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COMMITTEE ON CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

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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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December 20, 2023

Start: 9:13 a.m.

Recess: 9:30 a.m.

HELD AT: COMMITTEE ROOM - CITY HALL

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

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Rita C. Joseph

Christopher Marte

Kristin Richardson Jordan

Rafael Salamanca, Jr.

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING:

Keith Powers

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: This is a microphone  
3 check for the Committee on Civil Rights recorded in  
4 the Committee Room on December 20, 2023, by Layla  
5 Lynch.

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning,  
7 everybody, and welcome to the Committee on Civil and  
8 Human Rights.

9 At this time, if you can please place  
10 phones on vibrate or silent mode. Thank you.

11 Chair, we are ready to begin.

12 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: [GAVEL] Good  
13 morning, everyone. My name is Nantasha Williams,  
14 Chair to the Committee on Civil and Human Rights.

15 Today, we will be voting on Proposed  
16 Intro 632-A sponsored by my Colleague, Majority  
17 Leader Keith Powers. If passed, this bill would  
18 prohibit housing discrimination on the basis of  
19 criminal history. It is no secret that finding  
20 housing in New York City is not an easy task. For the  
21 average New Yorker, this process is stressful and  
22 financially taxing. Those with prior justice  
23 involvement have to go through the same process but  
24 with an added concern of not knowing if their record  
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2 will be the reason a landlord rejects their  
3 application, even if they meet all required criteria.

4           In housing, discriminatory practices  
5 related to background checks often manifest when  
6 landlords use blanket policies, such as automatically  
7 disqualifying applicants with certain criminal  
8 records. This disproportionately affects minority  
9 communities, perpetuating housing disparities. The  
10 Housing and Urban Development estimates that around  
11 25 percent of Americans have a criminal record  
12 impacting their ability to secure housing. A study  
13 published this year by the Data Collaborative for  
14 Justice at John Jay College found that nearly 2.2  
15 million people have a criminal record of some kind,  
16 nearly 80 percent of which identify as black or  
17 Latino. The study also found that almost two thirds  
18 of people with convictions have not had a new  
19 conviction in over 10 years. While a statute exists  
20 that all New Yorkers to apply for their records to be  
21 sealed, depending on the type of conviction, less  
22 than 1 percent of those who are eligible have been  
23 able to successfully get their records sealed. Many  
24 of those individuals have families they are hoping to  
25 live with or provide for, but the struggle to find

2 housing can be a major roadblock, even if their loved  
3 ones do not have records of their own. A survey  
4 conducted by the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights  
5 found that 1 in 10 formerly incarcerated persons  
6 reported that their families were evicted when their  
7 loved one returned home from prison. The same report  
8 found that 79 percent of participants were denied  
9 housing due to their record or the record of a loved  
10 one, showing the effects of this type of housing  
11 discrimination even on those without a criminal  
12 history.

13           Finding stable, long-term housing is one  
14 of the most important factors for justice-involved  
15 individuals to successfully rebuild their lives and  
16 rejoin society. With this bill, I hope we can help  
17 many New Yorkers looking to turn their lives around  
18 and start fresh. The last hearing on this bill was  
19 quite contentious, and all of that didn't go in vain.  
20 I'm happy we are passing this bill today.

21           I'd like to thank my Staff and Committee  
22 Staff for their work on putting this vote together  
23 and also thank the Majority Leader for his  
24 leadership, and I'll now pass it over to him for some  
25 remarks on his bill.

2 MAJORITY LEADER POWERS: Thank you, and  
3 good morning, everyone, and thank you, Chair, for  
4 giving me an opportunity to give a brief statement on  
5 Intro. 632-A, the Fair Chance for Housing Act, which  
6 the Committee is voting on here today. I want to  
7 thank the Chair and 30 Colleagues who have signed on  
8 as co-sponsors to this legislation.

