

SAMPLE LETTER TO OPPOSE ZONING OVERRIDE FOR COMMERCIAL-TO-RESI CONVERSIONS

(Please paste into company letterhead)

To Senator/Assembly Member _____

We are small businesses, workers, and advocates in industrial zones writing to express our strong opposition to two legislative proposals from the State of New York, The Gianaris bill (S5257) and the The Kavanagh bill (4937), to override local zoning to allow residential uses in New York City's manufacturing districts.

Industrial businesses are vital to the functioning of the city: as essential businesses, we have produced PPE and medical equipment, supplied food and other essential goods to New Yorkers, and managed the city's waste and utilities during Covid-19. We employ over 500,000 New Yorkers in jobs earning an average of \$65,000 a year---more than twice the average wage of retail, hospitality, or food service---often without the need for formal credentialing or advanced degrees. Industrial jobs are a lifeline for the people who have been most impacted by COVID, employing a workforce that is 80% people of color and 50% foreign-born. And going forward, work by industrial businesses will be vital to the production, supply, installation, and maintenance of the green technologies that will be at the forefront of the city's response to climate change.

But even in a business environment as tough as the Covid-19 era, the primary barrier to New York's industrial sector has been the reality of real estate pressures, specifically the rezoning of traditionally industrial land in New York City for non-industrial uses. From 2005 to 2015 alone, the city lost nearly 18% of its industrial space to residential and commercial uses, loss that ultimately disrupts local supply chains, inflates the price of remaining industrial space to the point of unaffordability, and ultimately upends the viability of other industrial businesses and the jobs that we support.

In 2018, with the aim of preserving space and opportunities for job-intensive industrial and manufacturing businesses, the City developed an important effort to limit the development of hotel uses in manufacturing zones. Specifically, the City required developers to receive a new City Planning Commission (CPC) Special Permit in order to limit the construction of new hotels and motels in M1 light manufacturing districts throughout the city. The goal of this special permit was to limit the growth of additional hotels, after those that had already developed in many manufacturing zones in the decades prior, in order to stem the loss and functionality of the city's remaining industrial space.

Given the needs of the city to facilitate an equitable recovery---job-intensive uses of space, more space for value-added industrial services, and a need for real estate price stability---any further loss would signal to the market that the city's Industrial Business Zones are unprotected, open to speculators, and would represent a permanent loss to the stock of industrial real estate and jobs.

While we certainly appreciate the need for affordable housing, this reaction to the real estate industry's COVID challenges will have permanent ramifications. The current bills in the NYS proposed 2022 budget that seeks to *override* the City of New York's local zoning protections in order to permit the conversion of office and hotel space into permanent housing would have a particularly harmful effect on industrial areas, where the bulk of class B and C office space and hotels of this relatively small size are located.

We hope that you will support the 500,000 workers in our industrial zones, as well as the small businesses that employ them, by opposing this effort to override the local industrial zoning that has protected our businesses.

Sincerely,