

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 24, 2023

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor
State of New York
Capital
Albany, NY 12242

The Honorable Eric Adams
Mayor
City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 1007

Dear Governor Hochul and Mayor Adams:

As Members of the New York City Congressional Delegation, we request that the State and City work with the delegation to address the negative safety, noise, and environmental impact of tourist and commuter helicopters on New York City residents. While we work to secure meaningful solutions to these concerns in the 2023 Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization Act, we request that you move to end non-essential helicopter flights from New York City's West 30th Street Heliport, East 34th Street Heliport, and Downtown Manhattan Heliport. The West 30th Street Heliport is owned by Hudson River Park Trust, a partnership between New York State and New York City. The East 34th Street Heliport and Downtown Manhattan Heliport are owned by New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC).

New York City has one of the world's highest rates of non-essential helicopter use. The city also has the highest population density in the United States, exponentially increasing the potential dangers of a helicopter accident in our city. Since 1983, there have been at least thirty helicopter crashes in New York City, with at least twenty-five fatalities, according to National Transportation Safety Board records.

The overwhelming number of helicopter flights over New York City creates intolerable risks to the community and negative impacts on the quality of life of all its residents. Many of our constituents can't enjoy a peaceful day in a park or their homes without near-constant noise and vibrations, all so that tourists and wealthy corporate commuters can fly in helicopters.

Over the past decade, New York City has seen increased numbers of non-essential tourism and commuter helicopters. As a result, helicopter-related noise complaints to 311 have increased in New York City by over 2300 percent in the last five years, and helicopter safety, noise, and

environmental concerns are now one of the top issues we hear about from our constituents.¹ We must work together to address this issue at the local, state, and federal levels.

As the New York City Congressional Delegation has worked to address this issue at the federal level, the FAA has cited efforts to accommodate existing state and local concessions agreements for non-essential helicopter operations as a challenge to restricting airspace.² Therefore, we again request that you move to end non-essential helicopter flights from New York City's West 30th Street Heliport, East 34th Street Heliport, and Downtown Manhattan Heliport. We believe that the State and City have the authority to end flights before the FAA institutes any flight restrictions in the area.

At West 30th Street Heliport in Hudson River Park, corporate commuter helicopters take off and land less than ten yards from a pedestrian and bike path twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. While these flights are convenient for the ultra-wealthy, they are disturbing for local residents, who have been working to remove the heliport for decades. In February 2022, a resident testified before the Hudson River Park Advisory Council that they "once saw a child riding down the bike path get swept off her bicycle by the blow from a helicopter."³ We strongly believe that the heliport should end non-essential operations. However, it's critical for the long-term health of Hudson River Park that the income made from non-essential flights is replaced and the Hudson River Park Trust is not stuck paying to operate a heliport for essential flights that will not generate funding for the park.

The NYCEDC-owned East 34th Street Heliport and Downtown Manhattan Heliport see 58,000 helicopter flights annually and burn through nearly 50,000 gallons of mostly leaded fuel every month.⁴ Over 95 percent of these flights are non-essential.⁵ Last month, NYCEDC moved to resolicit its Request for proposal for a Downtown Manhattan Heliport operator. Now is the perfect time for the City to end non-essential flights at the Downtown Manhattan Heliport and put a plan in place to do the same at East 34th Street. No economic benefit from these flights for the City will ever be able to justify the noise, safety, and environmental consequences that helicopters bear on the nearly nine million residents of New York City.

¹ *Helicopter noise*. Gale Brewer. (n.d.). <https://council.nyc.gov/gale-brewer/helicopters/>

² FAA & NPS Progress Update Y2Q1 | Federal Aviation Administration. (n.d.-a). <https://qa-www.faa.gov/general/faa-nps-progress-update-y2q1>

³ Minutes from February 9, 2022 Hudson River Advisory ... (n.d.-c).


<https://hudsonriverpark.org/app/uploads/2022/03/HRP-AC-Minutes-Feb-9-2022r1.docx.pdf>

⁴ Bellafante, G. (2018, March 15). "open-door" helicopters are no longer flying over New York City. what about banning all tourist flights? The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/15/nyregion/will-a-deadly-crash-in-the-east-river-empower-the-movement-to-ban-tourist-helicopters-once-and-for-all.html>


⁵ Tremayne-Pengelly, A. (2022, June 23). *New Yorkers are fed up with helicopters noise from tourists and the rich flying to the Hamptons. A new law may curb it*. Observer. <https://observer.com/2022/06/new-yorkers-are-fed-up-with-helicopters-noise-from-tourists-and-the-rich-flying-to-the-hamptons-a-new-law-may-curb-it/>

New Yorkers have lived through the safety, noise, vibration, and environmental impacts of non-essential helicopter flights for decades. It is a matter of utmost urgency that your administrations address this matter as soon as possible by moving to end non-essential flights at the State and City controlled heliports in New York City. Thank you for your attention to this matter.


Sincerely,



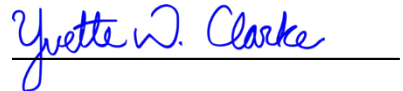
Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress



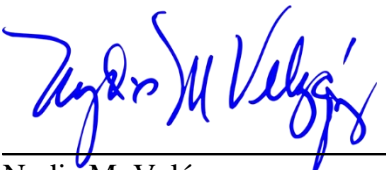
Dan Goldman
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Nydia M. Velázquez
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Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.
Member of Congress



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress

Cc: Noreen Doyle, President & CEO, Hudson River Park Trust
Andrew Kimball, President & CEO, New York City
Economic Development Corporation