

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

-----X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON CIVIL SERVICE AND LABOR

-----X

November 28, 2012
Start: 1:19 p.m.
Recess: 2:16 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers
City Hall

B E F O R E: MELISSA MARK-VIVERITO
Acting Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
James F. Gennaro
Melissa Mark-Viverito
Michael C. Nelson
Domenic M. Recchia, Jr.
Larry B. Seabrook
Eric A. Ulrich

APPEARANCES (CONTINUED)

Michelle Holder
Senior Labor Market Analyst
Community Service Society of New York

Christine Deska
Sr. Program Specialist
AARP

Michele D'Amato
Program Director
SAGEWorks

William Larmer
Concerned Citizen

Shaniqua Wuzoo
New York Academy of Medicine

ACTING CHAIRPERSON MARK-VIVERITO:

I'd like to welcome everyone and say good afternoon. Thank you for being here today. I'm Council member Melissa Mark-Viverito. I am filling in for the chair of the Committee on Civil Service and Labor, James Sanders, who is taking care of an urgent family matter and could not be here with us today he sends his regrets and we do wish him the best. I want to first give a quick reminder that the Council is now webcasting hearings live and recordings of hearings will be available on our website. Today we are discussing Resolution number 353, which calls upon employers in New York City to hire more workers over the age of 55. Approximately one million or 12 percent of New York City residents are over the age of 60, a figure that is also projected to increase by 50 percent in the next 20 years. This is due to the demographic change, due to the increased longevity of Americans and the baby boomer generation reaching traditional retirement age. As Americans live longer, many want to or need to stay in the labor market beyond traditional retirement age. Unemployment among New Yorkers over the age of 55

1 who wish to be in the labor market is a
2 significant challenge in the city. People age 55
3 to 64 make up 15.1 percent of the total labor
4 force nationwide, and make up 11.2 percent of the
5 total unemployed population nationwide. The
6 unemployment rate of people ages 55 to 64 is about
7 5.9 percent, and although the unemployment for
8 this population mirrors national trends, it is
9 more troublesome for older people due to the
10 staggering duration of unemployment. As of July
11 2011, the average length of time it takes an
12 American 55 years old or older to find employment
13 is 52.7 weeks compared to 36.5 weeks for people
14 under the age of 55. So the resolution that we
15 are discussing here today would urge businesses
16 and encourage businesses to look at ways that they
17 can hire New Yorkers over the age of 55.

18 Obviously, these are for New York City businesses.
19 I want to say that we have been joined by Council
20 Member James Gennaro and I want to thank the
21 Committee staff, - - Carlin, our counsel and Faith
22 Corbett, our policy analyst for being here today
23 and for working on this hearing. And as people
24 may know, we are going to ask the witnesses to
25

1
2 come and speak, but this Council has been very
3 committed and dedicated to our aging population in
4 the city of New York through the leadership of our
5 Aging Committee and Council Member Jessica Lappin
6 and our speaker, Christine Quinn. I am working in
7 partnership with New York Academy of Medicine and
8 other institutions. We have been very supportive
9 of the idea of how do we plan a better city, and
10 how do we prepare and encourage people to
11 understand that as people age in the city, we have
12 got to really be supported, whether it's
13 infrastructure or whether it's policy changes to
14 really helping those that are aging in place and
15 aging in New York City, so with that, I think we
16 have a short panel—well, there's two panels that
17 we will do. I would encourage those that are here
18 today to speak and to provide testimony. We will
19 start off—we will do panels of two. We are going
20 to start off Michelle Holder from Community
21 Service Society and then Christine Deska from the
22 AARP, and so, I don't know if our colleague,
23 Council Member Gennaro, would like to say anything
24 before.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER GENNARO: Maybe NYAM

1
2 would, Madam Chair. I recently turned 55, so this
3 is relevant to me. I am grateful to have a job.

4 CHAIRPERSON MARK-VIVERITO:

5 Alright. So, with that, anyone feel free to
6 decide who speaks first, and feel free to start
7 your testimony. If you could turn on the mic, I
8 think there is a button on the back of the mic. -
9 - .

10 CHRISTINA DESKA: Good afternoon.

11 There we go. I'm probably loud enough not to need
12 this, but - - . Thank you so much. I'm Christine
13 Deska. I'm with AARP New York. Beth Finkel
14 [phonetic] was originally going to testify this
15 afternoon. Unfortunately, she was called away, so
16 here I am. Thank you, Council Member Mark-
17 Viverito and Council Member and gentlemen. Thank
18 you for having us. So since I'm first I was going
19 to skip through some of the statistics, but I
20 think it's important to point them out. So AARP
21 has about 800,000 members in New York City, 2.5
22 million in New York State. We appreciate the
23 opportunity to offer comments on Resolution number
24 1352, a resolution calling upon employers in New
25 York City to hire more workers over 55 years of

1
2 age. Now some people wonder why does AARP care
3 about older workers? It's probably not a surprise
4 to those of us in this room, but the fact is 1/3
5 of our members are still in the workforce, so this
6 resolution happens to hit on two key dynamics at
7 play now for us in New York City and across the
8 country. The first is the economy, and the second
9 is demographics, and I think I heard the tail end
10 of some of the statistics you were mentioning as
11 you came in. Older workers are often unemployed
12 longer than younger workers. The average is 57.7
13 weeks—over a year. It's 20 weeks less for younger
14 workers. I also want to mention that though
15 unemployment is difficult for all workers, for
16 older workers there is a special challenge. They
17 don't have as many years ahead of them as older
18 workers to build their savings vehicles or 401k or
19 whatever that might be, so we are here to make the
20 point that this is not only a smart business
21 decision, it is also smart for the economy. Why
22 is that? There is evidence that society as a
23 whole is better off if more people work past
24 retirement age. For starters, delaying retirement
25 could ease pressure on Social Security, Medicare,

