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In Response to Preliminary Budget, 75 Climate & Labor Groups Representing More Than 2 Million New Yorkers Release Letter Demanding Climate Action in the Classroom

New York, NY – Today, the Climate Works for All coalition released a letter to Mayor Mamdani and Speaker Julie Menin with 75+ climate, labor, environmental justice, and student groups representing more than two million New Yorkers calling for a $2.2 billion investment in green public schools in the FY27 Budget.

Recently, the Mayor released his preliminary budget anticipating significant gaps and the need for increased state support to achieve a balanced budget. But the coalition is steadfast in emphasizing the urgency of greening our schools. Federal climate cuts have rolled back decades of climate progress, and New York's best line of defense is green public infrastructure.

"The budget is always a choice. This is about priorities, and right now, we're not prioritizing NYC children's health. Our kids spend 7 hours a day, 5 days a week, for half the year in NYC public schools that are making them sick and polluting our communities. Every year that we delay action we are gambling their futures and our city's safety," said Faiza Azam, ALIGN Climate & Labor Organizer.

In September, ALIGN and Climate Works for All released a new report detailing the environmental, health, and education costs of the city's aging school infrastructure and the benefits of Green, Healthy Schools. New York City's public school buildings are responsible for one third of the city's building pollution. Among 1,200 buildings, many are more than 75 years old and plagued with mold, asbestos, poor ventilation, and failing heating and cooling systems — conditions that lead to lower student test scores and increased disciplinary referrals and absences. Students and staff are exposed to these toxins every day, but so are the surrounding communities, due to the multipurpose uses of public school buildings—they serve as emergency shelters, warming and cooling centers during extreme weather, polling sites for elections, and spaces for adult literacy programs and community building.

Compounded with the effects of climate change, school pollution further heightens rates of child asthma and worsens air quality, particularly in environmental justice communities. Low-income

Black and Brown neighborhoods are most affected by deteriorating school buildings — nearly 70% of the schools with the worst ventilation are in environmental justice neighborhoods in Brooklyn and Queens.

An annual capital investment of $2.2 billion over five years in Green, Healthy Schools can:

- make schools fully electric and fossil fuel-free, install clean solar power, and upgrade heating, cooling, and ventilation systems
- create 321,944 green jobs or 64,388 per year
- cut Department of Education energy costs in half long-term
- deliver clean air and improve learning for nearly one million public school students
- make workplaces for more than 150,000 teachers and school workers sustainable
- meet the mandates of Local Law 97 at scale
- start to repair harm of decades of disinvestment and health harms by prioritizing schools in environmental justice communities

Green Schools were the sole climate priority on Mamdani's mayoral campaign platform. Now that Mamdani is in office, the coalition is looking for action and accountability in the first budget season under his new administration.

Green school upgrades would be a win for environmental justice and sustainability, and crucially, a path to creating good, green union jobs. Retrofits and solar projects can create more than 321,944 jobs or 64,388 jobs each year, while project Labor Agreements and union workforce development will ensure that these jobs provide long-term, equitable pathways for local residents — especially women, immigrants, and frontline workers. Green, Healthy Schools would also improve working conditions for teachers and school workers, delivering safer, healthier job environments.

Additionally, the Department of Education spends $275 million on energy costs every year. Green, Healthy Schools can cut energy usage in half, saving approximately $137 million annually. Plus, solar installation on schools would cut energy costs to near zero in the aggregate — a savings of about $250 million.

Finally, fixing and upgrading our school infrastructure is one of the most urgent and impactful things NYC can do to improve public health and meet the City's legal mandates for emissions reduction. By law, NYC must reduce emissions 40% by 2030 and 100% by 2050, while Local Law 99 mandates solar power installation on public buildings. Green, Healthy Schools will help the City achieve both.

The following organizations have signed on to the budget letter:

1. 350 Brooklyn
2. 350NYC
3. ALIGN: The Alliance for a Greater New York

4. Alliance for Quality Education
5. Association for Energy Affordability
6. Bangladeshi-Americans for Political Progress
7. Beyond Plastics Queens
8. Born Carbon
9. Bike Bus NYC
10. Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY
11. Chapter 3 New York State American Academy of Pediatrics
12. Citizen Action of New York
13. City Parks Foundation
14. Climate Defenders
15. Climate Families NYC
16. Climate Psychology Alliance - North America
17. Climate and Resilience Education Taskforce (CRETF), a project of National Wildlife Federation
18. Climate Reality Project NYC
19. Climate Works for All coalition (23+ organizations)
20. Community Education Council District 9
21. Community Voices Heard
22. CWA Local 1180
23. District Council 9 Painters and Allied Trades
24. District Council 37, AFSCME
25. Earthjustice
26. El Puente de Williamsburg
27. Fridays For Future NYC
28. Food & Water Watch
29. Fox EduConsulting
30. Gaia Scholastic
31. Greenfaith
32. Green City Force
33. Green Map System
34. Here on Earth
35. Indivisible Harlem
36. Jewish Climate Action Network
37. Jews for Racial and Economic Justice (JFREJ)
38. Jobs to Move America
39. Kidical Mass NYC
40. Kinetic Communities Consulting
41. Local Union No. 3, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers
42. Long Island Progressive Coalition
43. Lower East Side Ecology Center
44. Make Justice Normal

45. Mothers Out Front
46. National Wildlife Federation
47. New Settlement Parent Action Committee
48. New York City Environmental Justice Alliance
49. New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU)
50. New York Communities for Change
51. New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI)
52. New York League of Conservation Voters (NYLCV)
53. New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG)
54. New York State Nurses Association (NYSNA)
55. New Yorkers United for Child Care
56. NY Renews Coalition, 400+ Member organizations
57. NYC Democratic Socialists of America
58. NYC Youth Agenda
59. PowerSwitch Action
60. PSC-CUNY, AFT #2334
61. Queens Climate Project
62. Rider's Alliance
63. Rocking the Boat
64. Sane Energy Project
65. Seeding Sovereignty
66. Solar One
67. StreetWorks
68. Sunrise NYC
69. The People's Plan & People's Budget Campaign
70. The Point CDC
71. The Veggie Nuggets
72. Third Act NYC
73. TREEage
74. Urbecon LLC
75. WE ACT for Environmental Justice

Climate Works for All is a citywide coalition of labor, community, faith, environmental justice, and climate organizations, coordinated by ALIGN, that have come together to fight climate change and inequality in NYC by demanding a Just Transition for workers and environmental justice communities. CW4A campaigns aim to 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.

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