

August 12, 2022

Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
NYS Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul:

We, the undersigned local elected officials of Battery Park City and the partnering local residents and community organizations, write to you with several concerns regarding the Battery Park City Authority's (BPCA) plan to demolish Wagner Park. The community has made it clear that we do not feel comfortable with this project proceeding until these questions are answered and these concerns are addressed. Specifically, the community is upset to see that the current plans call for a reduction in active green space where children and families can gather and play and believes that the design could be modified to right that issue.

The community is hopeful that there is a path towards making the required resiliency modifications to Wagner Park while maintaining or even improving upon its current uses, but they do not believe that the current proposal achieves this. Residents understand and recognize the threat that climate change poses and that work must be done across the city to protect from rising tides and fiercer storms. However, the community does not understand why the proposed design calls for a significant reduction in usable greenspace and prioritizes paved paths and plazas instead. There is also some confusion as to why the design guidelines are based on older models over newer projections. Furthermore, Manhattan Community Board 1 members have voiced unaddressed concerns including a lack of plans for the creation of direly needed active and passive recreational opportunities, confusion around bus routes, and a lack of communication with certain specific local organizations. As the primary stakeholders of this project, our community deserves a response to these concerns before work begins. We urge you to instruct the BPCA to more actively interface with elected officials and local stakeholders such as the Jewish Museum, PS276 and the BPCNA to ensure Wagner Park becomes a protective, resilient park that also meets our community's needs for green space.

The Authority, which currently has a vacancy on its board and members serving on expired terms, continues to pursue an agenda which often feels opaque to residents and unresponsive to community input. This discomfort is amplified when the Authority makes decisions such as its choice to hire lobbyists to oppose A.10371-A/S.9031-A and A.10414-A/S.9032-B despite widespread community support and overwhelming support in the legislature. These bills were designed to ensure that the neighborhood remains livable and that the board remains responsive

and accountable and we believe that a prompt executive decision on them would help restore trust between residents and the BPCA and would go a long way towards reducing potential conflict in the future.

The task of building and planning in New York is exceptionally difficult, especially when dealing with urgent matters such as resilience. We all acknowledge that this undertaking requires collaboration and sacrifice. But when all is said and done, we should be left with a product that leaves the community excited, not disappointed. That is the goal of true community planning where the community is allowed to inform the design process, not simply react to it. We believe that with a few modifications, the plan could proceed with significant community support and create a public space that the Authority, local residents, and the city at large can be proud of and content with for decades to come.

Some of these concerns were raised in a recent letter from elected officials to President B.J. Jones of the BPCA and we are hopeful that with attention from both of your offices, these issues will be resolved. Thank you for your time and attention on this important matter. You may reach out to Theo Pérez in Assemblymember Niou's office (perez@nyassembly.gov) for any further follow-up. We look forward to continued discussions.

Sincerely,



Charles Fall Yuh-Line Niou
Assemblymember, District 61 Assemblymember, District 65 Maggie Dallal,



Jennifer Jones, PhD
President, PTA President, PS/IS276 Founder, Battery Park Montessori & Pine Street School



Amy Van Buskirk
PTA President, PS89