1
2 and other social programs. For many older persons
3 remaining in the workforce helps people stay
4 engaged and that helps them stay healthy. If you
5 have got a paycheck, you are a consumer of goods
6 and services and that is good for the economy as
7 well. In 2005, AARP commissioned a - - study that
8 concluded that employers could save as much as 3
9 percent in average per employee compensation costs
10 by doubling the retention rate of mature
11 employees. So I will try to breeze through the
12 other statistics, but we have all heard these. I
13 think we hear them often in the news. By 2020, 35
14 percent of the total U.S. workforce will be 50
15 plus. The highest rate is in the 65 to 74 age
16 group, and a whopping 83.4 percent increase is
17 projected between 2010 and 2020. The second
18 highest growth rate group is the 75 plus. It's
19 worth point out. So these two groups will be
20 about 12 million workers age 65 plus by 2020.
21 AARP has recently launched something—a soft
22 launch—for something called Work Reimagined. It's
23 the first talent exchange dedicated to helping
24 companies find experienced workers and to help
25 experienced professionals connect to more

1 satisfying careers. You can find it at
2 workreimagined.org. It's a social media platform
3 powered by LinkedIn. It's quite exciting. A key
4 component of Work Reimagined is the existing
5 relationships AARP has with hundreds of reputable
6 employers, including past winners of our best
7 employers for workers over 50 award and providers
8 of AARP member benefits. More than 150
9 organizations from a variety of industries have
10 signed on and are excited about Work Reimagined.
11 Our list of partners includes AT&T, Google, The
12 Hartford, MetLife, United Health Group, Harvard
13 University, Toys 'R Us, Lowe's, and countless
14 other local and national companies, including 11
15 from New York State. The Work Reimagined site
16 shows their logos and you can also go on LinkedIn
17 and find out more. There's a Work Reimagined
18 pledge we are urging companies everywhere to sign.
19 The pledge simply says we believe in equal
20 opportunity for all workers regardless of age and
21 that 50 plus workers should have a level playing
22 field in their ability to compete for and obtain
23 jobs. Recognizing the value of experienced
24 workers, we pledge to recruit across diverse age
25

1
2 groups and to consider all applicants on an equal
3 basis as we hire for positions within our
4 organization. I would like to take this
5 opportunity to encourage the city of New York as
6 an employer and other businesses in New York City
7 to take the opportunity to sign the AARP Work
8 Reimagined Pledge. You can follow up with us
9 later and we can let you know how that can happen.
10 In conclusion, obviously AARP supports Resolution
11 1352, a resolution calling upon employers in New
12 York City to hire more workers over 55 years of
13 age. We hope you will give this resolution all
14 due consideration and report this matter out
15 favorably, so that it can stand before the full
16 Council for a vote. Changes in our economy and a
17 demographic shift necessitate the need for
18 employers to consider policies that take into
19 account the benefits of employing older workers.
20 The passage of Resolution 1352 will help reinforce
21 the importance of older workers to employers in
22 New York City. Thank you again.

23 MICHELLE HOLDER: Hi. Good
24 afternoon, Council Members. My name is Michelle
25 Holder. I am the senior labor market analyst for

1
2 the Community Service Society of New York. I
3 thank you for this opportunity to testify on
4 behalf of CSS. CSS is a 168 year old organization
5 that works to advance upward mobility for low
6 income New Yorkers through research, advocacy for
7 systemic change, litigation and launching models.
8 We wanted to provide testimony at this important
9 hearing because in our recently published report
10 women, blacks and older workers struggle in post-
11 recession New York City. We highlighted the fact
12 that older New Yorkers are facing an especially
13 tough time if they become unemployed. This is a
14 copy of the report. I actually authored it, and
15 I'd be happy to give you this one copy I have with
16 me. If you need additional, I'd be happy to send
17 that to you. In this report that I wrote we
18 outlined a scope of particularly long term
19 unemployment in the city from 2009 to 2011 and
20 found that women ages 55 to 64, who lost their
21 jobs, remained out of work longer than any other
22 demographic group. Specifically older women were
23 jobless an average of 49 weeks. This is New York
24 City. Almost a year. Older women tend to hold
25 middle income jobs and the problem has been that

1 recent job creation and efforts to attract jobs to
2 New York City has been concentrated in either the
3 low wage service sector or high skilled fields
4 like high tech, while mid skill level jobs
5 continue to shrink. As an example, the massive
6 layoffs government sector jobs particularly
7 municipal jobs in the last few years. In
8 addition, men ages 55 to 64 years old saw a drop
9 of nearly five percentage points in their labor
10 force participation rate from 69.2 percent in 2009
11 to 64.3 percent in 2011. The labor force
12 participation rate tells us the degree of a
13 group's attachment to the labor force. It
14 measures those who either have a job or are
15 actively looking for one as a percent of the
16 working age population. Some of these older men
17 who lost jobs during the recent deep recession may
18 never be able to regain jobs again and will have
19 left the labor force permanently. Even if
20 unemployed persons over 55 years of age are able
21 to obtain employment, sometimes they find
22 themselves in the position of having to accept
23 part time work; however, too often part time jobs
24 don't provide needed benefits like health
25

1
2 insurance or paid sick time off-- benefits that
3 older workers in particular really need. CSS
4 hopes that the Council will use all tools and
5 options available to it to ensure that older
6 workers are not left permanently behind in post-
7 recession New York City, including the - - tool
8 that is at the disposal of the Council. Thank
9 you.

10 CHAIRPERSON MARK-VIVERITO: thank
11 you very much for your testimony. We have also
12 been joined by Council Member Mike Nelson. I have
13 a couple of questions actually, and I know I think
14 Council Member Nelson does as well, but looking at
15 the AARP testimony, when you take about this Work
16 Reimagined website, how long have has it been
17 available?

18 CHRISTINE DESKA: Just a couple of
19 months. It self-launched, so it became live and
20 we wanted to sort of see if there was a ground
21 swell around it, and it's very new.

22 CHAIRPERSON MARK-VIVERITO: So are
23 you looking to-understand and obviously knowing
24 how many people have been maybe placed because
25 they have been encouraged through the

1
2 participation in this website or—I mean, are you
3 going to be able to track that in the future? Is
4 that the intent?

