

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

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April 11, 2024
Start: 10:59 a.m.
Recess: 11:05 a.m.

HELD AT: COMMITTEE CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Nantasha M. Williams, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Rita C. Joseph
Christopher Marte
Kevin C. Riley
Rafael Salamanca, Jr.

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING:

Lincoln Restler

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: This is a microphone
3 check for the Committee on Civil and Human Rights,
4 recorded on April 11, 2024, in Chambers by Nazly
5 Paytuvi.

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning and
7 welcome to today's New York City Council vote for the
8 Committee on Civil and Human Rights.

9 At this time, please silence all
10 electronic devices.

11 Just a reminder, no one may approach the
12 dais.

13 Chair, we are ready to begin.

14 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Can you not hear
15 me? Hello.

16 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Yes,
17 Council Member.

18 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Okay, so you didn't
19 hear anything just now?

20 Okay, I'll start again.

21 Hello, good morning. Can you hear me?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Yes.

23 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Okay. Good morning,
24 everyone. My name is Nantasha Williams, and I Chair
25 the Committee on Civil and Human Rights.

2 This morning, we will be voting on a bill
3 sponsored by Council Member Lincoln Restler, Proposed
4 Intro. 69-A in relation to prohibiting provisions in
5 employment agreements that shorten the period in
6 which claims and complaints of unlawful
7 discriminatory practices, harassment, or violence may
8 be filed and in which civil actions may be commenced.
9 The New York City Human Rights Law is one of the most
10 comprehensive of its kind in the nation and, while we
11 as lawmakers take great pride in knowing this, we
12 also know there's always room for improvement when it
13 comes to strengthening and protecting the rights of
14 New Yorkers. Under Title XIII of the Administrative
15 Code, (INAUDIBLE) have one year to file a complaint
16 with the New York City Commission on Human Rights,
17 also known as CCHR, for an unlawful, discriminatory
18 practice or act of discriminatory harassment or
19 violence and three years to file a claim of gender-
20 based harassment. Additionally, they may commence a
21 civil action within three years. Proposed Intro. 69-A
22 would make unenforceable and void any provision of
23 any employment agreement that attempts to shorten
24 such period. Given that CCHR reports that the highest
25 number of inquiries that they receive relate to

2 employment, most often on the basis of gender or
3 disability, it is crucial that we do what is within
4 our power to ensure victims of such behavior or
5 actions are not taken advantage of due to (INAUDIBLE)
6 may try to encroach on their rights to seek legal
7 recourse after they have been harmed.

8 Before we begin to vote, I will turn it
9 over to Council Member Restler for some remarks on
10 his bill.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you so
12 much, Chair Williams.

13 No one should ever have to deal with
14 harassment or discrimination in the workplace but,
15 when these unfortunate incidents occur, New Yorkers
16 can rely on our landmark Human Rights Law to protect
17 them in court. Unfortunately, many large employers,
18 indeed the largest private employer in New York
19 State, has started forcing employees to sign
20 contracts that undermine and limit their rights.
21 Under the City's Human Rights Law, employees
22 currently have three whole years to file claims for
23 discrimination or harassment or violence in the
24 workplace. Employees, though, have been unknowingly
25 signing contracts when they apply for jobs or when

2 they begin employment that shorten this period to as
3 brief a time as six months. These contracts are
4 unreasonable, and they are absolutely contrary to
5 public policy. Six months is simply not enough time
6 for aggrieved workers to recover, find a lawyer, and
7 file a claim, especially given the high likelihood of
8 the threat of retaliation which discourages many
9 employees from immediately filing claims. Intro. 69
10 will restore the intent of our strong Human Rights
11 Law and ensure that no private employers can create
12 their own loopholes. Every employee should have a
13 full three years to file a claim.

14 I really want to thank the Speaker for
15 her strong support of this legislation, and I
16 especially want to thank Chair Williams. Chair
17 Williams was the first co-prime sponsor of this bill,
18 she held a hearing on this bill last session, and
19 immediately upon the new session beginning offered to
20 hold an additional public hearing on this
21 legislation. She's been an incredible champion for
22 this legislation, and I deeply appreciate it. I also
23 want to thank a constituent of mine, Anne Clark, who
24 brought this issue to our attention. She's a renowned
25 employment attorney, labor lawyer, and she helped

2 guide us in the crafting of this bill, and then
3 especially, last but not least, I want to thank my
4 Chief-of-Staff, Molly Haley, who brilliantly pulled
5 this all together and got us to this point so thank
6 you so much. I hope my Colleagues will support this
7 consequential piece of legislation to protect all
8 workers in New York City. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you, Council
10 Member Restler, and congratulations.

11 Now, I will ask the Clerk to call the
12 roll.

13 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Thank
14 you. Good morning. William Martin, Committee Clerk.
15 Roll call vote Committee on Civil and Human Rights,
16 Proposed Introduction 69-A. Chair Williams.

17 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: I vote aye.
18 Congrats, Lincoln.

19 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Thank
20 you. Salamanca.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Aye on all.

22 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Riley.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Aye.

24 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Marte.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: Aye.

1 COMMITTEE ON CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

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2 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Joseph.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Aye.

4 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: By a vote
5 of five in the affirmative, zero in the negative, and
6 no abstentions, item has been adopted by the
7 Committee and, Madam Chair, that is a full Committee.

8 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: All right. This
9 Committee meeting is closed.

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date May 6, 2024