



**Statement by the
American Council of Engineering Companies of New York**

in OPPOSITION to Intro 1307-a

Committee on Housing and Buildings, June 13, 2017

The American Council of Engineering Companies of New York, the association of professional consulting engineering firms, appreciates the opportunity to share our views with you.

At a time when the City Council is focused on improving construction safety, Intro. 1307-a would be a step in the wrong direction, watering down hiring standards for building inspectors even as construction becomes more complex and more is required of them.

We urge the Council to table this version and ask the Department of Buildings to take a more thoughtful approach to the issue of inspector qualifications, in collaboration with the design and construction professionals who interact with the inspectors every day and whose work is reviewed by them.

Last fall, ACEC New York met with the DOB and told them that the industry was sympathetic to their difficulty in recruitment, but that it was not a sufficient reason to give them unfettered discretion as then proposed. While the engineering community applauds the work Commissioner Chandler has done in reforming the DOB, the fact remains that construction safety is too important to depend on the integrity of future commissioners facing budget or political patronage pressures.

We offered to work with DOB to develop appropriate requirements depending on the type of inspection being conducted. Unfortunately, that did not occur.

What you see when you read several of the proposed “qualifications” is that when it comes to doing this important work, DOB’s want ads can say, “No experience necessary.”

60 credits towards a degree in a “relevant field of study” or completion of an apprenticeship program with no required length or a certification from an unidentified entity “related” and no experience could result in inspectors that have never been on a construction site, let alone have worked on one, and have insufficient technical course work.

This Council has been moving in the opposite direction with the adoption of the updated ICC construction codes with their increased sophistication needed to achieve safe, sustainable and efficient construction. You have required developers to engage third-party “special inspectors” to conduct 17 different inspections before the DOB is asked to sign-off on the work,

and the qualifications are higher than those proposed by the DOB, with less qualified personnel allowed only for specific tasks and only when under the supervision of a licensed professional.

Council Members- would you want to work in a tower whose structural work was inspected by someone with 60 college credits and no experience? Don't you think the type of apprenticeship program or certification needed to sign off on the natural gas system for a building should be spelled out and accompanied by at least some experience?

ACEC New York is not saying that every inspection requires the level of training and experience currently in the law. We are saying that each type of inspection and the qualifications to do that specific work should be thoughtfully and individually reviewed. And we are again offering to work with DOB to achieve this.

The American Council of Engineering Companies of New York (ACEC New York) is the voice of the professional engineering community, representing 300 member firms throughout New York State that collectively employ close to 24,000 people statewide, with a concentrated presence of firms located within the five boroughs of New York City. Our members are involved in all aspects of engineering for the public sector. We plan and design the structural, mechanical, electrical, civil, environmental, plumbing, fire protection and technology systems for the city's infrastructure, including transportation, energy, and wastewater treatment facilities, as well as public buildings.