5 CHRISTINE DESKA: Absolutely.

6 CHAIRPERSON MARK-VIVERITO:

7 Definitely I think that that is an interesting
8 idea obviously and would be encouraged. We not
9 only want to encourage businesses to look at
10 employing people 55 years of age or older, what
11 tools exist to kind of facilitate that, right, and
12 then also with regards to the testimony from CSS
13 you mentioned specifically when it comes to older
14 women that they tend to hold middle income jobs
15 and then obviously that's something that some of
16 us has have been criticizing that the emphasis in
17 job creation right now seems to be at least to New
18 York City on these low wage jobs, and we really
19 are losing kind of the emphasis on creating more
20 stable middle income jobs. Is there any aspect of
21 maybe stigma involved as well in terms of older
22 women having a harder time being employed? Does
23 that play any role? Did you find that in any or
24 is there any way of really measuring that?

25 MICHELLE HOLDER: It's difficult to

1
2 measure because that would be ageism, right? So
3 that is something that has been researched.
4 Economists have done it, but it is difficult in
5 terms of the data that I look at to determine
6 whether or not ageism and discrimination is going
7 on. You can infer that, so if you look at the
8 unemployment rates for say Latinas or African
9 Americans and you see that it is higher than
10 whites, one can infer that maybe discrimination is
11 going on, but you can't say that definitively
12 unless you use a whole bevy of other economic
13 tools to determine whether or not, yes,
14 discrimination is going on. My report did the
15 basic stuff, so it looked at the unemployment
16 rates. It looked at the labor force participation
17 rates. It looked at employment population ratios.
18 It looked at the sectors hiring these folks, but
19 it didn't go beyond that to look at whether or not
20 indeed ageism is going on. Do I think it is?
21 Yes, I do. Also, because of the fact that older
22 workers when they lose their jobs at least in New
23 York City tend to be out of work longer. There is
24 this I wouldn't call it phenomenon, but the longer
25 one is unemployed, the harder it is to then get

1
2 employment, so there is certainly discrimination
3 going on against long term unemployed, and long
4 term unemployment is disproportionately affecting
5 older workers, so there is a correlation there,
6 but as an economist, I would need more search to
7 say this is ageism. Do I suspect that it's it?
8 Of course I do.

9 CHAIRPERSON MARK-VIVERITO: Right,
10 and I would figure it is harder to measure. I
11 guess also part of it could be asking people when
12 they do go for interviews—although you're not
13 supposed to; ageism is illegal, but still
14 sometimes in conversations and in interviews, the
15 interviewers say things that kind of like are
16 inappropriate or that kind of would infer that
17 they are not getting the job because they are
18 older, et cetera. That is also part of it, but
19 that is a whole different level of analysis. I
20 know that Council Member Nelson had a question. I
21 may have another one.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER NELSON: Thank you,
23 Madam Chair. Good afternoon. Is there any
24 men/women ratio over 55 years old/percentage wise
25 as far as between men and women? Is there like 55

1

2 is at 55 percent men, 45 percent women or
3 whatever?

4

5

MICHELLE HOLDER: You mean in terms
of the makeup of the labor force?

6

7

COUNCIL MEMBER NELSON: Yes. Do
you have any stats like that?

8

9

10

CHRISTINE DESKA: I'm sure I could
find something. I don't know if I have it right
here.

11

12

13

14

MICHELLE HOLDER: I will say that
men outnumber women in the labor force in general,
but for that age group, yeah, we could probably
both see what the proportion is. Yeah.

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

COUNCIL MEMBER NELSON: - - we know
it's 50/50, but unlikely as you're indicating.
Any illnesses - - days off stats ratio between
those over 55 and those under 55? Like do the 55
year olds and up have let's say only 5 percent
absentee rate - - or something while younger has
maybe the same 5 percent?

22

23

MICHELLE HOLDER: Yeah, that's not
data that we looked at.

24

25

COUNCIL MEMBER NELSON: That would
be very interesting. It's a selling point-

1
2 CHRISTINE DESKA: [interposing] I
3 can comment that--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER NELSON: --if that
5 plays out in favor for the - - .

6 CHRISTINE DESKA: In 2010, we ran
7 an older workers symposium and I can't recall I
8 think it was human resources for Deloitte that we
9 had on the panel, and that was one of the major
10 myths they identified. In fact, older workers do
11 not--is that what you're asking, right?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER NELSON: Yes.

13 CHRISTINE DESKA: Take more time
14 off than younger workers. That was a myth, so I
15 can follow up and send the materials from the--it
16 was May 2010, we had a symposium.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER NELSON: I was
18 hoping that was the case that there might be
19 actually less despite the fact that they're older
20 and there may be other medical issues and
21 concerns. - - I believe I have a better
22 attendance record in my older days. A tummy ache
23 might have kept me out of work when I was younger,
24 but it won't anymore. Just finally what can the
25 Council do the encourage and facilitate the hiring

1
2 of such workers over 55 besides obviously the
3 reso. Anything else?

4 CHRISTINE DESKA: I'm sure I will
5 follow up with a few bullets, but offhand, just
6 based on what I have had in front of me today and
7 the late notice in which I received it, I would
8 say you could sign our Work Reimagined pledge as
9 soon as you are able to.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER NELSON: My feeling
11 has always been that people who are more mature
12 are more experienced, educated, disciplined,
13 appreciative, thus more productive, but I'd like
14 to have stats to back some of this up. I
15 appreciate your testimony. Thank you, Madam
16 Chair.

17 CHAIRPERSON MARK-VIVERITO: Thank
18 you, Council Member. And I guess maybe that is
19 something that I would ask also NYAM because I
20 know they have been doing a lot of work, and I
21 know there is testimony coming, but to the extent
22 that there is either kind of like a roundtable or
23 any sort of conversations happening
24 collaboratively between the groups that are doing
25 any sort of type of work with our seniors trading

1 mechanisms or tools, et cetera, you know that
2 would encourage businesses. Like okay, a business
3 says that they want to look at this or make this a
4 commitment like how else can we guide them, right,
5 through that process and encouraging them to get
6 there as well, whether it's through their human
7 resources department, et cetera, if there is
8 additional training that has to happen, so I'm now
9 wondering if there is any sort of collective
10 effort that is happening around that, so I'm just
11 wondering. I know that's probably a question I
12 would leave for NYAM, but anything that you can
13 respond to in that sense or you haven't—you're not
14 really participating in sort of a collective
15 effort that you are aware of?

