **Resuming the Army Corps of Engineers Resiliency Study:** The Trump administration in February yanked funding to this key study, which is assessing ways to protect New York City from confounding storm surge similar to what it saw during Sandy. While local leaders and advocates had issues with the study, whose options could have cost up to \$120 million, they had recently made headway to include factors such as sea level rise into its assessment. A draft report was due this spring, but will not move forward once Trump pulled the funding — effectively ending the historic project.
- **Implementation of a Five-Borough Resiliency Plan:** New York City must create a resiliency plan to address the many needs of its 500-mile coastline. More than half-a-million New Yorkers live near the water — from the Atlantic Ocean to the Hudson River — and are at severe risk as sea level rise, extreme heat, and other threats from the climate crisis batter our shores. While storm surge is a serious threat when a hurricane hits, there are constant risks on a daily basis, from beach erosion to sunny day flooding. Speaker Corey Johnson has added this to the [Council’s list of environmental priorities](#), but the administration has not embraced the proposal.

Their call comes as the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration shows a 60% chance](#) the 2020 Hurricane Season will be “above average.” That comes as no surprise, given the fact that one “named storm” has already formed days before the season officially began. NOAA expects anywhere from 13 to 19 named storms this season, which runs until November 30, and three to six of those potentially becoming major hurricanes. Evacuations for many communities along the coast will become even more difficult, due to the coronavirus’ transit restrictions New York City’s infrastructure particularly stands a poor chance against these storms, as evidenced by the extreme heat and violent storms last summer that knocked out power for tens of thousands of people.

All the while the President has surrendered leadership on this, among other issues. After a New York Times story detailed the Army Corps study’s storm surge options this winter, the Queens native mocked coastal communities — telling them to get out their “mops and buckets” the next time a storm hit. Many were livid by the jab at places like the Rockaways, South Brooklyn, and Staten Island, where dozens of New Yorkers died in Sandy, which caused \$19 billion in damage to the City.

Investing in the recommendations by the Army Corps and implementing a five-borough resiliency plan can guarantee a safer future. Public works like these not only create jobs, but guarantee hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers won't be displaced. Rating agencies, which assess the credit things like of municipal debt, have taken note by investing in companies that track the effects of climate change — indicating it will increasingly become a factor in its calculations.

Council Member Costa Constantinides represents the New York City Council's 22nd District, which includes his native Astoria along with parts of Woodside, East Elmhurst, and Jackson Heights. He serves as the chair of the City Council's Environmental Protection Committee and sits on three additional committees: Sanitation, Resiliency, and Technology. For more information, visit [council.nyc.gov/costa](https://council.nyc.gov/costa).

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