

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL
OPERATIONS, STATE AND
FEDERAL LEGISLATION

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June 16, 2025
Start: 10:26 a.m.
Recess: 2:48 p.m.

HELD AT: Committee Room - City Hall

B E F O R E: Lincoln Restler,
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Gale A. Brewer
David M. Carr
Amanda Farias
James F. Gennaro
Jennifer Gutierrez
Shahana K. Hanif
Vickie Paladino
Lynn C. Schulman
Inna Vernikov
Nantasha Williams

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Antonio Reynoso
Brooklyn Borough President

Allan Swisher
Queens Borough President
Donovan Richards

Thomas Luciana
Bronx Borough President

Keisha Sutton-James
Manhattan Borough President

Celeste Leon
Self

Rafael Mourie-Punnett
Bronx Community Board 6

George Torres
Community Board 12

Jeremy Laufer
BKCB7

Jason Lee
CACF Student

Emma Chen
CACF Student

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Sabrina Zheng
CACF Student

Kyae Sin Linn Lot
CACF Student

Mark Diller
Community Board 2 Manhattan

Jesus Perez
Manhattan Community Board 6

Shawn Campbell
Brooklyn Community Board 14

Robert Camacho

Lloyd Feng
Coalition for Asian American Federation CACF

Ashley Chen
Chinese American Planning Council

Jeemin Cha
CACF

Alice Mo
Home Crest

Naima Dahir
Arab American Families Support Center

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Oumaima Benyahya
MALIKAH

Sarah Fajardo
Korean American Family Support Center

Kimberly Gee Powell
Asians Fighting Justice

Julio Quinones, Jr.
Bronx Community Board 9

Gary Giordano
Queens Community Board 5

Christine Nolan
Queens Community Board 6

Heather E. Beers-Dimitriadis
District Manager

Theresa Scavo
Chair of Queens Community Board 6

Laura Singer
Brooklyn Community Board 15,

Nadeen Gayle
District Manager of Brooklyn Community Board 15

Taya Mueller
Brooklyn Community Board 2, District Manager

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Julio Pena

Chair of Brooklyn Community Board 7

Tammy Meltzer

Chair of Manhattan Community Board 1

Susan Stetzer

Manhattan Community Board 3

Calman Boco (SP?)

Self

Christopher Leon Johnson

Self

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SERGEANT AT ARMS: This is a microphone check
for the Committee on Governmental Operations, State
and Federal Legislation, recorded on June 16, 2025
located in the Committee Room by Nazly Paytuvi.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning. Welcome to
today's New York City Council Hearing for the
Committee on Governmental Operations State and
Federal Legislation. Please silence all cellphone
and electronic devices and as a friendly reminder, do
not approach the dais unless your name has been
called. Chair, we're ready to begin.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Great thank you very much.
Good morning. Sorry for the late start. My name is
Lincoln Restler and I have the privilege of chairing
the City Council Committee on Governmental
Operations, State and Federal Legislation. I would
like to welcome my colleagues this morning. Council
Member Schulman, Council Member Williams and of
course Council Member Carr of Brooklyn.

Today, we are holding an oversight hearing on
Community Boards and Proposed Legislation to provide
additional support for Community Board operations in
order to make them more effective and accessible to
the public.

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3 Community Boards play a vital role in making our
4 communities more dynamic and more democratic. They
5 are responsible for advising on a wide range of
6 government decisions from land use proposals to
7 liquor licenses and transportation projects. This
8 community level engagement is key to ensuring all
9 voices are heard in city government and community
10 boards provide an essential forum where all New
11 Yorkers can weigh in on the matters of the day.

12 But Community Boards have very limited capacity.
13 With budgets that have not significantly changed in
14 decades and typically staff of only two or three
15 people, they must rely on other city agencies and
16 resources for the support they need. In 2018, the
17 voters passed charter amendments to establish term
18 limits on community boards, encourage more diverse
19 appointments by Borough Presidents and provide more
20 support from the Civic Engagement Commission. 60
21 years after these reports have taken effect. We
22 continue to hear from Community Boards about the
23 challenges they face to operate effectively and
24 properly and fully engage the communities they serve.
25 Today, we'll be hearing four bills that I've
introduced to help address those concerns.

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3 Intro. 1314 will create an Office of Community
4 Board Support within each Borough Presidents Office
5 to provide dedicated, legal, technology, human
6 resources, and planning support for community boards.
7 With additional budget resources, I'll say that
8 again, with additional budget resources and clear
9 lines of responsibility, and clear lines of
10 responsibility, Borough President Offices will be
11 able to provide the technical assistance and back end
12 support the community boards need to successfully
13 carry out their charter mandates.

14 Additionally, Intro. 1316 will create an Office
15 of Community Board support within DCAS to assist
16 Community Boards with locating accessible Office and
17 meeting spaces.

18 Intro. 1315 will require community boards to live
19 stream their meetings and share regular monthly email
20 updates with community board members and the public.
21 And Intro. 1318, moves the Community Board
22 appointment date from the spring to August 15th and
23 requires applicants to attend one community board
24 meeting before applying.

25 Together, these changes will ensure community
board members have adequate training and members of

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1 the public can easily participate in the activity of
2 community boards. These legislative changes, all of
3 which are achievable without a Charter referendum.
4 Again, all of these legislative changes can be done
5 without a Charter Revision Commission, without a
6 referendum going to the voters are not realistic
7 without increased resources.
8

9 I'm committed to securing a commitment on
10 necessary funds as part of this legislative package
11 to make these changes feasible. We also will be
12 hearing legislation proposed by Council Member Carr
13 of Brooklyn to require the publication of community
14 board by laws. Legislation proposed by Council
15 Member Williams relating to equal opportunity
16 trainings and district manager term limits and
17 legislation proposed by Majority Leader Farias
18 relating to legislative trainings for board members.
19 In addition, we're also hearing Intro. 1134 and
20 Intro. 1317 today. Intro. 1134 sponsored by Council
21 Member Krishnan, will require city agencies that
22 collect demographic information to include additional
23 data on race and ethnicity.

24 Having detailed demographic data is crucial to
25 ensuring transparency, accountability and equitable

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treatment of all communities within our city and
dedicating resources to where they are needed most.

Intro. 1317 proposes an elimination of several
reporting requirements in the City Charter that been
identified by the Report and Advisory Board Review
Commission as obsolete.

The Report and Advisory Board Review Commission
is charged with reviewing what reports are sent to
the city, the Administration and the Council and
recommend some for discontinuation.

I support these efforts to improve government
efficiency and streamline outdated requirements but I
do want to stress that I believe the city's
compliance with the first ever demographic data laws,
Local Laws 126, 127, and 128 of 2016 is still in need
of improvement and hope we can advance Intro. 1134 to
address those concerns.

Before I conclude, I'd like to note that the
Adams Administration has decided not to send any
representatives to the hearing today. Numerous city
agencies, OTI, DCAS, CAU, CEC, are directly
responsible in the charter for assistant community
boards with various access of their work. Yet the
Mayor and his agencies care so little about Community

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Boards that they decided to not even show up for the hearing and answer questions.

At a time when the Mayor Charter Revision Commission is considering changes to dramatically weaken the role of community boards in the land use process, it's clear. It's painfully clear that Eric Adams does not care about what our communities have to say.

And I'll just add, as legislators, we deliver - we craft better legislation when we engage in a substantive on the record back and forth with the Mayor's agencies. His lack of courtesy and concern for the legislative process and for the bills that we draft is disappointing.

It's not a surprise at this point, because I don't think Eric Adams is paying all that much attention to governing but we are where we are for six more months. With that, I want to thank the Governmental Operations Committee staff, Jayasri Ganapathy and Erica Cohen for their work preparing for this hearing, as well as my communications director Nieve Mooney and my Chief of Staff Molly Haley, who is brilliant.

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2 I will now turn it over to my colleagues for
3 opening remarks on the legislation. Before I do, I
4 would like to thank Council Member Paladino for
5 joining us. We will begin with our Majority Leader.

6 MAJORITY LEADER FARIAS: Thank you Chair Restler
7 for the opportunity to speak on my bill, Intro. 1075.
8 This bill is about empowering appointed leaders of
9 our communities with the knowledge, tools, and
10 necessary skills to participate meaningfully in local
11 government.

12 Intro. 1075 would require each borough president
13 and any other additional agency in coordination with
14 the Civic Engagement Commission to provide annual
15 trainings on three key areas. The state legislative
16 process, the city legislative process, and the most
17 recent version of Roberts Rules of Order. These
18 trainings would be provided to Community Board
19 members and district managers and made available to
20 members of precinct community councils, community
21 district education councils, and the Board of
22 Directors for Business Improvement District
23 Management Associations.

24 Why is this necessary you think? Because too
25 often, New Yorkers who step up to serve on these

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local bodies are unprepared. They are eager to help shape their communities but they don't have a clear understanding of how bureaucracy works or doesn't work. How budgeting impacts the agencies that govern their communities or roles, how city or state legislation advances or how meetings are properly supposed to function.

Without that knowledge, meeting become irrelevant. They have little to no impact. Frustration builds and trust erodes. We lose the very people we are attempting to build with. An apathy amongst community members continues to increase. I want to change that. I want to provide structure, transparency, and confidence in the process so that civic meetings advance efficiently and so that residents can engage without feeling shutout or confused. This bill came from a recent experience. I inherited a business improvement district where board members refused to sign their annual contract renewal with Small Business Services and to members, there they decided on the final day to all resign. No advanced notice with no vote of stakeholders. They attempted to shut down the entire BID. In that meeting, if members were equipped with

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the knowledge of votes and meeting procedures,
Roberts Rules, then other stakeholders could have had
made themselves nominations and voted a new board to
sign a new contract.

But because there was no knowledge or
understanding of how that structure was supposed to
role out, those members instead caused chaos,
disruption and fear. Don't worry, I got the BID back
on track and we have a great board of members right
now but this should never happened. By passing
Intro. 1075, we can assure that all our local boards,
whether it's a community board, a precinct council or
a BID, have access to the training and tools they
need to serve effectively.

This is a simple but meaningful step we can take
to strengthen democracy at the hyperlocal level. I
urge my colleagues to support this bill and I look
forward to working with the Administration on its
passage. Thank you Chair.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you so much Majority
Leader. Really appreciate you being here today.
Next up, we'll go with Council Member Williams.
Always good to see you.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you Chair and as
3 a former community board member, I'm really excited
4 about this entire package of bills. I do think it
5 will make community boards run much more effectively,
6 equitably, and just all around better.

7 Community Boards are a vital part of how our city
8 functions. They weigh in on land use, help shape
9 neighborhood priorities and connect residents to
10 services and decision makers. They are also one of
11 the most visible spaces when New Yorkers engage
12 directly with local government. How these boards
13 operate shapes the way neighborhoods grow, how
14 concerns are heard and how city resources are
15 directed. That's why both of these bills are focused
16 on structure, clarity and accountability, the
17 fundamentals of strong, responsive public service.

18 Intro. 472 A would require borough presidents to
19 provide equal employment opportunity training to all
20 community board members. This is about more than
21 compliance, it's about creating a basic citywide
22 standard that reflects the seriousness of the work
23 and the dignity of the communities being served.
24 Board members are volunteers yes, but they are also
25 public servants. This training helps ensure that

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2 every board operates with respect, fairness, and a
3 shared understanding of what it means to serve an
4 entire community, not just a select few.

5 Intro. 1065 addresses the role of district
6 managers who are critical to how boards function day
7 to day. They manage operations, coordinate city
8 services and support board members in carrying out
9 their responsibilities. But right now, there's no
10 consistent structure for how district managers are
11 hired, evaluated or supported. That lack of clarity
12 creates instability, making it harder to retain good
13 staff, weakening internal operations and leaving too
14 much room for politics to interfere with process.

15 Intro. 1065 brings necessary guardrails to the
16 position. It gives a shared framework that still
17 respects local discretion, while helping ensure the
18 work is steady, professional and accountable. When
19 there's no structure, there's no consistency and when
20 there's no consistency, important issues get delayed
21 or lost in the shuffle. Communication breaks down,
22 decisions become unpredictable, and residents are
23 left without reliable support. These two bills are
24 about setting our boards up to succeed. They create
25 the kind of structure that helps volunteers lead

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effectively, helps staff stay focused and helps residents feel confident that their concerns will be met with respect because that's what builds public trust.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you very much Council Member Williams. We love having you here at the Government Operations Committee. Next up, Council Member Carr of Brooklyn.

COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Thank you Chair. It's great representing two boroughs in the New York City Council Staten Island and Brooklyn. Of course.

I want to thank the Chair and my colleagues for having this hearing today on consequential and a meaningful package of bills that pertain to an entity that provides a crucial forum and advocacy on neighborhood issues. The front lines of government much like we in the City Council do and I think our Community Boards have played a pivotal role in many, many neighborhood discussions or battles depending upon what we're talking about and I think it's crucial that our community boards, our borough boards and other advisory boards of our city and which members of the public serve, that there be a clear

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definition of what the rules governing the procedures
of those meetings should be.

And those rules are the bylaws adopted by the
organization. Many times, particularly in the case
of community boards, those bylaws were adopted a
long, long time ago and left unchanged and it is
haphazardly posted depending upon which institutions
we're taking about across the city and members of the
public should have access to that document on an easy
and readily available basis, so should members of the
board. I hear from many times, members of the boards
got their package with the bylaws many, many years
ago or at least only one time and it wasn't in a
digital format. It was a piece of paper and you know
paper gets lost and I think in this 21st Century it's
a basic standard that our boards and advisory body's
should publish their bylaws on line in machine
readable format so that everyone can have access to
them.

You know it's that old proverbial story of
ancient Rome where the senators would post the laws
so high that no one else could see them. I think we
should adopt a much better standard local bodies and

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that's what Introduction 1250, which I introduced
with the Chair, would do.

So, I ask all my colleagues to take a lot at it,
hopefully Co-sponsor it and hopefully we can move it
passage in the near future. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you Council Member
Carr. The art of bipartisan legislating still exists
in the City Council and I'd just like to note Council
Member Williams, who was a former member of CB12 in
Queens.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: 13.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: 13 excuse me. I was close.
Council Member Schulman was a former member of CB6 in
Queens and I was a member of B2 for many years in
Brooklyn where I proudly served as the secretary of
the board. With that, we're going to open up to our
first panel with representatives from Borough
President Offices from across the city including the
best Borough President in New York, the one and only
Antonio Reynoso. We'll also be hearing from Allan
Swisher from the Queens Borough Presidents Office,
Donovan Richards, Thomas Luciana, the Deputy Chief of
Staff to the Bronx Borough President Vanessa Gibson
and Keisha Sutton James, the Deputy Borough President

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3 for Manhattan. I want to thank you all for being
4 here.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good morning. Can you please
6 raise your right hands? Do you swear to tell the
7 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth in
8 your testimony today and to respond honestly to
9 Council Member questions? Thank you, you can go
10 ahead.