17 MICHELLE HOLDER: Well, I mean the
18 one effort that we have at CSS in terms of senior
19 employment is actually it's a volunteer program,
20 so these people are highly motivated because they
21 have decided to give up their time without the
22 benefit of a wage. It's the oldest program in the
23 city. It's the RSVP program, retired seniors
24 volunteer program. We have lots of seniors that
25 participate. I don't know if there are any

1
2 lessons that could be learned from that model
3 because again, it's a volunteer one, but that's—

4 CHRISTINE DESKA: We have AARP
5 foundation work search sites throughout the city.
6 It's a program that helps older workers become
7 accustomed to the online job search if they have
8 been out of work for the first time perhaps, and
9 haven't gone through it in that manner, but I
10 think with regard to your question of encouraging
11 businesses, I think and I hope to see a lot more
12 of that here locally once Work Reimagined gets on
13 its feet and so, we will certainly be in touch
14 with the Council because that's working directly
15 with businesses to encourage them and pressure
16 them to keep us in the forefront of their minds.

17 CHAIRPERSON MARK-VIVERITO: Right,
18 and I like the fact that you are like encouraging
19 us as a city to also look at maybe signing that
20 pledge and being part of that Work Reimagined, so
21 I'm sure that is something—I see Council Member
22 Jessica Lappin's staff person here—so maybe that
23 is something that we can talk about. Thank you
24 very much for your testimony. So we will move on
25 the second and last panel. It's going to be three

1
2 people, so we will get William Larmer [phonetic]
3 from SAGE, Michele D'Amato from SAGE and then
4 Shaniqua - - from NYAM. So feel free to
5 determine who will speak first, and...

6 MICHELE D'AMATO: Good afternoon,
7 distinguished members of the Committee. My name
8 is Michele D'Amato, I am the SAGEWorks program
9 manager at services and advocacy for gay, lesbian,
10 bi-sexual and transgender elders, SAGE. SAGE has
11 provided comprehensive social services and
12 community building programs for LGBT older adults
13 in New York City for more than 30 years. Thank
14 you for holding this hearing on Resolution number
15 1352, calling upon employers in New York City to
16 hire more workers over 55 years of age. In New
17 York City, the number of workers in the labor
18 force who are 55 and older has increased steadily
19 from 29.9 percent in 1993 to 40.4 in 2009. With a
20 slowly recovering economy, the recently released
21 census figures for 2011 show that poverty rates
22 for older adults in New York City has also
23 increased from 17.2 percent to 19 percent over the
24 year before. Given these facts and the increasing
25 numbers in the older adult population, it is clear

1
2 that the number of older adults looking to remain
3 in or reenter the workforce will continue to rise.
4 With the surge in older workers, we must look
5 closely at the barriers that hold that older
6 people face when seeking employment--challenges
7 such as age discrimination, which studies show
8 begins as early as age 40, lack of training in new
9 technology in industries and a disconnection from
10 employment networks can extend the job search
11 process and deepen the economic insecurity of
12 unemployed older adults. Lesbian, gay, bi-sexual
13 and transgender older adults are part of the
14 cohort of older job seekers, who may be overlooked
15 by employers and for whom job training and
16 employment opportunities are absolutely critical.
17 Like many elder job seekers, LGBT older adults
18 seek employment to support themselves as they age,
19 yet LGBT older adults face particular financial
20 and social challenges that could compound their
21 need for employment. LGBT older people are twice
22 as likely to live alone and half as likely to be
23 partnered than their heterosexual counterparts
24 meaning that many LGBT older adults are at risk
25 for social isolation. Further, LGBT older people

1
2 are more likely to experience economic insecurity
3 or poverty as they age due to past experiences of
4 workplace discrimination and unequal access to
5 federal safety net programs. Based on limited
6 demographic data, we estimate that there are
7 between 12,000 and 24,000 LGBT elders living in
8 poverty in New York City alone. Indeed 35 percent
9 of New York City SAGE constituents live on \$10,000
10 a year or less and an additional 35 percent live
11 on \$20,000 or less. Clearly, many LGBT older
12 adults need stronger financial supports and would
13 benefit from employment income. They also stand
14 to benefit greatly from the intangible advantages
15 of participation in the workforce such as
16 increased social connectedness and mental
17 engagement. Given the need for workforce supports
18 for LGBT older adults, SAGE launched the SAGEWorks
19 program in 2010. SAGEWorks is a workforce
20 development program for LGBT people age 40 and
21 older that seeks to improve the economic security
22 and overall wellness of LGBT older people through
23 employment training, skills development, and
24 access to employment resources and networks. The
25 SAGEWorks program begins with a work skills

1
2 assessment and offers participants tailored
3 trainings on computers and technology, resume
4 writing and interview preparation. SAGEWorks also
5 provides opportunities for employment referrals
6 through our comprehensive network of community and
7 business partners. Through this network, we seek
8 to place SAGEWorks participants at jobs where they
9 could earn a living and be in an environment where
10 they don't feel they must go back into the closet
11 to be comfortable in the workplace. We launched
12 SAGEWorks in New York City in 2010 and the program
13 has celebrated a number of achievements over the
14 past two years. We are an AARP certified work
15 search site and have partner with OATS, Older
16 Adults Technology Services, Reserve and a number
17 of other community partners to continually expand
18 the training and resources available to older and
19 LGBT job seekers. As the manager of this program,
20 I have seen how job security has an incredibly
21 stabilizing effect on the lives of our
22 participants, who find employment. Employment
23 offers not only economic security, but their new
24 roles in the workplace helps SAGEWorks
25 participants feel more confident, more empowered

