
FIGHT ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM BY PASSING THE SIGH ACT

Across our state, thousands of children attend schools that sit just a few hundred feet from major roadways. In fact, despite Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) guidelines, New York has more students who attend schools near major roadways than any other state in the nation. Every day, these mostly Black and Brown kids breathe in the toxins emitted by cars, SUVs, and diesel trucks, leading to respiratory illness, increased absenteeism, and academic challenges. We need legislature that will protect students from this harmful pollution.

THE PROBLEM

For years, the EPA has known that children who attend school within 500 feet of a major road without proper mitigation are exposed to intense air pollution. These students suffer from more breathing-related medical issues like asthma and perform worse on standardized tests. Yet, New York has more students who attend schools near major roadways than any other state in the nation. New York City operates over 250 schools within 500 feet of a major highway. More than half of these schools serve predominately Black and Brown students.

Many states have regulated the construction of schools near major roads, however, New York has not. Our state also does not have any requirements to mitigate air pollution through air filters or other strategies. This is part of a pervasive system of environmental racism throughout New York, where communities of color are disproportionately exposed to toxic air, unsafe water, and other adverse environmental conditions.

THE SOLUTION

Ending environmentally racist practices endured by students starts with prohibiting the building of schools near major highways. The Schools Impacted by Gross Highways (SIGH) Act (S04550 / A08998) will empower New York to protect students from air pollution by limiting new construction of schools within 500 feet of major highways.

The SIGH Act offers the opportunity to improve the health, educational outcomes, and economic prospects of thousands of New York's students who have endured the impacts of environmental racism for years.

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