11 Thank you so much for having me. Good morning to
12 Chair Restler and the members of the Committee and
13 thank you for holding this hearing today. I'm happy
14 to see the Council giving its attention to community
15 boards. I know that their reputation is mixed at
16 best but I can assure you that my Borough President,
17 colleagues and I are putting in the work to make sure
18 that their members are diverse, reflective of the
19 communities they serve and well equipped for the
20 role.

21 This is why we are submitting joint testimony
22 today as a proposed into the training, as well as
23 Intro.'s 1250, 1315, and 1316. So, today I want to
24 focus on other supports that community boards
25 desperately need. Our city's 59 community boards
serve a critical role as the foundation of our local

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democracy. The Charter mandates them with 22
responsibilities, including holding public hearings
on issues facing their districts, creating annual
statements of district needs and budget priorities,
weighing in on local land use proposals. Working
with City agencies to communicate information to
residents and evaluate service delivery and much
more.

Yet due to the chronic underfunding, community
boards have struggled to carry out these mandates,
let alone their day to day work. Most have very
small staff with little money left over to hire other
assistants such as professional planners or text
support. On top of that, the Charter's framework for
external support for community boards is confusing
and scattered. Calling on my Office, the Civic
Engagement Commission and other agencies to provide
various and sometimes overlapping support. However,
no office receives enough funding to support the
boards adequately or has supporting community boards
as its primary mandate. This leads our boards
struggling to access basic services, for example,
because OTI only has one staff person who supports
all 59 boards. It can take the agency three or more

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months to create an email address, three years to
remove and weeks to fill email access issues.

Recently submitted recommendations to the
Commission to strengthen local democracy for how we
can better support our community boards through the
Charter change, and these included increased
community board office budgets for staffing and OTPS
so they have at least three full time professional
support staff and money for updating technology,
office supplies and other needs.

Create a separate community board central office,
loosely brings on the model for the City Council
central staff to support community boards in numerous
areas including land use and planning, communications
and technology, real estate matters, human resources,
procurement, legal support and training. The CBO as
my staff and I call it would [INAUDIBLE 00:18:43] the
Community Board support and because it would be an
independent agency, its services would be consistent
across both geography and time and it would not be
subject to political whims, directives, or budget
cuts. Change the Community Board member appointment
date from April 1st to August 1st and require new

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applicants who have attended at least one board meeting prior to applying.

The bills that Council Member Restler is proposing today address many, although not all of the issues Community Boards face through legislation rather than Charter change. While I do think an independent agency is preferable for the reasons I explain, I would be willing to take more responsibility in my office for supporting the boards if and only if there's dedicated funding attached.

Otherwise Intro. 1314 is an unfunded mandate that would do more harm than good for our boards. There are also potential conflicts of interest between my office and the Community Boards, which I stress are their own independent agencies that would need to be addressed. As noted above, I do support Intro. 1318.

The Charter currently sets April 1st of each year as the appointment deadline for new community board members. This date is impractical for two reasons. First it is in the middle of an ongoing city budget negotiation making it difficult for City Council members to appoint new board members by the deadline and dropping new board members into the middle of ongoing conversations without context.

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3 Second, new board members start their terms in
4 May, meaning there are already one or two monthly
5 meetings before the board goes on summer recess,
6 making them obtain board membership after this break
7 a challenge. Additionally, district managers are
8 seeing a reoccurring problem where people apply to
9 the board without having attended a meeting. These
10 applicants often do not understand the role of a
11 board member nor the required time commitment,
12 leading to some members dropping off the board once
13 they've understood this more fully.

14 Requiring applicants to attend a meeting qualify
15 for membership would address this issue and the
16 Brooklyn District managers have told me they would
17 have no problem tracking this attendance if it would
18 improve member retention.

19 Thank you again for giving us the time today to
20 talk about the real issues facing our community
21 boards. I take my role as the appointer and convener
22 very seriously and hope to work with the Council to
23 ensure that they have the resources they need to be
24 as effective as they can be. Thank you so much for
25 that.

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2 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you very much Borough
3 President. We've been joined by Council Member Hanif
4 of Brooklyn. And now we'll hear from the Deputy
5 Borough President.

6 KEISA SUTTON -JAMES: Thank you Chair Restler and
7 members of the City Council Commission on
8 Governmental Operations State and Federal Legislation
9 for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to
10 testify on bills relating to supporting community
11 boards.

12 Community Boards are a vital forum for residents
13 to engage with local issues and contribute to
14 decisions that impact their neighborhoods. As
15 Borough Presidents, we take great pride in our
16 Charter Mandated responsibility to appoint community
17 board members and support boards with training and
18 technical assistance, and we take the responsibility
19 very seriously.

20 As largely volunteer bodies, community boards and
21 their members exemplify public service. Each board
22 has its own individual style and strengths reflecting
23 the unique culture of their boroughs and
24 neighborhoods and each board is its own independent
25 government entity creating its own committee's

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agenda's norms and by laws. Each of our offices and
I should pause and say that this is a statement
submitted on behalf of all of the five borough
presidents.

Each of our offices have invested significant
effort into making sure community boards are equipped
with the tools and support they need to succeed. Our
dedicated staff in each borough have neighborhood-
specific expertise and partner and collaborate with
community boards on the issues relevant to their
members and constituents.

Our offices have continuously strengthened,
expanded, and diversified the trainings available to
community board members, spanning parliamentary
procedure, equal employment and opportunity, and
more. We also work rigorously to ensure that new
members have trainings and information they need when
onboarded. We take these steps not because we are
required to, but because we know that our boroughs
and neighborhoods thrive when our community boards
are able to fully engage with their neighbors and
neighborhoods with the issues most important to them.

The bills on today's agenda offer some potential
ways to expand the support available to community

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boards, an idea we fully support. At the same time, we believe that it is crucial to avoid creating unfunded mandates and to ensure that the new responsibilities are assigned to the entities or agencies best positioned to take them on effectively.

We welcome the opportunity to engage with this Committee to ensure that Community Board members have the support and resources that they need. Intro 472 would require Borough Presidents to provide equal employment opportunity, EEO trainings, including anti-sexual harassment training and anti-discrimination training, to community board members. We agree that as public servants, community board members should receive these important trainings that help them understand essential legal issues and better engage with the full diversity of their communities.

Employees of city agencies receive EEO and other essential trainings from the Department of Citywide Administrative Services, otherwise known as DCAS. While our offices have each taken steps to ensure that community board members receive necessary trainings, we believe it would be more appropriate for DCAS to be tasked with training the over 3,000

community board members and staff across the city,
just as they do with City employees.

As the author of the City's EEO Citywide policy,
DCAS is the subject-matter expert for this training
and has both the knowledge and bandwidth to conduct
them. Training through DCAS would offer a more
streamlined, uniform, and cost-effective way to
ensure that community boards can comply with all
legally mandated training.

Intro. 1075 would require borough presidents to
provide trainings on legislative processes and
parliamentary procedure to local entities, including
Community Boards, Community Education Councils, CECs,
Business Improvement Districts, BIDs, and Precinct
Community Councils, PCCs.

While we understand the intent of this
legislation, we have concerns about its scope. Our
mandate as Borough Presidents is to appoint and
support community boards. We currently offer various
support and training; however, this expansion of
community board training requirements would extend
beyond our offices' current capacity and expertise.

Given their current relationship to community
boards, we suggest this responsibility be tasked to

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the Civic Engagement Commission, in consultation with Borough Presidents. When it comes to CECs, BIDs, and PCCs, while each of these entities is vital to community engagement, their responsibilities fall squarely within the mandate and expertise of existing city agencies.

We strongly believe that each of these entities deserve to get the support they need from the agencies best equipped to provide them; CECs should be supported by the New York City Department of Education; BIDs should be supported by the Department of Small Business Services; and PCCs should be supported by NYPD so that they get the most relevant and appropriate training and resources. For the above reasons, we oppose Intro 1075. Intro. 1250 would require Borough Boards, Community Boards, and Advisory Boards to publish their by-laws as well as updates to bylaws online within two weeks of any changes.

We strongly value the transparency in local government and appreciate this legislation's effort to create additional clarity for board members and the public. We encourage the Council to do further engagement with district managers and board members

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to ensure that they have the resources they need to
meet any new requirements in a timely manner.

Intro. 1315 would require community boards to
email a monthly newsletter and videoconference their
meetings and hearings. While many of our community
boards have taken steps in recent years to do both of
these things, staff capacity and resources remain an
ongoing challenge. New requirements like these
require additional staff and resources for already
stretched community boards and district managers.
Any new requirements must be tied to the funding
necessary to meet them.

Finally, Intro. 1316 would require the Department
of Citywide Administrative Services to establish an
Office of Community Board Support tasked with helping
community boards find accessible space for their
meetings and for their offices. Ensuring that
community boards have consistent access to space that
is fully accessible is essential for ensuring that
the public can equitably participate in board
meetings. Our teams consistently hear from our
community board members and district managers about
the challenges of finding suitable public space to
hold community meetings.

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3 We believe DCAS is the appropriate entity to
4 directly support community boards with their space
5 needs. We are grateful to this committee for hosting
6 this important hearing. We look forward to continued
7 partnership to ensure that community boards have the
8 support and resources they need to do their vital
9 work. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

10 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you very much.

11 ALAN SWISHER: Thank you Chair Restler and
12 members of the Committee for the opportunity to speak
13 on the important issue of adequately supporting our
14 community boards. My name is Alan Swisher and I
15 serve as General Counsel and Senior Policy Advisor
16 for Queens Borough President Donovan Richards Jr. I
17 help oversee our offices relationship with Community
18 Boards in our borough.

19 Borough President Richards has signed onto the
20 joint testimony that the Deputy Borough President
21 just delivered but I wanted to share a few additional
22 points on this topic.

23 I'll start by emphasizing that each community
24 board is it's own city agency and independent from
25 the Borough Presidents Office. Each Community board
has it's own agency head. The Chairperson who is

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selected by the boards own members, not the borough president. They have their own budgets. They hire and supervise their own staff. They establish their own bylaws, they run their own meetings and most importantly, they reach their own independent recommendations on matters effecting their communities.

My office relies on that honest independent input even if the borough president doesn't always end up concurring with it. I worry that assigning responsibility to the borough presidents to create and control a new unfunded community board support office may threaten that independence. The interest of a community board and the interest of a borough presidents office often diverge and a borough president run office that provides legal and community planning advice has the potential to dampen community boards independence and could raise conflicts of interest between the two.

My other concern is that some of these bills in their current form could give mayoral agencies further license to ignore their existing responsibilities to support community boards as city agencies and uhm Chair Restler, I do appreciate you

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pointing out that the Mayor's Office did not send any representatives here today and I think that that's emblematic of this dynamic.

One illustrative example, my offices EEO officer has approached DCAS multiple times over several years asking for their assistance in providing their EEO trainings to all Queens community board members.

Each time DCAS has argued that they cannot do it due to technical limitations because community board members are not city employees. Although DCAS eventually agreed to their own assistance to provide training just to the Chairs. And I understand that they already provide these trainings to non-employees serving on other boards and commissions.

I have numerous examples of community boards struggling to get routine support from other agencies, perhaps due to the misapprehension that community boards are under the borough presidents control. My belief is that the best way to ensure that community board members receive the training and support contemplated in these bills, a goal that we all share is to make it explicit that relevant agencies have a responsibility to assist.

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We look forward to further engaging with you on this topic because Borough President Richards agrees that Community Board members and staff need additional support and training. Particularly as term limits begin to go into effect in 2027. To that end, the Borough President has already taken numerous actions within his power including appointing unprecedentedly diverse classes and new appointees, instituting trainings and consultation with DCP, BSA, COIB and others at a mandatory orientation for new appointees. Establishing a code of conduct for members to help ensure that community boards are open and respectful spaces and helping boards update their bylaws to prepare new leaders and promote transparency. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you.

THOMAS LUCIANA: Good morning Chairman Restler. My name is Tom Luciana and I am the Deputy Chief of Staff to Borough President Vanessa L. Gibson, previously the Director of Community Board to the Borough President as well as a former district manager of Bronx Community Board 11. So, thank you Chair Restler and members of the Committee on Government Operations for holding this hearing today

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on how better we can support our community boards.

As Bronx Borough President, I am responsible for the appointment and support for the Bronx of the Bronx's 12 Boards led by 600 exceptional community advocates who volunteer their time to ensure that their neighborhoods are the best that they can be.

Supporting our boards are also more than 30 full time city employees including district managers who are amongst the most dedicated public servants I've had the pleasure to work with. I've worked hand and hand with community board members for my entire career and I am committed to any effort that supports their success.

It is important to recognize however that community boards are independent city agencies and that respecting their autonomy is a crucial component of our local democracy. It is with that vital independence in mind that I respectfully offer my position on several bills being heard today in addition to the joint testimony that has already been submitted by the five borough presidents.

Intro. 1065, creating term limits for district managers and granting borough presidents the authority to remove them undermines the stability,

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independence and effectiveness of local leadership.

Imposing district manager term limits introduces unnecessary turnover and disruption to community boards whose governing members are already term limited and hinders the long term planning and implementation needs of the district.

Further, district managers are best position to support community boards without fear of political interference or arbitrary removal. Concentrating on removal powers of a community board employee with the offset of the borough president, a separate city agency is unprecedented as it is unwise.

It invites otherwise avoidable legal, procedural, and ethical complications, preserving the autonomy of community boards and with the stability of the district manager role encourages more transparent, accountable and responsible community representation. For the reasons provided, I oppose Intro. 1065.

Intro. 1314, community boards are woefully short of staff typically having no more than three employees and there is no argument that they shouldn't be saddled with onerous, administrative requirements of a larger city agency. But borough presidents offices are not structured or funded to

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exercise administrative functions for other city agencies. Like community boards, borough presidents offices are very small agencies with each office having on average fewer staff than all but five city agencies. Despite this, borough president offices already endeavored to support community boards in many of the broadly listed functions in this bill. However, for the most of the identified functions, there are already mayoral agencies tasked with those exact responsibilities. Chief among those is DCAS along with the Law Department, the Mayor's Community Assistance Unit and OTI. These responsibilities - assigning these responsibilities to borough presidents offices, creates an unnecessary redundancy in city operation and does a disservice to the Community Boards, Borough Presidents, and the constituents they serve.