1
2 and positively affects their physical and mental
3 well-being. I know firsthand that employment
4 supports the lives of older adults in countless
5 ways. As SAGEWorks evolves, we see opportunities
6 for growth and collaboration ahead. Though our
7 program alone cannot solve the problems of
8 workplace discrimination related to age, sexual
9 orientation or gender identity, there are clear
10 benefits in sustaining a dialogue with employers
11 about how these types of bias negatively impact
12 employees and business overall. We welcome the
13 opportunity to work with the City Council to
14 strengthen education and employment programs
15 targeted toward LGBT and other marginalized older
16 workers. We also urge employers city-wide to
17 recognize the skills and the strengths that all
18 older workers can contribute. The older adult
19 population represents an enormously talented and
20 experienced pool of workers and we are hopeful
21 that their skills and their participation in
22 programs such as SAGEWorks will provide them with
23 numerous opportunities in the years ahead. I
24 thank you for your time and attention to these
25 important concerns.

1
2 WILLIAM LARMER: Thank you. Can
3 you hear me okay? Actually, I'm an older gay
4 adult looking for a job, so this is really
5 appropriate. Distinguished members of the
6 Committee, my name is William Larmer, and it is a
7 pleasure for me to address the Council on an issue
8 that is of great importance, not only to me
9 personally, but for my generation—the baby
10 boomers. I used the word blooming because I feel
11 I am just beginning to bloom at the young age of
12 64. Excuse me?

13 [background conversation]

14 WILLIAM LARMER: Thanks. Thanks.
15 My 40 plus years of working in the highly
16 competitive fashion industry gave me a lifetime of
17 valuable experiences as well as my share of
18 challenges. When Michele D'Amato first approached
19 me with the opportunity to be present for this
20 hearing, I immediately said yes. It was after
21 hanging up the phone that I wondered why did I
22 jump at this opportunity with so much enthusiasm?
23 I realized that it was because this hearing has
24 given me today a real purpose and having a purpose
25 at any age is of vital importance. Employment

1
2 offers people purpose and an ability not only to
3 earn money, but to feel challenged by working and
4 to contribute to society. What I enjoyed most
5 about my last job was working with the young
6 designers and sharing my knowledge with them.
7 True, working with designers younger than myself
8 presented challenges—any job does—but I could
9 still rely on the technical skills I learned
10 throughout my career. Years ago at some point in
11 my career, I noticed that the design positions
12 that were open to me in my 20s and 30s now seemed
13 closed to me. These jobs were going to a younger
14 generation, and I began to see how age
15 discrimination can play out in various ways
16 throughout a career. I felt fortunate to work in
17 a career where being a gay man was actually seen
18 as an asset and I never experienced this type of
19 job discrimination that many of my LGBT friends
20 working in other fields experienced. At age 40 to
21 help my career, I went back to school and got a
22 degree as an Associates of Applied Science in
23 fashion design at FIT. I had the wonderful
24 opportunity to study in Florence, Italy in
25 production design and Renaissance Art. Then 11

1
2 years ago, I learned how to use a computer. I
3 think I was the last person on the planet that
4 did. And just three years ago, I was at FIT
5 taking two computer courses to make me more
6 competitive to the demands of my industry. I met
7 many other older men and women who were doing the
8 same thing. Even with all of these skills and all
9 of my experience, I found that in my 50s I had to
10 reinvent myself in my field to book more jobs. I
11 moved out of fashion design and into production.
12 In doing so, I took a drastic cut in salary and
13 basically started from a new beginning in
14 production. As years went on, I went to job
15 interviews and began to hear potential employers
16 tell me you are overqualified. Somehow employers
17 began to interpret my skills and years of
18 experience not as an asset, but as a liability.
19 After more than 20 interviews, it was hard for me
20 not to come to the conclusion that age played a
21 part in the hiring decisions. That was a very sad
22 revelation. What I feel we all love about New
23 York City is its energy though at one time I
24 questioned whether New York would be the place for
25 me as I got older, certainly my experiences

1
2 working in one of New York's most valued
3 industries was irreplaceable, but I questioned
4 whether there are enough supports in place for
5 aging working workers like myself. That is why I
6 am here today—to help support any efforts where
7 older New Yorkers can be on a level playing field
8 with our younger counterparts. I am now happier
9 than I have been at any other time because I am
10 doing all the things that I love—pottery and
11 writing classes and taking advantage of all of the
12 wonderful benefits that New York City offers, but
13 the reality is that I continue to need an income
14 to provide for myself. This past year has brought
15 new challenges and a life transition as I have
16 been going through the process of retirement.
17 SAGE and SAGEWorks have been of the utmost support
18 to me. SAGE has always provided a safe and
19 supportive environment that it was only by
20 participating in so many of their programs that I
21 realized I was not alone in my challenge to find
22 ways to support myself. So many of my
23 contemporaries had the same financial needs and
24 the same desires to contribute as I do. Drive and
25 ambition do not go away with age. All we are

1
2 asking for is an opportunity to continue to be
3 able to be dependent to take care of ourselves
4 financially, maintain our dignity and to be able
5 to use our skills learned over a lifetime to
6 contribute. My skills and work ethic have only
7 gotten stronger as I have gotten older and any
8 potential employer could benefit. One thing I
9 have learned and I am sure you will agree is that
10 my generation, we don't give up and we are
11 stronger than ever. Thank you for this
12 opportunity.