9 As the Chair noted, right now, most  
10 landlords are free to discriminate against potential  
11 tenants who have a criminal record of any kind, no  
12 matter how minor or no matter how long ago. Any New  
13 Yorker who has done their time and is working hard to  
14 rebuild their life deserves a second chance. It's a  
15 principle that many of us live our lives on. It's  
16 time that our laws reflect that and, with today's  
17 passage of Intro. 632-A, they finally will.

18 Stable housing is the foundation of a  
19 stable life and, without access to housing, formerly  
20 incarcerated people struggle to find employment,  
21 maintain their mental health and physical health, go  
22 back to school, and take care of their families.  
23 Roughly 750,000 New Yorkers have a conviction  
24 history, the vast majority of whom are people of  
25 color, and they and their families face a lifetime of

2 obstacles to housing. By removing barriers to  
3 housing, people are better able to support themselves  
4 and their families, lowering recidivism, and making  
5 our communities safer.

6           The version of this bill we're voting on  
7 today is a culmination of months of ongoing  
8 conversations and feedback we received from  
9 advocates, housing providers, and industry  
10 stakeholders, and I mean this with no exaggeration,  
11 this negotiation went to the very last minute. I'm  
12 sorry to the staff. I'm proud of the bill that we're  
13 voting on today, and I'd like to extend a sincere  
14 thank you to everyone, the stakeholders, the  
15 advocates who worked diligently to help get us here  
16 today, including the 100-plus member organizations in  
17 the Fair Chance for Housing Coalition. In particular,  
18 I'd like to shout out Lily Shapiro and Andre Ward  
19 from the Fortune Society and Alison Wilkey from  
20 Community Voices Heard for their hard work on this  
21 legislation also until the very end. I want to thank  
22 Speaker Adams for her leadership. I want to thank  
23 Committee Chair Nantasha Williams for her support and  
24 her thoughtful recommendations throughout this  
25 process. I want to thank the Central Staff and the

2 Committee Staff who worked very hard on this very  
3 important piece of legislation. I want to give a  
4 very, very big shoutout to Ben and Haley from my  
5 office who are here today who worked for months,  
6 maybe years at this point, on this legislation. I  
7 want to extend a very big shoutout to them for  
8 working diligently to make sure that every single  
9 detail was combed through and was attended to.

10 I'm very, very excited the Council is  
11 moving this bill forward today, and as the Chair  
12 said, happy that none of this went in vain and we  
13 worked very hard to help New Yorkers here today. I  
14 would ask all my Colleagues to vote in support of it  
15 and want to thank you in advance for your support.  
16 Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: All right. Now I'll  
18 ask the Clerk to call the roll.

19 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Good  
20 morning. William Martin, Committee Clerk. Roll call  
21 vote Committee on Civil and Human Rights on Proposed  
22 Introduction 632-A. Chair Williams.

23 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: I proudly vote aye.

24 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN:  
25 Salamanca. Joseph. Marte.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTE: Of course, I vote  
3 Aye. Congrats, Keith.

4 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN:  
5 Richardson Jordan.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDSON JORDAN: I vote  
7 aye.

8 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: With a  
9 vote of three in the affirmative, zero in the  
10 negative, and no abstentions. Item has been adopted  
11 by the Committee.

12 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: I'll hold it open  
13 for a few more minutes.

14 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN:  
15 Continuation roll call, Committee on Civil and Human  
16 Rights. Council Member Joseph.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Aye.

18 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Thank  
19 you. Vote is currently at four in the affirmative and  
20 will remain open.

21 Continuation roll call, Committee on  
22 Civil and Human Rights. Council Member Salamanca.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Aye on all.

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2 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Final  
3 vote is now five in the affirmative, zero on the  
4 negative, no abstentions.

5 Madam Chair, that is a full Committee.

6 CHAIRPERSON WILLIAMS: Thank you so much.  
7 This hearing is ended. [GAVEL]

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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 December 23, 2023