Further due to the nature of community board and borough president relationships, creating such a centralized office within the Office of the Borough President as proposed, would cause obvious conflicts, not the least of which would be with legal representation and land use decisions. Should the will of the City Council be to create a centralized

office for community boards? It should be within
DCAS.

With a headcount of around 2,200 employees, DCAS
is adequately staffed to assist community boards with
enforcing these functions and more such as EEO.
Indeed, the Charter already establishes DCAS as
experts on such matters, including EEO. See section,
Charter Section 814-1 where DCAS is charged with
establishing procedures and standards for EEO matters
and overseeing citywide compliance structuring it to
seamlessly assist any city agency in following the
law.

DCAS is well equipped to provide the additional
support by this bill and arguably has already been
tasked with the same by the Charter. For the reasons
provided herein and regardless of additional funding
for community boards or borough presidents, I oppose
Intro. 1314. Intro. 1318 appointing community board
members has become an increasing, complicated and
time consuming process. Changing the appointment
date for community board members from April 1st to
August 15 would allow for a more realistic and
manageable time table. The extension will have a
positive impact on the appointment process and will

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better serve the community. Regarding training for new appointed community board members, this is already the practice of my office and I support assignment of these duties officially to the borough president, requiring community board attendance prior to appointment is also a current practice of my office but I caution against codifying the same in this matter as it would prove unnecessarily burdensome and impractical for community boards to track.

I suggest and would support the implementation of a question such as a checkbox on each of the board application that would serve as the applicants affirmation of prior attendance. This is an efficient alternative that serves the same purpose. For the reasons provided herein, and with the suggested attendance revision, I support Intro. 1318. Thank you for taking the time to thoroughly consider my positions and suggestions on this legislation. I deeply appreciate this Committees steadfast commitment to strengthen our community boards. Your dedication to supporting these vital institutions is shared and I'm pleased to be collaborating with all of you in these efforts. Thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you very much. Thank
you each for your testimony. I will kick it over to
colleagues to ask question first but I will just note
in case anybody is interested, we did get some
written testimony from the Administration. Both
agencies that wrote testimony, DCAS and OTI, clearly
expected to be present this morning but were
obviously directed by City Hall not to show up. DCAS
at the conclusion of their testimony, which they
oppose the bill, says that they're happy to answer
any questions that we may have. So, good luck with
that.

OTI writes their testimony from the first person
from the person who oversees the infrastructure
management division. They don't take a position on
the bill and there's no name associated with the
testimony, but we're happy to follow up with their
Public Affairs division with whatever useful -
useless questions we may have. Just another day of
working with the Eric Adams Administration. With
that, we'll pass it over to our Majority Leader
followed by Council Member Schulman.

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MAJORITY LEADER FARIAS: Thank you Chair. I look forward to emailing all my questions over to the Admin to see who responds.

Can each of your offices let me know how many staff each of the Borough President Offices currently have to run operations?

ANTONIO REYNOSO: So, this is a bit tricky because they play multiple roles. We have an office of community boards where we have two full time employees. Our general counsel is also a part of the services that we provide to community boards. We have one person full time in HR for community boards. On every single, in my office, we have 18 community boards and there's one liaison. One liaison and a backup that goes to every single community board meeting if I'm not attending. We have our community affairs office also attends our land use team that supports for recommendations and if they're large items like super rezonings or big rezonings, our land use team helps there. So, it's hard to really like put it all together but they're intertwined and at least seven or eight divisions within my office, plus the - at least 30 members in my office that have to attend every meeting in the borough. So, I don't

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know exactly how to say it but it accounts for a
significant amount of staff time.

MAJORITY LEADER FARIAS: Okay.

KEISHA SUTTON-JAMES: My answer is roughly the
same. It's equally difficult.

MAJORITY LEADER FARIAS: That's fine, I can just
take estimates. It sounds like 20 to 30 people
potentially.

KEISHA SUTTON-JAMES: And it's a really
significant amount of time. We've got a community
affairs team that's specifically focused. It's six
people, six liaisons plus a deputy director and a
director who were specifically focused on community
boards. Our land use team is intricately involved in
any land use matter. Our policy team is also
engaging consistently on any policy issue that is -
that impacts a particular community board or many
community boards. Myself and the borough president -

MAJORITY LEADER FARIAS: So, you guys are not
actually working on the community boards, right?

KEISHA SUTTON-JAMES: So you guys are not
actually working on the community boards right?

MAJORITY LEADER FARIAS: Your not going to the
meetings and taking notes and then following up?

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KEISHA SUTTON-JAMES: Not going to the - not
going -

MAJORITY LEADER FARIAS: I'm just trying to get
some general answers with the interest of time
because I have more, so 20 to 30 and I will not
include the Deputy Borough Presidents or the Borough
Presidents themselves as working directly on
community boards but - okay next person please.

ALLAN SWISHER: So, we have 64 people in our
office. I would say about one-third to a half of the
people in the office. In some way interact with
community boards. Uhm, I can speak to myself. I
serve as general counsel, so I'm the borough
president in the offices attorney. I would say that
I spend probably 20 to 25 percent of my time dealing
with community board issues that really fall outside
the purview of legal advice. And an important point
that I also want to make is that I am not the boards
attorney. The interest of my client, the borough
president often diverge from those of the community
boards. So, it is a significant number of people and
a significant amount of time but I feel that a lot of
that time spent is because other agencies are not
addressing the needs, so.

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MAJORITY LEADER FARIAS: And for the Bronx.

THOMAS SUTTON-JAMES: Good morning. In the total office, there's about 63 I believe. Our community board division is 3, community services is 3. You have an HR staff that deals with community boards but also we have other members of our staff who attend not only our DSC meetings, the precinct council meetings, the BIDs as representatives as well. So, it kind of moves - it kind of takes more than just that three person community board staff to deal with all of the different organizations that borough president wants to be represented on.

MAJORITY LEADER FARIAS: So, I appreciate all the responses. They seem to relatively be the same across at least the four boroughs that are represented. I kind of have an issue with the idea that you folks, each and each of the testimonies have declared community boards independency agencies that have their own autonomy or they're independent from the borough presidents office where it looks like 25 percent to 30 percent of your time, you are like literally over seeing their functionality, their legality, their appointments, their attendance rates, what resolutions they're passing or what governance

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has to happen over boards. I think that's a bit counter to them being independent agencies along with this is a panel of BP's, not a - we don't have a hundred and something chairs here ready to say they're autonomous of or separate agencies. I do understand that they are their own governing bodies in the community in some form or fashion but I think when we're looking at this legislative package or these bills that are here, what we are trying to get to is a standardization of practice. And I think that is the main problem. What's happening and what I'm seeing in my boards and when I speak to a colleague, it's very different then what's happening in Brooklyn or what's happening Queens and that is one of the beginning foundational points of where apathetic residents or voters are having challenging situations or completely different experiences borough by borough, board by board. And I think that's really what we're trying to get here. I just have - I don't know of their comments and questions at this point because I'm a little annoyed with some of the testimony here.

You know I - in my borough presidents testimony, I see that district managers are best positioned to

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support community boards without fear of political interference or arbitrary removal in terms of responding to 1065. When I know of several community board district managers that hold political positions in my borough.

Something I recently learned that's a common practice to not have an overlapping instance of one person on both ends and other boroughs is traditionally kept. So, some of this testimony to me it feels counter intuitive or counter to what's actually happening within our boroughs and I think - I would say I urge you folks to really look at it from a different angle and I know there's one person on here that's been a former Council Member and can understand like you know when you appoint people, they don't go in and they do not know that they are a separate agency and a governing body and we're not equipping people to go in and say my district manager isn't showing up for six months. We can vote him out and fire him.

That does not happen. We do not do that. I mean if that were the case, I mean I have a deputy district manager who doesn't have formal maternity leave because the governing body doesn't understand

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1 how to actually change that policy for their
2 employees. So, to me, it's a bit - you know I'm just
3 very frustrated with the responses here, knowing that
4 every borough is very different with how they govern
5 over how the boards themselves each govern and that
6 changes dramatically board by board across boroughs.
7 All of you seem to be mostly against every single one
8 of these bills or generally against the things that
9 could make a change to how things operate on these
10 boards, including 1065. And I would hope that you go
11 back and reflect and give us different testimony to
12 showcase how that could be different or huddle
13 together and find ways that we can standardize
14 practice.
15

16 Because something has to change. Community Board
17 members do not have power on most boards and district
18 managers are not accountable and the BP's always come
19 back to us and say we can't do anything with them
20 because they have a Chair. You know at this point
21 I'm ranting but something has to change. If it's not
22 this bill package, you folks have to help us figure
23 out how to make these better because now people have
24 term limits and we have political systems that people
25

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have to engage in civically and we have no other
alternatives.

ANTONIO REYNOSO: Council Member and I hear the
frustration in your voice and I think we don't want
to come here and be counter to wanting reform. The
two issues we have is for all intent and purposes,
we've been relegated to be an administrative agent to
the community boards. That's what we are and in that
administrative duties, some - technically we can -
there's ways in which those administrative duties can
make it feel like we have more control than we
should.

What I did is that we've made recommendations to
the Charter Revision Commission put forth by the City
Council to change everything and make it so that they
remove all administrative duties from us. So, there
is one central agency that handles all of their work
and we are not responsible for anything outside of
appointments, which takes away a lot of our perceived
political power or perceived political influence over
community boards. If we could remove that it would
be great. We're all trying to depoliticize of every
political agency or agencies. We are trying.

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In Brooklyn, every single one of them would tell you that I've been having regular meetings with Chairs and with district managers letting them know that they are independent agencies and I have nothing to do with any of them. I only remove people based on attendance and nothing else. That's the number one thing that we're working with but I think our big concern is also, if you give us more power. You're going to give us more influence or authority over the work that DCAS, the Law Department and OTI are supposed to be doing without any money. We're just going to increase that 35 percent to 50 percent and then we're just going to be again, just an administrative agency. Now look, if I have to choose between nothing and you giving us more money to do that work, I would take it. The ideal situation would be to completely remove the borough presidents from that responsibility all together, but I think that this is very difficult to do. I would be happy to continue negotiations with the City Council so we could find a middle ground because I do think change needs to happen but I want you to know that this is not so much that we're against it all, it's just in our experience, we're just an administrative agency

and the City Charter does not say that that's who we are. We're just taking that on because if we abandon the community boards, then they would be fulfilling no charter mandated responsibility.

So, we're just a lifeline. They're treading water with us and the City of New York has to show up.

MAJORITY LEADER FARIAS: Thank you for that response.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you very much. We'll go to Council Member Schulman followed by Council Member Williams. We can go to Council Member Williams then Council Member Schulman.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: So sweet thank you. I appreciate that. I just wanted to follow up on what the Majority Leader said. I do feel like you all are absolving yourselves of any responsibility. Like you're not even trying to take any forms or responsibility, which is again counterintuitive because you appoint board members as much as you try to just make it simply an administrative entity as by way of your office. Like, it is politically natured and as much as we can try to say we're not doing that, it is. So, I do think it's like a little

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disingenuous and I did meet with each borough
presidents office to talk about both bills. I have
already committed to making amendments to make sure
that you get the resources for the EEO training
around DCAS. I hear that. I'm not trying to give
you- you know an unfounded mandate and in terms of
the district manager bill, like yes, I know. I know
the district managers have problems with it. I know
you all have problems with it because you're hearing
from the boards and the district managers but unless
a board - and not so- here's the question I have. Do
you think all community boards function properly? I
would love to hear from each borough president. Do
you think all community boards function properly?

Antonio Reynoso: I would just say, there's
nowhere anyone - if you don't recall one time in the
entire year, you're officially not operating
effectively. So I would say no.

KEISHA SUTTON-JAMES: Absolutely, the same
testimony.

ALLAN SWISHER: Council Member Williams, I would
fully agree that many community boards are not
effectively and as you're well aware the borough
president has tried his best to address that.

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THOMAS LUCIANA: I would agree with my colleagues, there are challenges in each of the boards. Whether it's board members, whether it's staff, whether it's the operation as you mentioned of quorum. So, yes, there are boards that need some significant assistance.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you and I think that's my point. So I'm not saying that all boards need more oversight, right? Maybe some boards are functioning well independently but because there's no standard of consistency is where I have the issue. And so, I know the majority leader asked about how many people work in your offices that are doing stuff on the community boards but what percentage of your budget do you spend on community boards?

KEISHA SUTTON-JAMES: I'm sorry, I can't - we got that question last night about five o'clock. We have not been able to assess that but again in terms of time resources, it's really significant. I again I didn't get to say this before but our general counsel, I think you can attest to the same, literally gets a question every single - at least one question every single day from a community board and he is general counsel for our office, not for the

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community boards. Same thing with our EEO. We have two EEO staff who are really to support our office of 52. There are an additional 500 people that they have to - that they have to you know kind of be accountable for, not only in terms of handling EEO concerns but also getting - ensuring that they actually do the EEO training. It is a significant amount of time and energy. I can't give you a number on budget though.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Does anybody else know how much percentage? No, okay. Uhm, so again, I agreed that DCAS has the experience with creating these trainings. I am happy to make amendments. I believe I said that to you all when I met with your offices about that particular bill but I don't think that you should totally be out of any type of accountability to make sure these boards are function board and I think it is a very interesting catch 22 because on one end, you don't want to be kind of connected to what boards do but on the other end you are.

Have you had any issues with any DM's? Any District Managers? Have you all had any issues with any District Managers?

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ANTONIO REYNOSO: This is another tough question to answer but the DM's are by all intense and purposes employees of the Community Boards. The same way -

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: By way of your offices because community boards do interact with the borough presidents office. You have borough board - like there are like legitimate touchpoints where community boards interact with the borough presidents office. So, like you say, you're an administrative entity of the community boards, right? So, like have you had any issues with any district managers at large? It's like a yes or no.

ANTONIO REYNOSO: Yeah, yeah, so I want to be more frank and open with you I guess. I think in my purview, I am the Borough President, so I'm going to just speak plainly to you. The issues - that if we have a problem where we think a DM is not doing something right, we give notice to the Chair and to the Community Board that we think that there's something happening here that they should be addressing..

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Were they resolved?
Were your issues resolved?