13 SHANIQUA WUZOO: Good afternoon.
14 Members of the Civil Service and Labor Committee
15 and Council Member Mark-Viverito, thank you for
16 your time today and for the opportunity to
17 testify. My name is Shaniqua Wuzoo [phonetic],
18 and I am representing the New York Academy of
19 Medicine, where I manage the age friendly commerce
20 portfolio, which is comprised of initiatives that
21 address older adults as workers, entrepreneurs,
22 and consumers. NYAM has been advancing the health
23 of people and cities since 1847. An independent
24 organization, the Academy addresses the health
25 challenges facing the world's urban populations

1 through interdisciplinary approaches to research,
2 education, community engagement and policy
3 leadership. Our current priorities include
4 creating environments that support healthy aging,
5 strengthening systems that prevent disease and
6 promotes public health and working to eliminate
7 health disparities. Since 2007, NYAM has
8 partnered with the mayor's office and the City
9 Council in the Age Friendly NYC initiative, which
10 is dedicated to educating all sectors about the
11 vital roles played by older adults in our city and
12 encouraging the inclusion of age awareness into
13 normal planning and operation of all sectors. We
14 applaud the fact that the City Council is
15 highlighting the importance of older adults in the
16 workforce. The issue of older workers has been on
17 our agenda for several years. NYAM has
18 investigated the experiences and perspective of
19 older adults, including people who are working,
20 looking for work and not looking for work and
21 employers throughout New York City both before and
22 during the recession. During 2007 through 2008,
23 NYAM conducted focus groups, individual interviews
24 and community forums of more than 2,000 older New
25

1
2 Yorkers from a wide range of socio economic
3 backgrounds about key issues including employment.
4 In 2008, NYAM also conducted roundtable
5 discussions with New York City business experts to
6 investigate attitudes, practices and policies
7 related to older adults as employees. Last year
8 NYAM in partnership with AARP and the Bill and
9 Melinda Gates Foundation co-sponsored an all-day
10 symposium on employment in the aging workforce
11 called preparing an aging workforce. The
12 symposium included presentations by experts on
13 labor force projections, employer perspectives and
14 trends in higher as well as frank discussions
15 between older adults and New York City based
16 employment experts about key obstacles and
17 potential strategies. Currently, NYAM is
18 conducting interviews with leading New York City
19 businesses about the multi-generational workforce.
20 Many older adults have consistently reported that
21 they want and/or need to work, but face
22 significant barriers to reentering the workforce,
23 remaining competitive within their chosen field or
24 company, and managing work life transitions
25 related to caretaking responsibilities, functional

1
2 limitations and/or retirement. Even in pre-
3 recession 2007 many New Yorkers of retirement age
4 found the prospect of full retirement neither
5 financially viable, not personally desirable. For
6 some, financial concerns were primary and
7 reflected the erosion of worker friendly policies
8 and savings that were limited or declining in
9 value. Even for those who did not feel financial
10 pressure to work, employment was central to their
11 identity and feelings of self-worth and allowed
12 them to stay socially connected. We spoke with
13 older adults who were delighted to be retired from
14 paid employment, though many spoke of the desire
15 to give back via community or civic engagement or
16 simply by helping friends and neighbors. We also
17 found important variations in the kinds of
18 challenges that older New Yorkers faced. For
19 example, for those employed doing manual labor,
20 especially those paid hourly functional
21 limitations threatened their ability to maintain
22 their earning levels. For many the lack of
23 adequate computer skills and/or access to training
24 to a major barrier to remaining competitive on the
25 job or even applying for jobs. Ageism was

1 frequently described as an obstacle to continued
2 or new employment. The view from business experts
3 was somewhat more complex. In the consultations
4 held prior to the recession some experts expressed
5 concern about the potential exit of older adults
6 from the workplace and worried about how to
7 replace specific knowledge or skillsets,
8 experience, institutional memory and excellent
9 work ethic. Other acknowledged struggling with
10 how to effectively recruit and train older
11 workers, accommodate the changing needs of older
12 employees, restructure benefits to support more
13 flexibility, facilitate better relationships
14 between multiple generations within the workforce,
15 involve older workers in design and creative
16 strategies to address business challenges and
17 create mechanisms that maximize mentoring and the
18 sharing of knowledge between generations of
19 workers; however, since the recession
20 conversations with employers reflect a significant
21 change in attitudes. Employers do not now feel
22 compelled to make efforts to retain or to hire
23 older workers because of the surplus of highly
24 qualified younger workers. Unfortunately, ageism
25

1
2 combined with the lack of research demonstrating
3 older workers' productivity and the limited
4 visibility of highly effective older workers make
5 it even less likely that older workers will be
6 prioritized in this difficult economy. Reports
7 since 2009 have shown that displaced older workers
8 remain unemployed for far longer periods than
9 younger workers, and as was already detailed on
10 the panels. It is in the self-interest of
11 companies to maximize the role and productivity of
12 older workers. Through our local business
13 initiative which is an educational outreach
14 program designed to raise awareness among
15 businesses about the growing size of the older
16 adult consumer market, we have found that many
17 businesses have not yet recognized the value of
18 the older adult consumer base. Savvy businesses
19 know that customers like to see themselves
20 represented in the businesses they frequent. They
21 want their staff to reflect their customers, which
22 itself becomes a strong reason to have an age
23 diverse workforce. We recognize that there is a
24 need to help businesses identify the most
25 effective practices to recruit, train and utilize

1
2 older employees. For example, at the symposium
3 last year employment specialists discussed how
4 many older adults are not conversant with the new
5 ways of job hunting. The days of mailing in
6 resume are almost totally gone. Much of today's
7 job searches and applications are conducted
8 online. The drug store chain CVS realized that
9 many of their older customers would relate well to
10 older employees and so they developed special
11 recruitment strategies to attract older adults,
12 but many older adults were not able to navigate
13 their online application system, so CVS set up a
14 special pre-application training session for
15 potential applicants. It was a win-win approach
16 providing computer training to older adults and
17 increasing their pool of attractive employee
18 candidates. Their example provides a kind of
19 documented successful practices that other
20 businesses may be able to adopt to suit their own
21 needs. Therefore, we believe that the most
22 effective strategy to promote businesses to
23 recruit and retrain older workers is to reward
24 businesses that proactively create good
25 environments for workers of all ages facilitated

