



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John C. Liu

With temperatures hitting record highs across the northeast, legislators and environmental advocates call for the extension of NYC's green roof tax abatement before it expires

JOHN C. LIU June 24, 2024

| ISSUE: **GREEN ROOF, SENATOR LIU, ASSEMBLY MEMBER ROZIC, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**



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**Flushing, NY** – As dangerously high temperatures hit the northeast, NYS Senator John Liu, Assemblywoman Nily Rozic and environmental advocates gathered at the famed Queens Botanical Garden green roof to call on Governor Hochul to sign their bill [S6409A/ A6901](#) to extend the green roof tax abatement program in New York City. Advocates are calling for an extension to the green roof tax abatement program before it expires on June 30th, potentially halting progress on numerous green infrastructure projects across the city.

Green roofs are a vegetative layer grown on rooftops that help to reduce the heat island effect, absorb rainwater runoff, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and improve air quality. Since 2009, the program has provided tax abatements to building owners of up to \$200,000 per roof. The legislation, which passed both the Senate and Assembly this past session, would extend the abatement until 2027 and increase reimbursement to incentivize greater participation by building owners throughout NYC.

Additional changes to the Green Roof Tax Abatement include:

- Removing the requirement that 50% of the roof be green in order to encourage buildings with less square footage to participate in the program
- Increasing the tax abatement from \$5.23 per square foot to \$10 per square foot.
- Lowers depth of soil requirements to 1.5 inches, allowing for more buildings that might not be able to support 2 inches of soil to plant green roofs
- Removes cumbersome drainage requirements which may be harmful to modern green roofs
- Raises the total program cap to \$4 million per year.

Data from the [2024 NYC Heat-Related Mortality Report](#) shows an estimated 350 New Yorkers die every summer because of extreme heat. Investing in local resiliency projects and green infrastructure in neighborhoods with high heat vulnerabilities could help to reduce local temperatures and prevent heat-related deaths.

Today's press conference was held at the famed Queens Botanical Garden's Visitor and Administration building's green roof, an 8,000-square-foot installment built in 2007. [Tests](#) at the facility measured the garden's green roof temperature at 82 degrees, compared to nearby white and black tar roofs, which measured as high as 170 degrees. According to the [EPA](#), green roof temperatures can be 30 to 40 degrees lower than conventional roofs and reduce citywide temperatures by as much as 5 degrees.

**State Senator John Liu** stated, "New Yorkers have endured too many extreme weather events recently, from intense heat waves to sudden flash floods, that show just how important it is to maintain the green roof program. Green roofs are a nature-based solution that have barely had their day in the sun, and we need to make sure we continue incentivizing more New Yorkers to take advantage of this important program so we can help to mitigate the rapid onset of climate change."

**Assemblywoman Nily Rozic, Chair of Consumer Affairs and Protection** stated, "The green roof tax abatement program is necessary in our fight against climate change. By improving this program, we are taking proactive steps to promote sustainability and improve the quality of life for all New Yorkers. I urge Governor Hochul to sign this bill before the program expires indefinitely and keep the green roof tax abatement in place."

**Evie Hantzopoulos, Executive Director, Queens Botanical Garden**, stated, "We're at a critical point in our fight to address climate change, and this legislation will ensure we don't stop progress in its tracks. At Queen Botanical Garden, we established the first publicly accessible green

roof in New York, and we hope to see many more thanks to the leadership of Senator Liu and Assembly Member Rozic.”

**Tami Lin-Moges, Interim New York Cities Program Director of The Nature Conservancy**, stated, “The Nature Conservancy commends state legislators for passing a bill that will extend and expand the green roof tax abatement program. Green roofs offer multiple benefits; they save energy, reduce the urban heat island effect, improve stormwater management, and provide much-needed green space for people and wildlife. We urge Governor Hochul to sign the NYC Green Roof bill into current law before the program expires on June 30 so that green roofs and their many benefits can expand across New York City.”

**Shino Tanikawa, Executive Director, NYC Soil & Water Conservation District** stated, “We are grateful to our legislators for getting the Green Roof Tax Abatement amendment and extension passed by both houses. It is critical that the Governor sign the bill immediately before the law sunsets on the 30th of this month. It is mid-June and we are already experiencing what feels like a heatwave, reminding us how important it is to create more green roofs that help cool the city and mitigate the effects of climate change. We cannot afford to let the Green Roof Tax Abatement lapse.”

**Jeremy Cherson, Senior Manager of Government Affairs for Riverkeeper**, stated, “Green roofs are a key piece of the puzzle in New York’s strategy to reduce local flooding and prevent Combined Sewer Overflows, both of which have been exacerbated by our rapidly changing climate. With the current tax abatement set to expire at the end of the month, it is extremely important for Governor Hochul to sign the new and improved Green Roof Tax Abatement into law. Riverkeeper thanks the legislature for their commitment to this vital program to protect our communities and the environment.”

**Rebecca Pryor, Executive Director of Guardians of Flushing Bay**, stated, “Sustaining funding pathways for green infrastructure creation is more important than ever. As temperatures rise and rain events increase, communities surrounding Flushing Bay and Flushing Creek are in need of green solutions that absorb rainwater, capture carbon and cool neighborhoods. The Green Infrastructure Tax Abatement bill enables property owners to realize these green, climate resilient solutions in local neighborhoods. We call on Governor Hochul to support legislation that would extend this critical program before it expires at the end of June.”

**Shawn Slevin, Founder, Executive Director of Swim Strong Foundation**, stated, “With climate action bringing warmer, hotter, weather, we should extend the green roof tax abatement. Green roofs can help reduce urban heat by up to 5 degrees, improve air quality and provide habitation to birds, bees and other pollinators. Extending this abatement will encourage more ‘greening’ of NYC.”

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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### **2023-S6409A**

- 
- Introduced
    - ◦ In Committee Assembly
      - In Committee Senate
    - ◦ On Floor Calendar Assembly
      - On Floor Calendar Senate

- ○ Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
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Relates to the green roof tax abatement in a city of one million or more persons

April 18, 2023

Signed by Governor

Sponsored by [John C. Liu](#)

Do you support this bill?