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ANTONIO REYNOSO: In my case, we've made one recommendation where we thought it resolved, another one where we were ignored by the community board related to an issue with the DM. It's up to them.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, the last two quick questions. I know the answer but would love to know, can you remove borough - not borough. Can you remove board members?

ALLAN SWISHER: For cost we can.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay so you can remove board members but you have absolutely no say so over individuals who in my opinion in a lot of boards, sometimes have even more power than board members, especially if it's a district manager that has been a district manager for quite some time. It is an interesting dynamic to have a volunteer manage a full-time employee that might have been this full-time employee for a very and/or connected politically.

So, maybe they just got to the board a year ago but they kind of got to the board by way of affiliation and you're asking this like volunteer person to provide oversight and manage this person. So, I just wanted to - like you can remove board

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members but you have absolutely no say so in district managers which I find a little odd.

The last thing, is Community Board 13 still in violation of the Open Meetings Law?

ALLAN SWISHER: I've had a conversation with the District Manager of Community Board 13 and advised them as to their responsibilities under the Open Meetings Law and my understanding is that they will be in compliance at their next meeting.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, so their June meeting.

ALLAN SWISHER: I believe so, yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay. Just you know, I agree you know maybe there needs to be some of them - there needs to be some amendments with these bills. I don't think they're perfect but I really did want to start a conversation because I do think overall whether it's the district managers, the Community Board itself it needs to run more professionally and needs to have better oversight and that's just not there and this is coming from a person who was on a board and also coming from a person who is now a Council Member that has two boards in my district and I see tons of issues. You know one board, great,

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1 great DM. Like no personal issues, great DM. We can
2 argue about whether or not you know the efficacy of
3 the board is reflective but personally like I love
4 this DM. I'm sad that she's now retired but my point
5 is, it's not about like whether or not I like a DM or
6 not, like for me, it's whether or not this board is
7 functioning, that it's open. I can't tell you the
8 amount of complaints that I get about regular
9 constituents not being able to get any support, call
10 the boards, no one's answering. It's like an array
11 of issues and I mean, you know speak to the borough
12 presidents as I have before I even introduced this
13 bill, I spoke - I sent you the job. Like, the day
14 before and to kind of like get this continued like
15 absolving any type of like responsibility for
16 anything I think is a problem.

18 ANTONIO REYNOSO: Can I just say uhm because what
19 we're trying to do here is take an inherently
20 political system and we have to make a choice,
21 whether we want to dive deeper into the politization
22 of it or move away from it and right here, where
23 we're having the struggle we're going to have is
24 that. That is what we're trying to get to. What
25 you're saying is, you do have power and there is

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political influence that you have in this and you should do something about it when a DM is out of control, when a District Manager is out of control, right? And what we're saying I think what most of the borough presidents have come together to say hey, what we want to do is while that might be an authority we might have or we could figure out, what we want to do is move away from the politics of it all.

But it's an appointment based process by which Council Members and Borough Presidents choose you to appoint, so inherently it is political.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: So, Brook- I mean I can't speak about Brooklyn because I know in my borough like ultimately the borough president Allan said this a ton of times like, you all had the final say. So, we make simple recommendations but it's not fair to now put it back on us. We're just making a recommendation.

ANTONIO REYNOSO: I don't want to put it on you.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: You make the final say on who is a board member.

ANTONIO REYNOSO: I guess the conversation I want to have with you is do you want us to - we have to

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make a decision like a decision on whether we want to
either recognize this political - like it's a
political position, a political office, that we have
political influence on or -

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: I think it should be
recognized and I think that there should be
guardrails in place for it to not be something that
is done that is politically natured. So if a DM is
completely out of control, like I think there should
be guard- I don't think a borough president should
just have unilateral authority to just remove a
district manager because they don't like them.
That's not what I'm saying. I'm talking about these
situations and circumstances where it's like - this
is clearly like a violation. It's clearly an issue.
Like there should be a recourse and if the Chair or
the board is not acting like I do believe there
should be a recourse. I am not suggesting and I do
not want to give you all power just to remove
district managers because you feel like it. That's
not what I'm trying to do and I hope we can get there
through this bill and - I'm sorry. Can I Chair the
Majority, sorry.

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2 MAJORITY LEADER FARIAS: I'm sorry, it's just my
3 thought to this is what body ever has had staff that
4 can stay over 20 years with board members that get
5 interchanged. The power dynamic there and the
6 education level that's there, there's a massive
7 disparity and that's what we're trying to solve. You
8 have DM's that can stay forever and volunteer
9 positions that have to hope the DM is acting in good
10 justice or in good faith of the community.

11 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay, thank you both. I
12 mean, we got other folks who want to ask questions.
13 Why don't we go to Council Member Schulman? I just
14 want to acknowledge Council Members Brewer and Mealy
15 have joined us as well. Thank you.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you Chair. So
17 uhm, so, I'm a member, I was a member of my local
18 community board and so, I think - so a couple things.
19 One is, I don't necessarily agree with all the
20 legislation that's here and I'm going to say that as
21 a Council Member but I think what's happening here is
22 there's a frustration level that has risen to a point
23 where we have this now and we have to try and work
24 with it.

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So, there's a few things. One is that my recollection Allan and you can - is that there's a personnel committee on each of the boards that selects a district manager and supervises the district manager because I remember when I was on the board and we had a district manager there was an issue with and we voted as a board what to do with that person. So, that you know but I don't think it's consistent in each borough or whatever and so maybe that's something that needs to be dealt with. Am I right Allan?

ALLAN SWISHER: Yes Council Member, you are correct. It's very clear in the charter that the district manager is hired by the board. Typically, it's either a personnel committee or the Chair who supervises.

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: And they, and they, yeah and they supervise the person and they you know and if there's issues that come up then they you know discipline or whatever it is - take some accountability. But I don't know if that's consistent across the board. I think that's part of what some of the frustration is. The other is that the problem is that the - each board, so the Chairs

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of each board, the bylaws of each board are different. That's the other thing and they are different across the boroughs too. So, for example, my board just changed their bylaws to say that the Chair can only be Chair for two terms but then other boards have different. So, that's another frustration level I think. So, that some boards may have - that's a problem. In some boards it's not and you know so that's an issue. The third is that to the point of making it political, making the boards political, we had uhm a on my board, we had a district manager who is also a district leader and brought his - and wasn't a district leader in the board, in another board. He was in another part of Queens but brought his mindset, his political mindset to board and that was a huge problem that I had to deal with for part of my first term.

So, maybe there's, maybe - you know it's not in any of this legislation but maybe we say that those but we can't - somebody can't hold a party position and be the district manager. You know I mean we're looking to you guys too to come up with some solutions and I know most of you here and I know you can do that.

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So, this is just I think a starting point because of the frustration level and then the other thing is when we have the folks coming off the board soon, because of term limits, that's a problem because of the way it's being done. It's being - who was appointed on an even year as opposed to an odd year and all this other stuff and that's going to bring a whole lot of issues to bear. But I think to the point of somebody - of the board being independent, I think it should be. I also want to share that uhm the board - I don't think and my experience with the two boards that I have is that the board members don't realize that they advisory. They think they make policy. That's a problem. That's a problem for us as the Council Members. Not so much for you guys, but it is for us. So, for whatever training or whatever else that they're advisory. And there are some - listen, I have some - Allan knows this. There's some issues that we have with some of the Board Chairs and the Board Managers help to manage that and then vice versa.

So, we just want to come up with some consistency and I'm opening it up to you because you know like I said, I'm not wedded but we need to have a starting

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point and it's just a frustration level that's just coming up to you know up to like the frustration levels. Yeah, did you want to say something?

KEISHA SUTTON-JAMES: I'll just say I appreciate, we appreciate, I think I can speak for all of us in saying that I think we appreciate this as a starting point in terms of the conversation. Like we hear what some of the concerns are. I hope that you know that Council Members understand kind of the position that we are in as well in this office and in terms of being in this very difficult place and yes, we appoint. Yes we appoint but as the general counsel said, we are not actually hiring and firing. It is the community boards leadership and their personnel committees that are actually managing and that is in the charter.

So, you know any variety of issues you know could be addressed through continuing for us. You know us continuing to work together to find the solutions that will be meaningful.

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: And I just had one other like more minor question. So I know Deputy Borough President, you talked about Intro. 1315, which is the monthly - don't the community boards - I

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mean I know six like has You Tube and stuff that they
livestream. So isn't that still available for folks
to look it up like after the fact or no?

THOMAS LUCIANA: Most boards do. So, there's
kind of two competing legal rubrics here. The first
is the Open Meetings Law, which governs how members
may participate remotely and then there's also a
provision in the charter that governs community
boards, making themselves available to be
livestreamed.

You know Borough President Richards had advocated
for all community boards to be livestreamed just so
that they're accessible and viewable to the public
and most of our boards have found ways to do that but
as you're well aware, there are many where they might
be meeting in a space that doesn't even have Wi-Fi.

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Well that's something
that needs to - we need to really take a hard look at
across the board and make sure that - because if
they're available and people can see them, then we
don't have to require them to do monthly because to
your point, the staff isn't there to do that. I know
it's not there to do that.

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THOMAS LUCIANA: And that has been the other challenge as well as budgetary and technical expertise on the staff. You know I'll completely acknowledge that there are a lot of district managers who have been around for a very long time and do things in a particular way. They bring institutional experience which often times is incredibly helpful but then there are new challenges. You know like during COVID, my office had to work very closely with all the boards to help navigate that extreme challenge.

One thing that I will add on the point of district managers is we've thought a lot about how to navigate this particularly in terms of in 2027 we're going to have a lot of people coming off the board, new people coming on who might not appreciate the role of a district manager. I've noticed that dynamic on some boards with a lot of new members. One thing that we have proposed and it's gotten a lot of push back but is having a formal annual evaluation process for district managers which in my mind, in my opinion actually protects both the board and the district manager and that it lays out neutral expectations. If that was something that my office

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could compel all boards to do, I think we would
willingly do that.

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Why don't you offer
that as an amendment to the legislation that we have?

THOMAS LUCIANA: To allow Borough Presidents to
set a standardized - I would be happy to discuss that
further because there have been things that we have
asked and worked with Community Boards to do. Many
of them are more than willing to do it, others have
pushed back and I think that it's an interesting
conversation to see the scope of what borough
presidents should be allowed to do and compel but I
would be more than happy to continue discussing.

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: No, we should - we
should and I appreciate everybody up here but just
know that I think the frustration has grown and grown
and grown and I've seen it as a community board
person so.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I appreciate Council Member
Schulman and I know the Borough President has some
time constraints and all four of the other Council
Members here have questions, so I'll just - we will
keep folks to the allotted time. We will hear from
Council Member Hanif followed by Council Member

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3 Paladino followed by Council Member Mealy and then
4 Council Member Brewer. I will just note for Council
5 Member Schulman's benefit on the record. In 1991
6 Coib(SP?) did issue an analysis that board chairs and
7 district managers are not on the substantial policy
8 making discretion list and therefore they are not
9 restricted from serving as district leaders. Only
10 people who are city employees who are on that
11 substantial policy making discretion list are
12 prohibited from serving as district leaders. No, no,
13 no, if the bylaws of the board were to prohibit it or
14 if Coib were to do an updated analysis in 35 years
15 later then it would inform it. Thank you. Council
16 Member Hanif.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you. Thanks for
18 being here. I think community boards are important
19 but they're archaic. I feel like they have not
20 evolved in a way where a lot of our other sort of
21 participatory democracy spaces look right now. And I
22 think as a result of that, not seeing young people
23 even if you know a lot of attempts to appoint a
24 younger person. It is still a space that is and
25 probably archaic isn't the best, best word but
something needs to change about how we do - like we

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1 have to come to the 21st century is how I feel with
2 community boards and I wanted to ask about uhm, what
3 the idea around the evaluation. I was wondering if
4 there is any current performance metric or
5 accountability structure for district managers and
6 board members?
7

8 ANTONIO REYNOSO: Those are set forth by the
9 local community boards. So, every community board
10 has their own standard for evaluating DM's. Of which
11 we are not - well which in Brooklyn we're not a part
12 of.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Got it and then uhm, what
14 are the - what's the process when a board member
15 experiences discrimination or harassment?

16 THOMAS LUCIANA: So, board members are protected
17 by the city's EEO policy and also the New York City
18 Human Rights Law. My office set up a code of conduct
19 that applies to members, not to DM's because we don't
20 have control over DM's. That dictates what the
21 process by which a community board member can make a
22 complaint to our office. Now typically in the
23 instance of an EEO complaint that gets referred to
24 our EEO officer, a community board member also would
25 have the ability to reach out to the Commission on

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Human Rights or the EPC, depending on the situation and whether they were comfortable speaking to our office.

Our ability to discipline or remove members is limited to a provision that says we are allowed to remove members for cause, which is not defiant in the charter. So, by creating this code of conduct, it actually allowed us to specify what we believe cause is and certainly violating you know the human rights law or EEO policy would constitute potential cause for removal.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And have there been members who were removed for misconduct?

THOMAS LUCIANA: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And what's that process?

THOMAS LUCIANA: I think all of our offices handle it relatively similarly but I'll speak to my office. A written complaint is made to me as the advisor to the borough president on these issues about whether he has cause to remove someone.

If the individual making the complaint makes a prima facie case that if we accept their allegations as true, that would be discrimination, then we conduct an investigation and then based on that

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investigation, I make a recommendation to the borough president about whether to use his power under the Charter to remove a member.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Got it, that's helpful. And what percent of the funding do your offices allocate?

ANTONIO REYNOSO: We've been asked that question three times.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Oh, sorry.

ANTONIO REYNOSO: We got the question pretty late but we have at least six to seven departments in each of our office that handle community board work in one way or another. Many split times, some are dedicated to just community boards.

COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And like no direct discretionary funding to the Community Board itself?

ANTONIO REYNOSO: No, no, no. Well, we do have an office for community boards in my office where we have two employees that specifically deal with just our community board but you know there's at least 30 staff members that do something, 30 to 40 staff members that do something related to community boards in my office, in our office.

