



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL  
COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS  
NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF BUILDINGS  
MELANIE E. LA ROCCA, COMMISSIONER  
AUGUST 18, 2020**

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Good afternoon Chair Cornegy and members of the Committee on Housing and Buildings. I am Melanie E. La Rocca, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Buildings (“the Department”). I am pleased to be here to discuss the important issue of construction safety. Keeping our construction sites safe, and protecting the public, is a top priority for the Department.

While construction safety continues to be a focus of the Department, we’re only as good as the industry we regulate. Building owners, contractors and the construction workforce must do their part in ensuring a climate of safety exists at the City’s nearly 45,000 active construction sites. I commend construction sites where safety is prioritized, and where the laws and regulations that govern construction, including the site safety training requirements established by the City through Local Law 196 of 2017 (“Local Law 196”), are followed. This historic law requires that workers at our larger construction sites receive site safety training. The Department is committed to holding the construction industry accountable, a goal that we are accomplishing by conducting regular proactive inspections at construction sites to identify safety lapses and to ensure that workers are being appropriately trained.

I am happy to report that, for the first time in nearly a decade, construction-related injuries decreased over 20% last year compared to the previous year. This is a trend that we are committed to seeing continue. Every worker must go home to their families at the end of their shift, and the work they engage in must be safe, not just for their benefit, but for the benefit of every member of the public. This decrease in injuries comes after the launch of our Construction

Safety Compliance (“CSC”) Unit, which is dedicated to conducting proactive inspections of our larger construction sites. To date, the CSC Unit has conducted over 45,000 proactive inspections at nearly 19,000 unique construction sites, issuing 20,000 violations and over 4,000 Stop Work Orders.

Our goal at the Department is to continue to improve construction safety, and we recognize that site safety training is key to achieving that goal. The decrease in injuries we saw last year can be attributed to our proactive inspections, which include our enforcement of Local Law 196. Currently, workers at many construction sites are required to have 30 hours of safety training and supervisors at those sites are required to have 62 hours of safety training. When fully phased in, Local Law 196 will require that workers have 40 hours of safety training. The Department will continue to monitor the effectiveness of this law and looks forward to working with this Committee to identify opportunities to further improve upon it.

Since the enactment of this law, we have conducted extensive outreach to the construction industry, including visiting construction sites to connect directly with the workers who are impacted. We ran an educational advertising campaign that included television, radio, and subway ads. We also released our Site Safety Construction Map, which is an interactive map that workers can use to determine whether a construction site requires site safety training. We will also be hosting a virtual worker safety event next month, which will highlight Local Law 196 and the importance of receiving site safety training.

To date, our approved course providers have issued nearly 90,000 Site Safety Training Cards and many thousands of OSHA 30 cards to workers, which means that workers are receiving the site safety training required by this law. We are pleased with the compliance that we are seeing on the ground. To date, our inspectors have identified 900 construction sites where approximately 1,500 workers did not have their required training. This resulted in the issuance of approximately 3,000 violations to owners, contractors and employers, for which over \$2 million in penalties has already been collected.

The legislation before the Committee today would extend the date by which construction and demolition workers must complete their 40 hours of training. For many workers who are seeking to satisfy their training requirement, the remaining 10 hours of training includes 8 hours of fall

prevention training. This training is critical to improving site safety as many construction-related injuries and fatalities in recent years have involved worker falls. Last year alone, worker falls accounted for 50% of construction-related fatalities and nearly 25% of injuries. While the Department has concerns about extending the deadline for workers to complete their training, we understand that COVID-19 has had an impact on many aspects of our lives, including delaying workers from receiving their training. Due to COVID-19, many of our approved course providers began offering site safety training online. We now have nearly 100 course providers offering site safety training in multiple languages, 49 of which are now offering training online in a format that complies with Local Law 196. Our online course provider map, which is sortable by course, language offering, and online training availability, allows workers to find out where the training is available. We have no objection to this extension, but I urge our construction workforce not to delay this potentially life-saving training. The sooner this training is completed, the better, both for workers and the public.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I welcome any questions you may have.