



For Immediate Release: May 29, 2024

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Climate & labor coalition condemns attempts to weaken critical climate law, Local Law 97

New York, NY - In response to the Appellate Division, First Department's recent [decision](#) to reverse the dismissal of a lawsuit against Local Law 97 of 2019 (LL97) on preemption grounds, and recent legislation, [Int 0772-2024](#), attempting to create loopholes, the [Climate Works for All](#) coalition released the following statement:

"The Climate Works for All coalition stands firmly against any attempts to weaken Local Law 97 and its critical purpose — to mitigate the threat of climate change in the most vulnerable communities in NYC. Reducing our dirty buildings' emissions was never going to be easy in a City that has run on fossil fuels for generations, but loopholes are not the answer to our ever-worsening climate crisis.

The City has a responsibility to uphold Local Law 97's intent in the face of multiple threats. First, the reversal of the lawsuit against LL97 is astonishing and will drain City agencies of time and resources that could be spent on greening our buildings. Buildings account for nearly 70% of NYC greenhouse gas emissions, so they are the most critical target to combat the impacts of climate change. LL97 is meant to help the State reach its climate mandates for the benefit of all New Yorkers and beyond, and claims of preemption serve only to distract from the urgent need for decarbonization.

Second, [Int 0772-2024](#) would reduce penalties for co-op and condo owners by including green spaces in buildings' square footage when calculating emissions reduction mandates. While green spaces are essential resources for communities, they do not change the amount of emissions a building generates, thereby allowing these buildings to emit more greenhouse gasses and expose residents and tenants to more indoor air pollution.

Equally unavailing are the arguments that compliance would increase the financial burden on building owners. The Department of Buildings (DOB) recently released [rules](#) with alternatives to immediate compliance including provisions for genuine financial hardship and good faith efforts by building owners. Nearly 90% of buildings are on track to meet their mandates for the first deadline, which confirms that compliance is not significantly out of reach. Hence, this new bill would benefit only a small number of building owners who have been vehemently opposed to LL97 since its inception and steadfast in their non-compliance while ignoring the benefits LL97 would bring to NYC.

The City must do more to take advantage of state and federal funding and ensure building owners receive sufficient financial and informational resources to retrofit buildings. Int 772 is not the answer.

If we allow Local Law 97 to be stripped of its power for the benefit of a few, it is the Black, Brown, immigrant, and low-income communities who are already bearing the brunt of climate impacts who will continue to pay the price. The DOB has already provided pathways and solutions through the rulemaking process, but there is also a clear need for direct financial support to building owners. The City must make compliance more accessible for all without compromising the Law's purpose: to reduce emissions at the pace of our climate crisis."

[Climate Works for All](#) is a coalition of labor, community, faith, environmental justice, and climate organizations that have come together to fight climate change and inequality in NYC by demanding a Just Transition for workers and Environmental Justice communities. Our campaigns move us towards an equitable economy, a resilient, livable and healthy climate, and prioritize justice for low income Black and Brown communities across New York City.