



October 29, 2021

Pete Buttigieg
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave., S.E.
Washington, DC 20590

Michael S. Regan
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Secretary Buttigieg and Administrator Regan:

We are a coalition of city and state elected officials from New York and New Jersey writing to address our urgent concern about helicopter overflight. Helicopters are hovering over our homes and public spaces, flying in between tall buildings and tormenting our residents with incessant noise. These aircrafts operate over our cities, towns, and boroughs night and day, often without regard for public safety or quality of life. As New York and New Jersey elected representatives, we urge the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Federal Aviation Administration to support the Improving Helicopter Safety Act and take whatever steps are within your regulatory authority to address this issue.

Current regulatory practices are inadequate to address these issues. We are acutely aware of the risk of a catastrophic helicopter accident, like the June 10, 2019 helicopter crash in Midtown Manhattan and other fatal accidents in recent years. In addition to our preeminent safety concerns, the noise pollution created by sightseeing helicopters has become a serious problem. For example, Central Park – one of the most-visited tourist attractions in the world – is surrounded by some of the most densely populated residential neighborhoods in the nation, with over half a million people living within a 10-minute walk of the park. The continuous helicopter traffic over and around the area poses a great hazard to life and property, and a significant assault on the senses of visitors and local residents. In fact, The Public Theater frequently has to pause performances during its annual Shakespeare in the Park festival, a New York institution, due to helicopter noise. The same story repeats itself in other communities near – or in the flight path to – attractions like the Brooklyn Bridge, the Statue of Liberty, and many others.

In Hudson County, New Jersey, an operator known as FlyNYON advertises “perfect shoe selfies” on “doors-off flights” operating 7 days a week out of Kearny, New Jersey. These non-essential “selfie” flights are making residents of densely populated Hudson County miserable. From 7am to midnight as many as 60 daily non-essential tourist helicopters buzz residents’ homes at altitudes as low as 100 ft. The noise is so great that residents cannot

hold outdoor conversations. Residents report being unable to conduct work meetings from home offices without being interrupted by low-flying, noise-polluting helicopters. As a result of activities of helicopter operators like FlyNYON, Hudson County residents are unable to enjoy their homes, yards, cherished community spaces or world class waterfront parks without the regular intrusion of low-flying, non-essential helicopters.

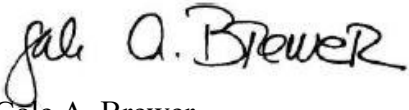
In addition, helicopters are also an environmental and public health concern. Helicopters burn large amounts of fossil fuels. This is significant since tourist flights over New York City, despite being reduced by half in 2016, still amount to roughly 80 flights a day. This figure vastly increases when flights out of New Jersey and Westchester are taken into account. Lastly, excessive exposure to aircraft noise is associated with deleterious effects on health. According to a joint study from the Harvard School of Public Health and Boston University School of Public Health, people exposed to exhaust fuel and aircraft noise, especially at high levels, may face increased risk of being hospitalized for cardiovascular disease. Non-essential helicopters constantly hovering over residents is a nuisance, imminent danger, environmental hazard, and a public health risk.

Convened by Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer, New York and New Jersey elected officials have come together to form a Helicopter Task Force. This multi-city, dual state effort is the direct result of helicopter noise complaints. In New York, complaints about helicopter noise increased by 130% between October 2019 and October 2020. Earlier this year, our colleagues in the federal government took meaningful steps to bring attention to, and address, the issue of excessive helicopter flights. On March 7, 2021, Representatives Carolyn B. Maloney (NY-12), Jerrold Nadler (NY-10), and Nydia Velázquez (NY-07) reintroduced the Improving Helicopter Safety Act, which would prohibit nonessential helicopters from flying in covered airspace of any city with a population of over eight million people and with a population density of over 25,000 people per square mile—including waterways within the city's jurisdiction. First introduced in 2019, the Improving Helicopter Safety Act would drastically reduce helicopter traffic, improve safety, and cut down on noise pollution by prohibiting non-essential helicopter flights in New York City airspace. We in state and local government support these efforts.

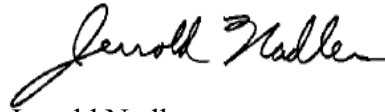
Residents from across our districts, from Jersey City, NJ to Bayside, Queens and Brooklyn Heights, can agree that something must be done now. For this and other reasons expressed in this letter, we write in support of the Improving Helicopter Safety Act and request that the Federal Aviation Administration impose special flight rules for all non-essential (sightseeing and charter) helicopters over highly populated areas, including the City of New York and adjacent New Jersey.

We look forward to your response in addressing these concerns.

Sincerely,



Gale A. Brewer
Manhattan Borough President

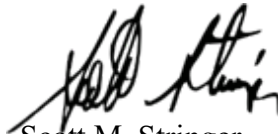


Jerrold Nadler
Congressmember, 10th Congressional District

/s/ Nydia M. Velázquez
Nydia M. Velázquez
Congressmember, 7th Congressional District



Robert Jackson
NYS Senator, 31st District



Scott M. Stringer
New York City Comptroller



Brad Hoylman
NYS Senator, 27th District



Brian P. Kavanagh
NYS Assembly Member, 26th District



Liz Kruger
NYS Senator, 28th District



Deborah J. Glick
NYS Assembly Member, 66th District



Richard Gottfried
NYS Assembly Member, 75th District



Harvey Epstein
NYS Assembly Member, 74th District



Daniel J. O'Donnell
NYS Assembly Member, 69th District



Linda B. Rosenthal
NYS Assembly Member, 67th District



Dan Quart
NYS Assembly Member, 73rd District



Rebecca Seawright
NYS Assembly Member, 76th District



Mark Levine
NYC Councilmember, 7th District



Margaret Chin
NYC Councilmember, 1st District



Carlina Rivera
NYC Councilmember, 2nd District



Ben Kallos
NYC Councilmember, 5th District

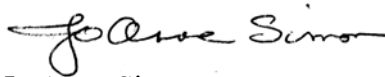


Keith Powers
NYC Councilmember, 4th District



Helen Rosenthal
NYC Councilmember, 6th District

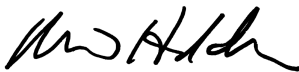
/s/ Bill Perkins
Bill Perkins
NYC Councilmember, 9th District



Jo Anne Simon
NYS Assembly Member, 52nd District



Eric Dinowitz
NYC Councilmember, 11th District



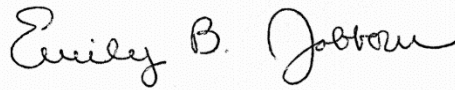
Robert Holden
NYC Councilmember, 30th District



Phil Cohen
NJ City Councilmember, Hoboken



Raj Mukherji
NJ State Assembly Member, 33rd District



Emily B. Jabbour
NJ City Councilmember, Hoboken



Annette Chaparro
NJ State Assembly Member, 33rd District

/s/ Albio Sires
Albio Sires
Congressmember, 8th District

/s/ Brian P. Stack
Brian P. Stack
Mayor, Union City & NJ State Senator, 33rd

/s/ Ravinder Bhalla
Ravinder Bhalla
Mayor, City of Hoboken, NJ

/s/ Richard F. Turner
Richard F. Turner
Mayor, The Township of Weehawken

/s/ James Doyle
James Doyle
Councilmember, City of Hoboken, NJ



James Solomon
Councilmember, City of Jersey City, NJ

cc: Polly Trottenberg, Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of Transportation