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2 ALLAN SWISHER: Same thing, our community board
3 unit is specific and works every day full time on any
4 community board matter and again, some times those
5 issues are not handled directly by the board because
6 they move out of what their expertise and their
7 responsibilities are. They will go to the general
8 counsel. They will come to me as the Deputy Chief of
9 Staff at times and it then will go to other pieces of
10 the agency where the expertise lies, whether it's our
11 human - our human resources division, whether it's
12 our land use division, our community affairs
13 division. So, while it may be our three members in
14 our community board unit, the whole agency in some
15 shape or form does do deal with all of our boards.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Got it. While this is all
17 very helpful and I think we're all on the same page
18 that some changes need to be made and I'm looking
19 forward to working with you. I want to give a shout
20 out to my community boards, Brooklyn 6, 7 and 12.
21 They're doing great work. You know we've had hard
22 conversations at least for the Community Board 7 with
23 our women, a housing project. So, it's wonderful to
24 see the process in place really shape community
25 vision and goals.

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3 So, I would never want them scrapped but how can
4 we really improve and bring them some clear
5 improvements? Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you very much Council
7 Member Hanif. Council Member Paladino.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Good morning and thank
9 you everybody for being here. I just want to make a
10 statement. First of all, community boards are not
11 archaic. Let me make that very clear. They are
12 extremely necessary, as are our district managers.
13 District managers are key to the operation of a
14 community board. They are aware of everything that
15 happens within the community board- what happens
16 within the area. Why would we want to limit them to
17 term limits? It's just another way trying to get rid
18 of the community boards like we do. Look, we have
19 term limits already set up for the board members. I
20 don't understand why we would give overall power to a
21 borough president and why would we want to strap you
22 with that? This is a political. This is not a
23 political office and to have you - you guys are doing
24 a great job. We have - we have an unscrupulous
25 borough president, which we do not, especially in
Queens. Thank you very much.

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CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Or in Brooklyn.

COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: The idea of giving somebody that kind of power to fire a district manager is just way, way too much. To me, let me just go to one other thing. You know we have here Intro. 1065. In my opinion, there is a poison pill wrapped up with other more reasonable proposed legislation on this slate that would make a better - community boards better.

Better resourced with a more equitable and in carrying out their mission to represent the needs and the advisory of opinions of their district. We are right now in a situation where too much power. This is all elected by the communities, the volunteers of communities who have lived in the communities and I know in district, in Community Board 7, we lost Gene Kelty(SP?) who was vital. I mean he knew every tick and every tock. I've never met an encyclopedia like that. So you know I don't like the ageism game that is being played out in so many areas. Yes, we do need to let in fresh air and we do. You know when we look to replace community board members, there is certain criteria's that I follow, I often meet with those people in my office and then I make reference

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to my borough president as to I think some great people who have their best interest of the community. Whether they are 25 or whether they are 55. I don't care how old a person is but the burden of process should not be placed on the borough president. Absolutely not. I don't believe you should have the right to fire anybody. They have the ability to bring in, do a vote whether or not they want the district managers to stay. The same way we have the ability to vote on the overall boards. Boards are very complicated but they're broken down and I've had the ability to see it first hand in District 19 with all the land use processes that are going forward. So, I'm very much a very strong participant in my community board, smoke shops and other things. You know they open up to me because we stay a lines of communication. So, maybe I'm very fortunate but I hear a lot of vendetta stuff going on here. I don't much care for that you know and I don't want this to turn into that through 1065. I want this to be you know just - if there needs to be changes fine, we'll listen to it and we'll come to a reasonable one but I am totally against 1065.

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2 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you very much. We
3 won't do applause in here. Thanks. I do just want
4 to make one clarifying statement. Thank you for your
5 thoughts Council Member Paladino. There would be
6 terms in Council Member Williams bill but not term
7 limits. So, somebody could be reappointed for an
8 infinite number of terms. Yes, so just to say,
9 unlike us, we face term limits. Board members face
10 term limits. This would just create terms. So, you
11 could be reappointed for 24 year terms potentially.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: [INAUDIBLE 01:20:31].

13 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: That piece I'm not
14 disagreeing with at all. I totally hear you. I just
15 wanted to clarify that one point. We will go to
16 Council Member Mealy and then to Council Member
17 Brewer.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Yes, I just want to put on
19 the record, I concur with my colleague Paladino. For
20 someone that has five community boards, more than
21 anybody in the whole city, every borough. I have
22 five community boards, five precincts and two PSA's
23 and I could say the one time that we all was kind of
24 on the same page was City of Yes. I have saw so many
25 different things go on. I have Community Board 16.

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They don't have a space as of yet. They - I got to ask you a question, how many of your community boards are still doing Zoom?

THOMAS LUCIANA: So, under the Open Meetings Law, actually no public bodies including Community Boards are allowed to do peer meetings. I would say most of my 14 boards are doing some hybrid.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Well, some of them but the majority can go to the meeting, right?

THOMAS LUCIANA: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: So, during COVID, one of my Community Boards, they have a new district manager. I get at the board and ask them, who is this person? You should check your records borough president. They said, no it's private. I called your office to find out how could that be private? To this day, I haven't met the new community board. That's disgusting. So, we stand taking politics out of it. I really don't want to give it - take something away. All that institutional knowledge to give it to borough presidents to do something totally different. It could be political that way. Some people I want on the board. The borough president says no. How is that not political? Some people

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1 have blood, sweat and tears, volunteered their time,
2 when no one else was even concerned about our
3 community, the boards were. Everyone on the board
4 and the district manager. Who did I have? Louis
5 Watkins. He had been there forever.
6

7 But he did right by the community and now that it
8 is has moved on to have somebody that you don't know
9 and be an elected official of that district, how is
10 that not political? And then to have the whole -
11 well the board and the powers to be safe. They can't
12 tell you who is getting this position because when
13 they got the position, it was during COVID and it was
14 online. So, I think we can not afford to let anyone
15 have that kind of authority just to fire the district
16 managers because you never know. We could do that
17 and we could get the borough. Presidents could put
18 their own [INAUDIBLE 01:23:51] one there and then how
19 is that really helping the city? We need people who
20 are really for the people, by the people, and that's
21 one way we can keep these community boards going. I
22 don't feel it was correct. Some people were kicked
23 off the board without even a conversation and they
24 have really been helpful to this city and I believe
25 every borough president body should start thinking

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1 about that. And I heard you said you want new people
2 borough president; we could have them all. We can't
3 throw the baby out with the bath water because
4 they're older or we can't just put all young people
5 in there because they're inexperienced. So, I feel
6 we need everyone and we can't be discriminatory in
7 regards to people age. I could go deeper on that
8 because I heard it with my own ears but I know my
9 community boards have been changed so much and I'm
10 not saying that it was a good thing, some of them I
11 wanted off, some of them I didn't but I dealt with
12 whatever I got and I knew I could of gotten better
13 people but the board, seemed like they have autonomy
14 on who they want to put on these community boards.
15 And that's wrong and I said last year I'd go back and
16 look at - I said this is not their year up and all of
17 a sudden their year is up and then I put somebody in
18 and all of a sudden they're not in.

19 So, this whole thing needs to be revamped and I
20 really thank my colleague Paladino, what she said,
21 I'm 200 percent. It's like we'll take one way and
22 get another dictator. So, sometimes you got to bear
23 teeth and grin and deal with what you have. I need
24
25

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to know how could district managers be running for
office and still working.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: As a district manager.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Yeah, thank you very much
Council Member.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Answer that question.
Please, no answer that question.

ANTONIO REYNOSO: No, no on a couple of issues
just in Brooklyn, even during mid-terms, people get
removed for attendance only. So, if there was
somebody in Brooklyn that didn't show up to any
meetings, they went through a process.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Yeah, we know all about
that.

ANTONIO REYNOSO: So, there's no way you get
removed from borough, from there. Outside of that -

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: I have paperwork on it I
could show you.

ANTONIO REYNOSO: From Community Board right now
and especially in the ones that you in yours in 16,
which we've had troubles with quorum, have been
almost exclusively -

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: 17, 3, 8, 9.

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2 ANTONIO REYNOSO: Have been exclusively related
3 to attendance. It's now a district manager has all
4 the authority, regardless of what we do has all the
5 authority to run for office independent of what we -
6 we can't do anything about that. If after they run
7 for office, the community board decides they don't
8 want the DM to be there, that's on them as well. We
9 can't control that.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: No, I believe at one point
11 uhm, it's like a conflict. Like City Council, they
12 give us a black out day.

13 ANTONIO REYNOSO: No, not for them and the
14 Council Member could speak to that but you know
15 Rafael Salamanca used to be a Community Board
16 District Manager and he's now a Council Member.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: But in Brooklyn we didn't
18 do that.

19 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Well, I think that it's -
20 yeah, as far as I know it would really be a question
21 for the bylaws of the given community board, if they
22 wanted to prohibit their staff member, the district
23 manager or assistant district manager from seeking
24 public office. I don't - maybe that could be a way
25

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to do it but there's not a citywide policy that prohibits somebody's inability to run for office.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Like Sharoni Perry, she was running against Council Member Alvan. They made her get off the community board because she was running against a Council Member, so it's a whole - this whole thing -

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: But I think ultimately these are the decisions that are up to the board, up to the individual board on how they manage their staff. Perhaps that could be a way to handle that if that was something that you wanted to explore but thank you very much for the comments and appreciate borough president Reynoso clarifying that people are removed from the Community Board based on attendance. Council Member Brewer.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much. I have a lot of experience with this topic. The first issue, just be clear, they need more money. Community Boards need more money and have any of you advocated for more money for the Community Boards? I haven't heard it, so I'm wondering if you have.

ANTONIO REYNOSO: Every single year I individually come when my staff come and I've been

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screaming to the mountain tops Council Member. More
money for Community Boards and it's just something
that -

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Did you give an amount
this year?

ANTONIO REYNOSO: Excuse me?

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Did you give an amount?

ANTONIO REYNOSO: I think so.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, keep going and
Manhattan, did you advocate for more money?

KEISHA SUTTON-JAMES: Yes as well. Yes we did.
We have.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: This year?

KEISHA SUTTON-JAMES: I believe we did this year
as well. I'd have to double check.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, I haven't heard it
so. Go ahead, have you advocated?

ALLAN SWISHER: It's been a common refrain in our
office; I can't speak with specifics about this year.
I wasn't involved in that process.

THOMAS LUCIANA: Same here. Over the years, I
think we've included in our borough budget priorities
as well on expense side. Again, I'm not specifically
sure about this year.

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COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, I'm just saying, I believe that should be the main topic of this discussion. You got the SLA, cannabis, outdoor cafés, ULURP, technology, that's a lot for these community boards and they are not able to function given the increased number of activities that they have to produce. So, that will be something I'd like to see more about from all of you.

Second, they eight years at the Charter Revision came about with all due respect, because some people in the Bronx who were members of Community Boards were asleep the entire time and not you but those borough presidents did not take them off. They slept through the entire meeting. Nobody left, they stayed on. It wasn't in Manhattan, I'll be honest with you but in the other boroughs, they slept and that's why we ended up with this crazy eight years. I am not supportive of it because the land use is what is the number one topic and you cannot learn in my opinion, eight years land use successfully to be able to take on the developers.

Now, understand Manhattan had yours before Bronx and other places ever heard of a ULURP, in terms of the community boards. We have had ULURPs for I don't

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1 know 50 years now. So, the issue is land use. How
2 do you end up with a group of people who are able to
3 handle the ULURP challenges? That to me is the
4 number one issue. My question is in terms of term
5 limits. I am not supportive. I understand what the
6 bill is that Council Member Williams has suggested
7 but to me, this notion that volunteers can't
8 supervise pay staff is ridiculous. I've been on 12
9 boards of nonprofits, volunteers, supervising, paid
10 staff. So, to me that's a nonstarter. I do wonder
11 if you - maybe you said this earlier, your position
12 because I do believe that without a knowledgeable
13 district manager, the entire board is not going to
14 function. I need a partner in that community board.
15 I have three of them. I need a partner to be able to
16 work with me on that issue. So, what's your
17 position? Maybe you said it earlier, on district
18 managers remaining and or maybe and not having term
19 limits. Even those that can be shut off on a certain
20 time period. Understand all district managers in
21 Manhattan used to work for me, understand that.

23 ANTONIO REYNOSO: I think in our testimony, we
24 all said that by Charter law, it makes it very clear
25 that we don't have authority as to how long or how

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short a district manager - so we don't support.

Right now we've taken a consensus that we don't support the bill where we are in charge of district managers or can fire them and so forth.

The term limits one - not the term limits, the terms, is this something we're willing to have a discussion about? Not term limits, the terms but the one where we get the authority to remove them, it's not something that we are supportive of.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: No, I don't want you to have it either. The other question I have, I don't agree with Council Member Restler on this is, I don't think the Mayor's office should be involved in the way that is suggested by some of the legislation. When you're on a community board, you need to have definite authority away from any relationship with the Mayor's Office in the sense that you don't want to be - okay, we get money from them. We get staffing from them. We get support - lots and lots and lots of well we need to support this ULURP, oh we need to support this. That doesn't work and I do think the borough presidents are separate. You're elected separately.

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2 So, what's your position on that? Now, whatever
3 that I call the de Blasio bill that Charter Revision
4 that brought in those two new agencies, I think they
5 should be abolished. I sued them and I lost.

6 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Please, no clapping.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: My question would be what
8 is your position on keeping more, maybe more support
9 in terms of funding for the borough presidents and
10 the community boards at the borough presidents office
11 and not in the mayor's office? What's your position
12 on that?

13 ANTONIO REYNOSO: Sorry, I'm conferring with the
14 whole crew because we are one in this and we're
15 trying to make sure that we do it as united as
16 possible and we took her time Council Member, so if
17 Council Member Restler.

18 ALLAN SWISHER: So, yeah I think one of the
19 concerns that we had was that conflicts that might
20 raise between - particularly when it comes to legal
21 issues and community planning. We already fulfill a
22 lot of the functions that are contemplated in the
23 bill like with HR, EEO, budgeting, etc..

24 I certainly take your point Council Member about
25 those conflicts might also exist with the Mayor's

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Office as well. So, I think that we're all open to the idea of an independent office but one of the refrains that have kept coming up here is consistency among community boards and there are 59 across the city. Assigning it to individual borough presidents offices and then trusting us to coordinate, it just seems inefficient and redundant, particularly whenever you have agencies that are already doing those sort of nonpartisan services for all other agencies, like you know DCAS for instance but I certainly take your point.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [INAUDIBLE 01:34:05]

DCAS?

ALLAN SWISHER: I have my own issues with DCAS certainly but it's something that we grapple with.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I just want to take a moment to say I think you misrepresented our package. The bills that I've introduced today. None of my bills give more power and authority at the Mayor's Office. It does assign some responsibilities at DCAS that I think are already the responsibility that clarifies them. It actually gives more power and responsibility to the borough presidents to provide technical assistance and support to the community

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boards. So, I think what you've articulated is actually very consistent with the legislation I've introduced today. So, just encourage you to take a harder look at it, our forever Borough President.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I said the word DCAS.