1
2 by older workers. As such, the Sloan Foundation
3 has funded NYAM to develop and implement the Sloan
4 award for age friendly workplaces in New York
5 City. We think an evidence based awards program
6 will demonstrate the value of older workers,
7 identify best practices and provide documented
8 examples and offer a practical checklist to
9 informed business practices will help change a
10 discourse around older workers from why should I
11 to what is the best way that helps my business?
12 Our intention is not only to provide an evidence
13 based compendium of practices for businesses, but
14 also to use the awards program as a means of
15 generating new practices and tracking the success
16 of initiatives. We need to build knowledge in
17 this area. Our work will address many aspects
18 relevant to older employees, including
19 recruitment, retention, knowledge transfer and
20 training; however, the issue of older workers must
21 be addressed in the context of the increasing
22 multi-generational workplace. Today it has become
23 increasingly common for four even five generations
24 to work side by side. This change carries some
25 new challenges for organizations to address as

1 well as new opportunities for creative
2 collaboration. Rather than going by generational
3 stereotypes and possible biases, it is important
4 for businesses to create workplace cultures that
5 support cross generation collaboration. NYAM's
6 administration of the awards program will begin
7 with the development of an evidence based
8 compendium of current practices and
9 characteristics of age friendly workplaces, which
10 will then serve as the basis for the application
11 guidelines and evaluations. This phase is
12 currently underway is being guided by a research
13 advisory panel comprised of leading experts in the
14 field and led by James Parrott of the Fiscal
15 Policy Institute. The formal announcement of the
16 award guidelines along with public presentation of
17 the report will be held in Spring of 2013.
18 Businesses will be able to begin submitting
19 applications at this time. An expert advisory
20 panel consisting of business leaders and experts
21 in workplace management practices will guide the
22 process and serve as judges for the final
23 awardees. Awards will be presented in October
24 2013. Additionally NYAM will produce and
25

1
2 disseminate tools and products to help businesses
3 make their workplaces more age friendly. Thank
4 you for your time today.

5 CHAIRPERSON MARK-VIVERITO: Thank
6 you very much to the three that are providing
7 testimony. I just want to recognize that we were
8 joined earlier by Council Member Recchia. We have
9 been joined by Council Member Ulrich. I thank you
10 for being here. And I wanted to just say Mr.
11 Larmer, I really appreciate your testimony. It
12 was really touching and it was very moving, so
13 it's always great to hear firsthand experience on
14 these issues and to talk about the challenges and
15 also what the benefits are of having workplaces
16 that are more inclusive in many different ways, so
17 thank you very much for that. I wanted to ask a
18 very specific question with regards to Ms.
19 D'Amato, your testimony. I was just curious about
20 how the SAGEWorks, if you could talk a little bit
21 more about how it is structured and what do you
22 include in it because it sounds like it is a
23 really great program, and then how many-if you
24 have any idea of how many people you have worked
25 with through the programs since you initiated it.

1
2 MICHELE D'AMATO: Yes, I'd love to.
3 SAGEWorks was first imagined probably in right
4 before the crash, and I think the idea was to
5 assist people who were already retired who might
6 be thinking about going back to work, but then of
7 course, the crash happened and we realized that we
8 had to open it up to starting at age 40 because
9 that is when age discrimination starts in the
10 workplace. That is we found out. We have never
11 done this kind of work before at SAGE, so it was a
12 learning process for us, but when we did start the
13 program in 2010, we realized the most of people
14 that were coming into the program were in their
15 40s and 50s, and that these were people that had
16 lost their jobs during the recession and were
17 having a hard time getting back into the workforce
18 because a lot of those jobs no longer existed, so
19 everyone comes into the SAGEWorks program through
20 a group orientation. We are a certified AARP work
21 search site, which Christine mentioned, and that
22 is an online computer system that assesses
23 people's skills and matches them with job roles,
24 so we give them access to that database, and then
25 we also ask them to come back and meet with us one

1
2 to one, so we can get an idea of their employment
3 history, what it is they want to do, skills that
4 they might want to improve on, skills they already
5 possess that will help them find a job. After
6 they do an employment assessment, we can review
7 their resume at that time, and then they can
8 attend a series of workshops and seminars that are
9 geared towards skills building, and we invite
10 people to facilitate those workshops and we have
11 been very fortunate in that because it's within
12 the LGBT community a lot of our folks that are
13 facilitating these seminars and workshops are
14 within our community and they want to give back,
15 so we have a lot of very talented people coming to
16 do these seminars for us, and we are very
17 grateful, but really one of our main goals and it
18 always has been, and it has been very difficult is
19 to establish more relationships with employers.
20 That is one of our key goals, so that we can let
21 them know that we do have these people that some
22 of them do need some skills like technology
23 skills, and we have partnered with OATS, Older
24 Adult Technology Services, and we do have a number
25 of community partners that we can refer out. We

1
2 have just recently established relationships with
3 temp agencies and we have had several recruitment
4 events at our office, at the SAGE office, so
5 people find that coming to SAGE is a certain level
6 of comfort, and I think that is what makes our
7 program a little unique because there are a lot of
8 workforce development, employment assistance
9 programs out there, but some of them are run by
10 the New York State Department of Labor, but you
11 don't come into an office where there is a
12 security guard in a suit. You come into a very
13 age friendly, LGBT friendly environment, and I
14 think that is what it is that makes our program
15 special. Did I answer you—

16 CHAIRPERSON MARK-VIVERITO: Yes,
17 Mr. Larmer, are you part of SAGEWorks?

18 WILLIAM LARMER: Yes, - - .

19 CHAIRPERSON MARK-VIVERITO: And
20 could you maybe talk a little bit about your
21 experience being in that kind of a job development
22 program or workforce development program?

23 WILLIAM LARMER: What Michele just
24 said, the thing is SAGE has such a beautiful
25 environment, and this past year it has given so

1
2 much support through not only SAGEWorks, but also
3 through their—I decided to retire early, and I
4 started seeing a counselor there just to get my
5 boundaries. They have been of such value to me.

6 MICHELE D'AMATO: What about the
7 out of work support group?

8 WILLIAM LARMER: Oh, and for a
9 number of months, I participated with a group. It
10 ended up being older men, but it was open to
11 everybody, this group of men, we were all looking
12 for work in a whole variety of different jobs, and
13 I loved it. I love SAGE. As an older person, I
14 can't imagine not having a place like SAGE to go
15 to.