THOMAS LUCIANA: Council Member if I can just add one thing. We talk about consistency. We talk about training of community board members. One of the things that I think the group has spoken about in the past and our Deputy Borough President in the past has testified to this, is that the community board handbook which is the document that we kind of refer folks to hasn't been updated by CAU or Mayor's Office or wherever since the Bloomberg Administration.

So, it doesn't talk anything about how remote voting or remote meetings are held. Obviously things have changed in the 20 odd years and so, that document and we've asked CAU, the Mayor's Office to take that up and provide a much needed update so that some of the questions that we get in our office can simply be addressed through that handbook.

KEISHA SUTTON-JAMES: May I add to that?

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I never listened to anybody else's handbook. I do my own.

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KEISHA SUTTON-JAMES: I'll add that that handbook
is no longer available on the website.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Who needs it? Do your
own. The hell with them.

KEISHA SUTTON-JAMES: I will also just add just
caution and concern around the borough presidents
taking on - offices taking on more is your point
around DCAS. We don't manage real estate in our
office. We are consistently being asked for
assistance with finding suitable meeting space,
particularly in this post COVID, in this post COVID
world. That is not an expertise that we have within
our office to find you know suitable real estate,
suitable space for community members. OTI, we are
not - I mean we are able to manage the technology in
our office and beyond but we are not - we don't have
the bandwidth, we don't have the funding to actually
support from a technology perspective being the back
office if you will from a technology perspective,
staying with the EO, etc., etc.. So, there is
concern about where that expertise lies and you know
having again an unfunded mandate.

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COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: But do all your community boards have owls? I know all the ones in Manhattan do. Do they all have owls? Manhattan does.

KEISHA SUTTON-JAMES: Manhattan has the owls. We actually provide our Zoom accounts for all of our community boards.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I'm aware.

KEISHA SUTTON-JAMES: I don't know about the other boroughs.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: No owls?

ALLAN SWISHER: I don't think owls in particular but we've helped many community boards find some technical solutions.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: We pay for all the owls. You don't pay for owls in Brooklyn?

ANTONIO REYNOSO: Not yet. We give technical support as well.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: They need owls.

ANTONIO REYNOSO: No.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: They need them.

ANTONIO REYNOSO: Oh, I hear you.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Do you know what an owl is? Yes.

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2 ANTONIO REYNOSO: You're my favorite borough
3 president in the history of borough presidents, so I
4 will take into account owls for all my community
5 boards. My members are here.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I know, I know them all.

7 ANTONIO REYNOSO: Okay got it, I got it.

8 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Just on trainings. I
10 just want to stay on trainings.

11 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Last one from Council
12 Member Brewer.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay but what do you do
14 in terms of trainings? What's the - like do you have
15 certain numbers, certain topics? I did everything,
16 all the trainings.

17 ANTONIO REYNOSO: We do most - we do most of the
18 trainings for our community board staff. We do an
19 orientation. We're starting to do like EO training
20 and so forth but it's all - I think we're all doing -

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Procedure, you don't do
22 parliamentary procedure?

23 ANTONIO REYNOSO: We do parliamentary procedure.
24 The issue here is that and this amount of support
25 that we can give to community boards that feel that

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DCAS is responsible for that. So, we'll do it and we'll continue to do it but we're playing the role of DCAS without getting any of the funding to make it happen.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

KEISHA SUTTON-JAMES: I'd say the same. Yes, we do - yes we follow in doing you know robust training. EEO, COIB, parliamentary procedure land use 101. Their a number, there array, in fact we're working on you know putting together the most recent course for the new appointees right now.

ALLAN SWISHER: Queens provides the same trainings at a mandatory orientation for new members whenever they're -

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And do you do ongoing training also ongoing?

ALLAN SWISHER: Uh ongoing training, depending on need and if the community board comes to us but we feel that the orientation training is the most crucial.

THOMAS LUCIANA: Each August, we hold our new member orientation where we have the CEC, COIB, City Planning, our general counsel comes in and speaks to the new board members. During the year, we will have

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other opportunities for board members in
parliamentary procedure, which we're actually peeling
another round now.

Recently, we had the CEC participate in a
conflict resolution session at Borough Hall, so we've
done that as well. We work very closely with CEC and
the trainings that they offer and be sure that each
of the boards and board members get that information
in order for them to participate.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Finally, Dr. Aldon
Bonea(SP?) who was obviously a deputy in my office,
knows more about community boards than any other
human being on the face of the earth and my
suggestion would be at some point to have a
conversation with him. He does the trainings. Now
he's at the fund for the City of New York. There's
nobody better. He talks about it nationally. Thank
you very much Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you very much. We
are 90 minutes into this panel. I have not asked a
single question and you can imagine, I have like 20
pages of questions that I was prepared for but I will
try to limit myself just to a few. I'll just say,
you can hear, you heard from a diverse set of Council

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Members this morning who are frustrated with the status quo of community boards and I think each of us who attend multiple community board meetings every month would all say that there's real unevenness in how these boards operate. Some are functioning quite well, some are not and there's a need for more support for these boards to function at a standard and a level that we all expect. And with the limited resources that they have, limited staffing that they have, it's just not realistic to expect things to change without I think some centralized support.

I've heard Borough President Reynoso and others speak to support for a new independent office but that would of course require a charter referendum and there's no referendum in site. We'll see perhaps the state legislation introduced by Senator Kruger and Simone may change those dynamics and make it easier for us to get Charter referendums, Charter referenda excuse me, on the ballot to allow for the types of changes that I think Borough President Reynoso you certain envision.

In the immediate though, the options we have are what we can do legislatively to make things work better. So, with that, barring changes that require

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a referenda, which may or may not happen in our lifetimes, in the real world of what we can do today to make things better, do you support the borough presidents taking on more responsibility to provide technical backend support to make our community boards function better? I'm happy to keep that to a yes or no if you're able to but if you're not then you know briefly.

ANTONIO REYNOSO: If there is money behind it and there's no referendum in site?

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Totally.

ANTONIO REYNOSO: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Cool.

KEISHA SUTTON-JAMES: And we have the same response. It needs to be funded.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Great.

ALLAN SWISHER: Yes, although I think there needs to be some clarity with respect to particularly legal support, IT support, and planning support because potential conflicts.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Yes.

THOMAS LUCIANA: I would agree with my colleagues. I haven't had that opportunity to speak with the borough president about that specific

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question, but I think in terms of what everybody here
has said, we would be able to work with that as well.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Totally and I mean in think
we would all agree that city agencies, especially
since they didn't have the courtesy to even show up
today, are failing community boards. You know OTI's
testimony brags about the one dedicated staffer that
they have to provide support to 59 community boards
where they may or may not respond in 3, 6, 9, 12
months to address issues of import of urgency to our
community boards and DCAS, which has no dedicated
support to actually provide office space or meeting
space to our community boards, should be doing its
job. So, we want our city agencies to be helping
more but I think giving dedicated resources to the
borough presidents office is to provide that support
could actually help us get things done.

I do want to ask on planning, do you think that
community boards have the requisite planning
expertise and capacity today to do their jobs
effectively?

ANTONIO REYNOSO: No, there are some community
boards that have planners, architects and folks that
have some knowledge of land use within the community

board through their volunteered time have assisted but outside of that, they rely almost exclusively on our office to be able to be helpful and considering the amount of ULURP applications that come into Brooklyn specifically, we do the best we can to show some general support but they should have their own planners. They should have some system by which they can do their own planning work and they do it with you know - I say it with like a gum and duct tape figure out a way to put forth amazing recommendations on land use items with almost no expertise provided to them by the City of New York.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you.

KEISHA SUTTON-JAMES: The civic engagement commission is supposed to provide land use training but that's not happening.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Can I just ask you on that Deputy Borough President, the Civic Engagement Commission was tasked with providing community boards with access to professional planning expertise, translation resources, training and land use technology and meeting procedures. To your knowledge, are they doing any of those things?

PANEL: No, no.

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2 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: It would have been great of
3 them to show up at our invitation to answer those
4 questions but it's very helpful to get clearly on the
5 record that they are not doing their jobs.

6 KEISHA SUTTON-JAMES: No, they're not and it's
7 absolutely necessary as the borough president stated,
8 they are pulling it together however they can. We
9 provide support but it's not sufficient meaning we
10 can't meet that need. It's not that we are not doing
11 the best that we can, it's that the Civic Engagement
12 Commission is supposed to be doing this.

13 They also need more financial support. They hire
14 consultants but they need you know more financial
15 support in order to be able to hire more consultants
16 and really increase their staff capacity.

17 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Great, anything you guys
18 would like to add on this?

19 ALLAN SWISHER: Just add, we have worked with the
20 CEC and as I mentioned, we just did our conflict
21 resolution with CEC so we do have a relationship with
22 them. We have worked with them on translation as
23 well. There is an additional need for some more land
24 use training. We work with them on some of the
25

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1 trainings they've done with HPD. So, we have had
2 some success working with the CEC.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay, uhm and I just want
5 to, I think I'll do one more topic and then let you
6 all go. Is especially Mr. Swisher, you spoke to
7 concerns about potential conflicts of interest, which
8 I understand is challenging. You know as Borough
9 President Reynoso I think laid out clearly, this is
10 all a political process. A political appointment
11 process, etc., and elected officials are appointing
12 these people and there are times when the policy
13 priorities and preferences of the borough president
14 are in conflict with what the board chairs, district
15 managers, or full boards want. And so, providing
16 guidance and support gets tricky but I just wonder if
17 you could elaborate like what are the - are there any
18 ideas that you have that with additional resources,
19 how could borough presidents offices kind of avoid or
20 limit those conflicts of interest to continue to be
21 effective resources to support community boards?

22 ALLAN SWISHER: Well, I think I guess first I'll
23 talk about legal conflicts. You know the law
24 department is properly situated as uh the legal
25 representation for community boards. When it comes

to compliance advice which would sort of fall under the rubric of legal advice, I certainly have you know I advise community boards constantly on Open Meetings Law, FOIL, etc.. I think where it gets tricky is whenever there's a conflict between the Borough Presidents responsibilities under the Charter to perhaps remove a member for cause and then also providing legal advice to a Chair or a District Manager about how to navigate that.

So, for instance, if there was a particular community board member who were to file complaints, like an EEO complaint against a Chair, I think that - or a district manager, certainly that Chair or District Manager should be able to you know benefit from having legal advice, legal counsel but I can't provide that because their particular interest might diverge from the borough presidents to potentially remove a member.

Now, if there were a dedicated attorney whose only client was community boards, I think that that would potentially address it. However, to be fair to the law department, I have found that the Office of Legal Counsel typically has been fairly responsive to those types of questions.

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CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Good, that's helpful.

Appreciate you laying that out. The last thing is just a curiosity point for me. We've been doing our own analysis of the Open Meetings Law and we think there's a valid question of whether committee hearings, committee meetings excuse me, need to be held hybrid or in person. Is your all's collective analysis, have you looked at this question? Not just the board meetings but the Committee meetings in particular and you've all come to the conclusion and have you engaged with the law department on this? That Committee meetings can not be held exclusively on Zoom?

THOMAS LUCIANA: I'm happy to address that if my colleagues here -

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: You have a lawyer at the table.

THOMAS LUCIANA: Yeah, uhm so this is a tricky question because I think that you're getting to the point that it's very challenging for a lot of community boards to hold committee meetings in person for space, time and needs etc., etc.. The committee on the open government has issued advisory opinions stating that all public bodies, which includes

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Committees of public bodies, need to comply with the
Open Meetings law in person requirement.

Uhm, I think that a lot of community boards are
finding a grey area there in terms of how to navigate
this, particularly if they're not voting on an issue.
If it's - you know a committee meeting, if it's an
informational session that is accessible to the
public, anyone can sign in. There's not a vote. In
terms of risk of you know an Article 78 or some sort
of compliance issue with that.

I think that it's fairly low but I also think
that the Open Meetings Law and advisory opinions
surrounding that, it is clear that yes, they do need
to be in person.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay and I just will say
this in closing and then let you all have a nice day,
is I feel like we as a city government fail to
provide enough support to Community Boards, and I
think the only folks that are trying are the Borough
Presidents Offices. So, I appreciate that you all
are trying. I think that there's so many grey areas
of what actually falls at your doorstep versus other
peoples doorsteps and other folks are not doing their
jobs, and it's unfortunate.

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1 So, the spirit of the legislation that I've
2 introduced is to make clear who is responsible for
3 what working within what we can do legislatively to
4 provide more support and technical assistance to make
5 boards - ensure that all boards are functioning well
6 but this - my desire to have you all as our first
7 panel today was in part to recognize that you all are
8 trying and I appreciate that you're trying. I'm sure
9 that each of my colleagues in each of the different
10 boroughs have different opinions to varying degrees.
11 You know we're all New Yorkers so we have too many
12 opinions but uh I really do appreciate that I think
13 we have four borough presidents who are former
14 council members who understand, who have worked with
15 their boards - who have worked with Community Boards
16 for many, many year and I think you're trying, which
17 we recognize and appreciate. I know, I certainly can
18 say from my experience in Brooklyn, Borough President
19 Reynoso and his team are doing a great job.

20 So, I really appreciate it. Thank you all for
21 being here today. Sorry this went for almost two
22 hours but it's good conversation, so thank you so
23 much.
24

25 PANEL: Thank you.

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2 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Next panel we'll hear from
3 are District Managers. Uhm, we will go with uhm why
4 don't we try to do some borough diversity? What do
5 we got? I think - alright we will do Celeste Leon
6 from Brooklyn Community Board 4. Bushwick is here.

7 We will do Rafael Mourie-Punnett, excuse me if
8 I'm mispronouncing your name from Bronx Community
9 Board 6. We will do George Torres from Community
10 Board 12 in the Bronx. We will do Jeremy Laufer from
11 Brooklyn Community Board 7. I think that's 4 and
12 then we'll do a second panel. I think 4 is all we
13 can squeeze here.

14 Okay you all can testify in whatever order you
15 are so moved but you are - we need to swear you in.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Good afternoon.
17 If you could just raise your right hands please. Do
18 you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and
19 nothing but the truth in your testimony today and
20 respond honestly to Council Member questions?

21 PANEL: I do.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You can go ahead.

23 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Go ahead.

24 CELESTE LEON: I am still digesting everything we
25 just heard but I will go ahead right into my

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1 testimony. So good morning Committee Members, Chair
2 Restler. My name is Celeste Leon, I'm the District
3 Manager of Brooklyn Community Board 4 and the
4 facilitator of the future of community boards working
5 group, which includes district managers citywide. I,
6 as a DM eight years ago, I found my role and tasks
7 overwhelming, frustrating and at times unnecessarily
8 complicated. I eagerly sought to learn more from
9 mentors such as the former chairperson, colleagues
10 and taking on extra responsibilities such as
11 moderating borough budget consultations.
12

13 After many meetings where the same issues were
14 discussed and nothing changed, I asked my colleagues
15 in Brooklyn about intentionally coming together and
16 documenting shared challenges and potential
17 solutions. I extended this invitation to other
18 district managers citywide who were serving as their
19 boroughs budget consultation moderators. The
20 pandemic eventually provided a unique opportunity to
21 virtually convene and strengthen relationships in a
22 time of crisis. That is how the first working group
23 report, the future of NYC Community Boards report was
24 prepared with independent support from a staff member
25 who worked for then Council Member Antonio Reynoso

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1 who is now our current Brooklyn Borough President. I
2 want to focus my testimony today in reference to
3 Intro. 1314, the support from the Borough Presidents
4 Office, it has to be independent. It has to reflect
5 the nature of the community boards. Boards should
6 have a say in who is employed. It should also
7 include financial and purchasing assistance.
8

9 This is you know formalizing really the role of
10 what they do now, which has only been done based on
11 previous discussions, including HR. A portion of the
12 borough presidents budget should be separately
13 allocated, dedicated to this unit.

14 There should be separate accountability or
15 consolidation of other agencies that are responsible
16 for supporting the community boards. It should be
17 protected from the whims favor of the borough
18 presidents or any elected officials. It should be
19 required to maintain records for in transitional
20 purposes. Examples, new administration, staff
21 turnover, board support. Separate consideration for
22 this is an analysis, a report or an audit of all the
23 personnel that current assist the boards.

24 I also want to focus on the board member training
25 Intro. - the borough president offices had

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inconsistent practices, which result in equitable outcomes. Consider requiring a consolidated report in all practices to inform the boroughs and future administrations. We often see a top down approach whenever it comes to the community boards. This leads to miscommunications. Recommend a more collaborative approach, get the boards involved, have boards share knowledge. Similar recommendations to the Civic Engagement Commission. They have operated on behalf of the boards without consulting the boards, and a recommendation for at least the borough boards, which include all of our Chairs in partnership with the borough presidents to inform their work.

There are some other items. I have responded to all of the points but I'm going to save my time. Some things that were left out, I know we've heard a lot about district managers but I just want to flag that there is currently no space for district managers to air grievances. So, if there is a toxic relationship with a board member or there's a toxic work environment, there's no space to resolve that.

I thank you for your time. A sign of good leadership is a balance of informed decision making

and engagement and thank you for the opportunity to
be a part of that.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you very much Celeste
and I just want to thank you for the really
thoughtful work of the working group and the report
recommendations that you all put together. It
certainly was the - on the future of New York City's
Community Board, certainly the underpinning for this
hearing and for the legislative package we drafted.
Go ahead.

RAFAEL MOURIE-PUNNETT: Good afternoon Chair
Restler. My name is Rafael Mourie-Punnett, I'm the
District Manager for Bronx Community Board 6. Thank
you for holding this oversight hearing. I would like
to express my support for Introduction 1250. In
particular when it comes to the publishing of bylaws
and I'm going to talk about borough board because no
one is really talking about borough board here. So,
City Council does oversight over the agencies on a
citywide level. We do oversight of our local
agencies on the community district level but there's
also supposed to be oversight over city agencies at
the borough level. The borough board and the borough
cabinet are by Charter required to do these things

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and unfortunately there are no Bronx members on the committee but you can ask your colleagues, this doesn't happen in the Bronx. We don't see oversight over the agencies at a borough level. We essentially get a presentation where we're talked at for an hour and then we go home.

We also don't have by laws at Borough Board and I think creating by laws at the borough level and publishing them publicly, and allowing the Council Members and community boards and BP to draft them in a joint manner would create a system where why we could do oversight over agencies at a borough level.

If you walk around the Bronx, you can see there's public safety needs. There's trash pickup that needs to happen. There's street improvements that need to happen and there needs to be oversight at the borough level and the Charter requires us to do this and we're not doing it.

I also would like to express my support for Introduction 1314, which would be formalizing the Borough Presidents responsibilities to provide technical assistance to the boards. I want to counter the narrative that was presented to the Committee by the borough presidents. They provided

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1 joint testimony but in practice what we are seeing is
2 the amount of support and relationship between
3 borough hall and the community boards varies widely
4 based on the borough you're in. I can speak to the
5 Bronx, essentially what the Bronx Borough President
6 provides in support to the community boards is one,
7 they process our EEO complaints. Two, they do our
8 payroll and that's it. This idea that one-third of
9 their staff are supporting the boards is not my
10 experience. I have one full time person that I share
11 amongst 12 boards for support. I have one person
12 that I share with other boards for attendance and
13 then we have HR staff that process the payroll that I
14 share with all the other boards.
15

16 In practice, you know I've seen that my requests
17 for assistance are not answered or they are denied or
18 there is interference between my communication and
19 other agencies when it comes to legal questions. And
20 so, I really hope that through formalizing the
21 responsibilities between the BP's office and the
22 boards, we can improve the supports for the boards.
23 I think it's the most practical way to address the
24 needs of the boards because our members are appointed
25 by the borough president.

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3 Just an example, I mean the borough president
4 won't discuss reappointments or new appointments in a
5 meaningful manner, even when it comes to members that
6 are intentionally disruptive at board meetings. I
7 filed an EEO compliant seven months ago, which I
8 never heard back on it. It just simply wasn't
9 processed. Other you know attempts to get input on
10 employee manuals or different things like that; they
11 just refuse to comply. They refuse to participate
12 in. So, it's I think really 13, 14 years the best
13 way to address this and especially in light of the
14 other responsibilities community boards are getting,
15 it would be great to formalize this through
16 legislation. Thank you.

16 GEORGE TORRES: Good morning. My name is George
17 Torres and I'm the District Manager for Community
18 Board 12 the Bronx. I am here to talk about Intro.
19 1315 and other pieces of legislation and that
20 providing more training for board members. I will
21 speak about my experiences and challenges with
22 requirements set forth from this legislation. There
23 was much consternation amongst my colleagues with the
24 requirement to provide a monthly newsletter. I'm
25 hoping that the authors of this legislation did not

mean literally a news letter instead of what we do provide, which is a calendar of upcoming meetings with an agenda. I read the text of this legislation to meet a calendar of meeting notices with agendas. My bylaws already state that agendas and meeting notifications are sent one week prior to the meeting. We are not meeting this obligation.

State Open Law Meeting - State Open Meeting Law requires 72 hour notification for meetings and we are meeting that requirement. Imposing a one month advance notification might be an unintended burden for community boards to meet. When I arrive to Community Board 12, I set out to broadcast our meetings to as many people as we could.

I work with Bronx Net, our public access television provider, in the Bronx to broadcast our general full board meetings. This came with additional costs with my board to produce and broadcast our meetings on public access television. That cost burden grew with each year to a point where we could no longer sustain using Bronx net to produce our meetings. I am fortunate that I have a permanent site to host all of my meetings within my office space. My colleagues are not as lucky and do not

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1 have a suitable permanent site to host their
2 meetings. The task to finding locations large enough
3 to host a meeting is difficult. Finding space that
4 has the necessary technological curettements of this
5 bill makes that task for difficult then limiting.
6 Moreover, it would require community board staff to
7 start lugging around computers and cameras to
8 telecast our meetings.
9

10 One of the reasons broadcasting with Bronx Net
11 was costly was because of the effort needed to
12 produce a meeting of 50 board members. It is not
13 this similar to everything laid out in this hearing.
14 We need microphones, cameras, a soundboard and enough
15 cables to connect everything, not to mention the
16 staff with technical expertise to use those cameras
17 and soundboard to ensure a quality production.

18 Mandating community board to do this for every
19 meeting would require a near herculean effort we are
20 not equipped to do. A possible solution is for the
21 franchisees like Bronx Net, that are awarded the
22 contracts by the city via the office of the Bronx
23 Borough President for cable providers like Optimum
24 and Spectrum to have exclusive rights to provide
25

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3 cable and sell communication services in the five
4 boroughs.

5 I would be remiss if I did not speak to all the
6 legislation requiring additional trainings for board
7 members and on EEO and parliamentary procedures is
8 mostly welcoming. I believe most of my colleagues
9 are supportive of this effort. I would say that many
10 of my board members are also supportive of this
11 effort.

12 The only change I would suggest is that these
13 training courses be required of all board members
14 prior to their appointments at the community board
15 like a prerequisite class at school and that it be
16 required on a yearly basis.

17 Finally, I end my testimony by making more
18 requests for funding. Much of this legislation would
19 be possible if we had the resources to implement it.
20 This request is not just for community boards; the
21 Borough Presidents Office and other agencies will
22 need more money to carry out these mandates. I would
23 ask that you start by providing modest increases to
24 our budgets on a yearly basis so that we can plan
25 accordingly. Thank you for the opportunity to offer

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my testimony. I hope it is helpful as you move
forward with this legislation.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you very much Mr.
Torres.

JEREMY LAUFER: Good afternoon, my name is Jeremy
Laufer. I am here today to speak in opposition to
the deadline proposed in Intro. 1318. I am
testifying on my own behalf today, not on behalf of
my board, although I do so drawing upon my 25 years
of experience as district manager for Community Board
7 in Brooklyn.

In that time, I have never experienced a year in
which appointments were made by the current April 1st
deadline. My board has had appointments made as late
as the second week of June. We have had appointments
and removals on the day of the board meeting where we
had ULURP votes. I agree that the current April 1st
date does not work, simply because it is in the
middle of the year. It is nearly impossible to train
new board members on board protocol and issues before
us in time for new board members to be active and
productive members from the beginning of their term.

That puts boards at a disadvantage, as new
members tend to abstain from complicated issues until

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1 they get better acclimated making achieving a
2 majority vote more difficult. With regard to the
3 proposed August 15th deadline, this leaves community
4 boards in a similar position as these appointments
5 would be made near the end of the summer with little
6 chance to meet trained and assigned committees to new
7 members.
8

9 This year, some boards September meeting falls on
10 the 8th, barely three weeks after this appointment
11 date. With the last two weeks of summer, the start
12 of a new school year and Labor Day in between. I am
13 concerned that a deadline without consequence as we
14 currently have also leaves boards at the mercy of
15 late appointments, further complicating a September
16 board meeting.

17 I understand that this bill was written in
18 consultation with the Brooklyn Borough President and
19 this deadline does seem advantageous for borough
20 presidents, pushing the appointment date out until
21 almost the very end of the summer. But this does not
22 resolve the problem of preparing our board members
23 for services I appointed out.

24 Community Board district managers have different
25 ideas on the best date, although I believe there's a

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strong consensus for something other than April 1st.

I have and continue to argue that July 1st would be the best possible date for our resourced four community boards to prepare our new members.

Community Board 7 has an introductory meeting for new members, distributes a member handbook specific to our board and has a question and answer session for new members. We do our committee assignments over the summer, have time to prepare all our members for big issues that arise in the three months between the full board meetings.

I would pause it that August 15th deadline puts us in a similar position to where we are now. In fact, a lead of two months of summer would allow time for members to take their trainings without overlapping with Committee meetings. I'd also like to take a moment to stand with my colleagues calling for significant non-salary budget increase for community boards, something our agencies have not seen in my 25 years as district manager.

The job has changed significantly in that time, particularly major changes in technology. My board still worked on typewriters when I started. We had to scale back our staff in order to properly equip or

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office. Our budget has never been increased in a meaningful way in that time to allow us to handle increased responsibilities and technology. A budget increase in my mind would have the most positive impact of any action this City Council can take.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay, thank you all for your testimony today and for your patience. I'll just ask, what additional support could the Borough Presidents Office provide that would be most valuable to each of your boards?

RAFAEL MAURIE-PUNNETT: I'll start with any support and I guess in specific when it comes to reappointments and new appointments having a meaningful conversation about who is getting on the board and the ability of current programmers to be served. I have programmers that can no longer serve and are reappointed. I had programmers that didn't show up for two years during COVID and were reappointed and so I just, a meaningful conversation about the reappointment so that everyone can make an informed decision, would be really helpful for me.

CELESTE LEON: I would add accountability from the mayoral agencies that are supposed to support us. Supporting and ensuring that there's accountability.

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3 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: But I don't think Borough
4 Presidents have any real ability to get
5 accountability from City agents. When you have a
6 mayor that's not doing his job, I don't know how
7 that's going to change anything.

8 CELESTE LEON: Well, I would say at least being
9 vocal. I mean, that's why we're here today to start
10 that conversation but if we're you now, not met with
11 mayoral agencies and it's just allowed to be that
12 way, then we are truly failing the community boards
13 and I know we're here to discuss that today but it
14 has to be more clear you know who is failing at what?
15 Because really this is a silo and not many folks
16 realize they just say the community board is
17 dysfunctional. They don't realize the reason we're
18 truly dysfunctional.

19 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Yeah, any additional
20 thoughts on how borough presidents could provide most
21 valuable support?

22 GEORGE TORRES: Sure, I started in 2015 and like
23 I said, I started broadcasting our meetings because I
24 wanted as many eyeballs on our - what we were doing
25 in an effort for transparency. Then COVID hit and it
kind of opened up our world. We were able to

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seamlessly transition to video conferencing and
telecasting because we were already doing it. I've
been talking to the borough presidents office about
expanding the role of franchisees like Bronx Net
public access. Currently, Bronx Net does like
borough board. When I engage Bronx Net, they charged
us, they were charging us initially about \$1,200 a
meeting. That cost steadily grew over the course of
several years where it was \$1,750 and we just
couldn't sustain that.