16 CHAIRPERSON MARK-VIVERITO: I love
17 you guys. - - I know this Council has also been
18 very supportive. Personally, I really do
19 appreciate very much the work that you do. I want
20 to ask a question to Shaniqua with regards to the
21 NYAM testimony. I mean I think that the idea of
22 this award is really great as a way of enforcing
23 that message that we need workplaces that really
24 value workers that are older workers and the
25 experience that they bring and I think that

1
2 highlighting it—do you know, is there any work at
3 the federal level? Like is the federal government
4 looking at how they can work with businesses or
5 looking to integrate the older workers back into
6 the workforce, and understanding the unemployment
7 reality. Is there any effort nationally to try to
8 encourage that?

9 SHANIQUA WUZOO: I would say that
10 the work around that has been quite limited, but
11 there have been some entities have looked at it,
12 primarily, my colleagues around can definitely
13 chime in, especially AARP, but primarily, through
14 the SCCAP program, which is the Senior Citizens
15 Community Appointment Program, is where that is
16 taking up. I know that there might be some worker
17 opportunity tax credits that could go to a certain
18 segment of the older adult population, but
19 overall, I wouldn't say that there is a concerted
20 effort to look at the population as you would see
21 with other cohorts. No.

22 CHAIRPERSON MARK-VIVERITO: Right,
23 whether like the Department of Labor is maybe
24 looking at it from a different—you know what I'm
25 saying? Like - - there is a division that is

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

being dedicated-

SHANIQUA WUZOO: However, I will say that the Department of Labor prior to the current administration did issue--there was a taskforce, if you will, that was headed by the Department of Labor to look at the aging workforce, and so, a lot of the recommendations that have come out of that--there were some good ones, but were not implemented, so to my knowledge there hasn't been a concerted effort in this current administration.

CHAIRPERSON MARK-VIVERITO: That is a shame. So then just talking a little bit more about this award--obviously, I guess you're defining exactly what the criteria are going to be, and then people that apply to be selected have to give specific examples. Have you determined what the criteria are or you are working on it?

SHANIQUA WUZOO: We are working on that, so right now we are in the middle of putting together this report that goes over all these characteristics. The reality is is that there are quite number of businesses out there that have come up with innovative practices whether it be

1
2 around hiring or be around design of the workplace
3 or design of the tools that you use in order to
4 complete your work, and so we want to highlight
5 those because it's quite powerful to another
6 business to see, wow, someone has actually done
7 something and that it is feasible to do, and that
8 there are great outcomes from it, so that is what
9 we are documenting. Then, also taking a scan of
10 what is going on here in New York City and then
11 pulling all that information together to develop
12 said characteristics and then pulling from that to
13 determine what the criteria is, so along with this
14 group of research experts, we are also putting
15 together a panel of business experts because we
16 need to make sure that what we're coming up with
17 is going to work in New York City's business
18 environment.

19 CHAIRPERSON MARK-VIVERITO: I think
20 I really like that idea, and you mentioned CVS as
21 one company or whatever - - multinational
22 conglomerate, whatever, that stands out, so are
23 there any other ones--these big companies that
24 maybe stand out that are looking seriously at
25 this?

1
2 SHANIQUA WUZOO: There are a few,
3 so there is a group called the Global Coalition on
4 Aging, which did participate in the symposium that
5 I spoke of and that Christine mentioned earlier
6 that is a group of multinational corporations,
7 some that are headquartered here. That's Bank of
8 America, Johnson and Johnson, et cetera, who have
9 been for a long time looking at this issue.

10 Another one that stands out is BMW. They actually
11 looked to figure out how they could retain their
12 workforce because the skillset is so specialized,
13 so what they did was went back and did some
14 ergonomic designs of the chairs that people sit
15 in, the tools that they use, so it really runs the
16 gamut, and it's not just about wow, hire and
17 train, retrain, retain. There is so much more.

18 CHAIRPERSON MARK-VIVERITO: Right.
19 Instead of like the worker having to retool to the
20 company, the company also has to retool to the
21 worker, and especially if they value the
22 experience and the skills that they have and they
23 want to retain them, they have to do some
24 retooling themselves.

25 SHANIQUA WUZOO: Well, not only

1
2 that, but also I'll add that as it has been stated
3 around the globe people are aging, and so when you
4 think about folks who are going to purchase these
5 goods and services, they are older, and here in
6 New York City there is a strong impetus to have
7 businesses, even small businesses to get involved
8 with export, imports so that they can remain
9 competitive globally, so if you are going to do
10 that, this is—it behooves you to look at this, and
11 to think of having older workers because that is
12 already an in house incubator if you will of
13 individuals that can generate ideas, that can
14 serve as focus groups, you name it, and it
15 provides the worker the opportunity to continue to
16 contribute, and meaningfully be heard.

17 CHAIRPERSON MARK-VIVERITO: Well,
18 thank you. I want to thank you. You know,
19 obviously NYAM I have a great respect for NYAM
20 because they are in my district, one. Number two,
21 we do have a really strong partnership, but also
22 all of the work that you have been doing on the
23 age friendly NYC, and so many other initiatives,
24 but really having—this resolution is just the
25 beginning so to speak because it is just talking

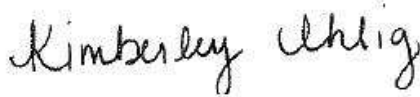
1
2 about the importance of encouraging businesses to
3 look at hiring older workers, but I think that
4 there is much more work that we can do as we move
5 forward - - details and how do we encourage and
6 what mechanisms can be created to facilitate that
7 for businesses. I think the idea of the award
8 again is one way of really reinforcing the
9 importance of that message. So I want to thank
10 everyone that is here today that testified. Thank
11 you to my colleagues who were here. I hope
12 everything goes well with Council Member James
13 Sanders, and with that, this hearing is adjourned.

14 [gavel]

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Kimberley Uhlig certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.

Signature _____

Date _____ 12/11/12