So, we were able to find a cheaper alternative
and then with COVID hitting, we were actually able to
now we were able to do it via You Tube link. So,
we're not paying anymore for that service. I would
just say that as part of the franchise at the borough
presidents office votes on, I don't know how often
they do. My understanding, we had a meeting with the
borough presidents office yesterday or the day
before. I'm sorry, on Friday and they suggested that
the contract is already three years late. I would
say that as part of that, every borough gets it.
That they should expand those services to all the
community boards within their respective boroughs.
These contracts are worth millions of dollars. Each

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1 of us can watch on TV some of the programming for
2 public access and it's not as informative as and not
3 to be bias but I am, community boards have important
4 stuff like land use votes and things that are going
5 on locally that people need to be aware of and they
6 should be tuning into that.
7

8 So, I think if you can help us have that
9 conversation so that these contracts can be more
10 meaningful, maybe it's a nominal increase to the
11 franchisees just to cover the additional cost but I
12 think that could be the most helpful for us.

13 JEREMY LAUFER: I'm rabid about our independence.
14 In an ideal world, where we were properly funded, all
15 I want are timely appointments.

16 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay, just wondering maybe
17 even we can do this as a yes or no. As we discussed
18 on the previous panel, the civic engagement
19 commission was tasked with providing community boards
20 with access to professional planning expertise,
21 translation resources, training and land use
22 technology and meeting procedures, since the CEC was
23 first convened some six years ago. To your
24 knowledge, has that - has any of that support been
25 provided to your respective community boards?

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RAFAEL MOURIE-PUNETT: No, and I'll speak specifically, that's one of the things I did engage CEC. I went to them and I asked them for trainings for my board members. They said that they couldn't do it for such as large party. We started engaging other organizations like the Center for Urban Pedagogy. Am I saying that right, CUP? And we, I think we initially paid for a land use training. It was about \$2,500 and then we subsequently extended it to all the district managers where we provided funding for that as well but everything that we've had to do, especially in terms of training, we've had to do it ourselves or find agencies to do it. And let me just say to the point of mayoral agencies not being responsive. We had reached out with that training on land use and zoning to HPD to give us a training on housing connect and affordable housing and they basically were like no. Now this was several years ago. This was during the de Blasio Administration but it sort of let me knew where I stood with the agencies in terms of asking for trainings that they could give to my board members.

JEREMY LAUFER: I just want to add there is you know in the CEC's mandate to provide translation

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1 assistance to boards. Community Boards cannot be run
2 in two different languages without additional funding
3 to hire full time or to hire contracted translators
4 at board members. And I think it's very unfortunate
5 that you know there's the - the voters voted on
6 expanded capacity for language and without additional
7 funding or CEC providing translators, boards can only
8 be held in English.
9

10 I'll also just note for an example; you know the
11 CEC did organize a training on parliamentary
12 procedure. The person they brought in had no
13 specific knowledge about community boards and was
14 very annoyed. The people were asking them questions
15 about community boards which they had no independent
16 knowledge of so the training was essentially useless
17 for many of the board members because they want to
18 know how to make a motion on the board with this
19 committee and the trainer didn't have any knowledge
20 of that.

21 CELESTE LEON: It has often been at a minimum of
22 what they've attempted to do. We have heard about
23 language line, which allows for in office translation
24 but not interpretation services for our meetings.
25 Often they note that they have a broader charter or a

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broader mandate that they have to focus on. Not exclusively community boards and that they are unfunded, which is why they cannot meet their provisions.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: And I - oh go ahead please.

GEORGE TORRES: So, I've testified in front of this Council about the need for translation and interpretation services. The same meeting that CEC has testified at. They have provided us with a list of contractors that we've actually provided to them. So, we could spend our own money. It's costing me when I can afford to do interpretation services, \$300 a meeting for two languages and it's something that we cannot sustain. I've estimated that if we are to provide interpretation services for all of our board meetings, including committee meetings, that would be between \$40,000 and \$50,000 a year.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you and not directly germane to the legislation we're hearing today, I did want to ask about the Mayor's Charter Revision Commission and the proposal to further marginalize the recommendations of community boards. Have any of your boards taken a formal position on changes to the land use process and going to further marginalization

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of community board recommendations and do you plan to
do so?

CELESTE LEON: There's been no formal position of
the board. However, individual members have
testified or plan to testify prior to wrapping up.

JEREMY LAUFER: We can't taken a position yet.

RAFAEL MOURIE-PUNNETT: Same here.

GEORGE TORRES: We haven't taken a position on
those poorly advertised public hearing issues.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I mean I would just say
that time is of the essence if you're all concerned
about the impact that community boards have on land
use decisions, in my opinion, Council Members
generally care about the advice and recommendations
that Community Boards give and I think that if
Council Members and Community Boards are not in a
position to guide land use projects then your
recommendations will fall on deaf ears. As I think
is underpinned some of the testimony that I've heard
today from district managers, you know mayoral
agencies are not particularly responsive to your
boards and the mayor will not be responsive to your
concerns about how to shape a land use project that
makes sense for your community.

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So, I think that Council Members and Borough Presidents are more concerned generally with trying to provide the support that you all need to operate effectively and I you know would certainly think now is very much the moment to sound an alarm if - I know there's a lot going on between budgets and elections and this hearing and many other things and you all have too few staff and too many responsibilities but that train is very much leaving the station.

With that, I want to thank you all for being with us today. Really appreciate your time. We are going to take a brief break from Community Board discussions because we have a panel of students that are here with us today and we want to give them a chance to share their expertise. So, I'll invite Jason Lee, Emma Chen, Sabrina Zheng, and Kyae Sin Linn Lot. And if I mispronounced anybody's name, you have my most sincere apologies.

So, you'll each have - thank you for being with us today. You'll each have three minutes to share your testimony and really just you can go in whatever order you're so inspired but really appreciate your presence.

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JASON LEE: Good morning. Thank you to Chair Restler and the rest of the Committee for allowing this conversation. My name is Jason Lee and I am currently a Junior at the Bronx High School of Science and a Youth Advocate at the Asian American Student Advocacy Project AASAP. AASAP is CACS citywide youth leadership program and we're here today to testify in support of the Intro. Bill 1134. As a Chinese Korean American student in New York City, I've experienced first hand the many challenges that AAPI students face throughout the city on the forefront of constant assumptions made within my community as a result of the reduction of my vibrant community into a single word on a checklist, Asian.

I remember in history class; my friend would talk to me about how he never saw any representation of his identity in any of our classes. I noticed an extreme lack of perspective and commentary on the effect of different Asian cultures on US history in both classes and media as well as the effect of certain historical events on the Asian communities. My friend commented on how his heritage always felt invisible, especially in seeing himself in his community always being overlooked, not only in school

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curriculums but in government surveys and
institutions as well.

Sorry, when he was always put into the group of
Asian, which masked his background and covered up the
struggles he saw within the community and the city.

However, he's not the only one to fill this way.

Many AAPI youth across the city do not see themselves
in the data and often question about their [INAUDIBLE
02:18:36] as a result of this. This is not okay.

Not if we're going to make sure that everyone feels
included and not if we care to make sure that
everyone feels welcome and safe.

Data aggregation causes the diverse struggles of
each ethnic group to be often overlooked as a result
of not fully understanding the individual need and
strength that each community has. With aggregated
data, how can any government agency truly understand
our needs and challenges? This incites essentially
an array of individuality completely failing to
notice representation of communities. Damaging the
mental health of many and creating wrong believes
that AAPI students do not need resources.

Detailed ethnic data and more disaggregated data
would allow for a deeper understanding of each

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community struggle. This prevents the possibility of schools not fully understanding AAPI, possibly causing micro aggressive savings that could be made with the possibility of needs for students not fully being met. Disaggregated data could help to better understand each of the diverse language needs for students or the make up of families who truly need support in our city, as well as efficiently allocating resources to students that need it, rather than investing in resources that do not suit the needs of the of the communities throughout the city.

This bill is extremely essential. Disaggregated data does not only represent numbers in a survey. It's about the recognition that many communities who have gone unnoticed in the past will finally receive. For too long, many diverse communities have often been overlooked and have been invisible in the data. As a result of this, we have also been invisible in the solutions. This bill represents the first step of many to ensure that each and every community is recognized, fully understood and supported. I urge you to pass this bill and I thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you very much.

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EMMA CHEN: Good morning. Thank you Chair

Restler and the rest of the Committee for allowing this conversation. My name is Emma Chen and I'm a Junior at the Clinton School and Youth Advocate at the Asian American Student Advocacy Project AASAP.

As an AAPI student, I've seen first hand the impact of aggregated data. Aggregated data lumps the AAPI community into a whole, perpetuating story types that see the AAPI community and students as a monolith.

When I volunteered at a food pantry in ninth grade for the first time, I remember being surprised that there were many AAPI elderly people who needed help. I'd internalize the idea that Asian Americans didn't need help. That same day, I remember a volunteer upon seeing the Asian elders casually asking me in regard to the nondairy milk, "oh yeah, aren't all Asians lactose intolerant? Are you?"

At the time, I didn't think twice about this but I later realized the impact of stereotypes on how I viewed my own community, including myself.

After learning about data disaggregation and the mono minority myth through CACF and AASAP, I now better understand that the AAPI community often does

require resources. However, aggregated data and the generalized perceptions of the AAPI community that followed, led me, a young AAPI to internalize the idea that AAPI's didn't need help. It made me blind to the stereotypes that followed.

Disaggregated data breaks down these stereotypes. It shows us that the AAPI community is diverse. That every ethnicity, every individual, requires resources and that the AAPI community is not monolith. Our needs are different. For example, the needs of Chinese Bengali, Tai and Vietnamese American Communities are different and how can the government know what the needs are and fully support us without disaggregated data? For students, disaggregated data cannot only shift the views API students hold about their own communities but also create a school environment in which stereotypes are broken down. A community in which AAPI students are valued for their individuality both by their peers and their school. This bill is essential to breaking down stereotypes in the AAPI community and bettering young AAPI's visions of their communities.

Had I understood the unique needs of the AAPI community, perhaps I would have understood the

struggles many Asian Americans face and be better able to understand the needs of my community. With disaggregated data, students like me are able to challenge stereotypes that they hold and that the people around them hold allowing students not only to access resources but also value their individuality. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thanks so much Emma.

SABRINA ZHENG: Good morning. Thank you Chair Restler and the rest of the Committee for allowing the conversation. My name is Sabrina Zheng, I am a senior at Midwood High School and I'm also a Youth Advocate of part of the Asian American Advocacy Project, AASAP. Through AASAP, I had the opportunity to facilitate a workshop for my classmates on the need for data disaggregation.

At first I was nervous about facilitating the workshop because many of my peers perpetuated the idea that the entire AAPI community is financially well. And that is a harmful stereotype even I grew up believing it. I was shocked when I first saw racialized data sets on the poverty rate and education attainment. These sets were disaggregated by ethnicity through the work of community based

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organizations and they showed that many AAPI communities really do in fact live in poverty.

After learning about data disaggregation, I questioned why it has not been implemented. Detailed data would help us directly support struggling families who in worse case scenarios are hanging on by a thread. Aggregated data is very misleading because it puts the AAPI community that consists of a diverse range of ethnic groups into one category. The AAPI community has hundreds of ethnic groups. When there is a lack of disaggregated data, people continue to see the community as a monolith and many of us become invisible and our stories are untold and a lot of our strengths are masked.

I have heard many AAPI youth across the city question whether or not they even belong in the AAPI community. They all feel seen or included in most of the data found online. Youth like myself do not see our stories painted by aggregated data. Aggregated data hurts our communities. We need to break it down for our struggles to be seen and our stories to be understood. This result in better decision making when supporting all communities. Having disaggregated data is not for us to compete to see

who needs more or less or who needs more resources.

It brings proper attention and resources to
communities who need it.

In AASAP we challenge the space by the AAPI youth
constantly, such as the model minority myth and we
seek to build communities where youth feel seen,
heard, and supported. This bill is one big step
forward in our fight in social justice. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: That was great, thank you.

KYAE SIN LINN LOT: Good afternoon and thank you
Chair Restler and the rest of the Committee for
allowing this conversation. My name is Kyae Sin Linn
Lot and I am a Junior at John Dewey High School and
I'm also a Youth Advocate at Asian American Student
Advocacy Project, AASAP. As a part of AASAP language
access campaign team, we have discussed how many ELL
students and AAPI ELL students' needs and challenges
are overlooked just because there isn't enough data
detailed and data. And as an English Language
learner, I don't receive enough support from my
school because my ethnicity and language is under
represented in New York City.

I am Chinese Burmese and I was born in [INAUDIBLE
02:26:07] and I'm only proficient in Burmese but if

the school cannot provide language translation in
Burmese doing exam. Teachers will assume I'm Chinese
but I'm not. My parents cannot engage with my
teachers due to lack of language support. Since then
I feel unseen. With many other Burmese students and
their parents, the school refuse to support them to
better understand their kids' education and also
success in school.

This lack of resource come from lack of data. We
are all labeled as Asian and they assume our
struggles are identical and ignore who we are and we
become invisible but that is not true. This
invisibility it steals more than resources. It
steals our confidence. When school lumped all the
Asian students together, they don't see me. A
Burmese Chinese girl who needs Burmese translation.
For years, I raise my hands less, spoke softer and
hid my struggles. That's because when the system
repeatedly tells you that your identity doesn't
matter, you start to believe that. Your voice
doesn't either. This shyness isn't my personality.
It's learned silence from being erased.

Every Asian checkbox a form whispers that your
specific story isn't worth seeing and disaggregated

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1 data, I changed that. Disaggregation can allow
2 schools to accurately accommodate AAPI, ELL students
3 based on ethnicity and country of origin.
4 Disaggregated data will ensure schools to recognize
5 who I truly am and the next generation will have to
6 restrain themselves to fit - won' have to shrink
7 themselves to fit into boxes that erase them.
8

9 This bill is a solution for us who to feel
10 visible because it will mandate all the city's agency
11 to use the same standard of data collection where
12 detail ethnicity are collected.

13 So, the government service can know who AAPI's
14 area and what our needs are, what will enable us to
15 better understand one another and unite us together
16 to advocate for all of our needs. We call the city
17 to pass this bill to break the invisibility in the
18 AAPI community. Due to a lack of data by requiring
19 detailed options beyond broad category or race
20 because data disaggregation is also one of the
21 beginning start for a school to become culturally
22 responsive. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you so much. I just
24 want to firstly state that you all testified with
25 just impressive poise and insightfulness and I really

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appreciate you sharing your expertise with us today.

Just what grade are you guys each in?

SABRINA ZHENG: Three of us are juniors and I'm a senior.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Where are you heading for college?

SABRINA ZHENG: Huh?

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Where are you heading for college?

SABRINA ZHENG: Uhm, I'm going to Binghamton University.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: That's amazing. Congratulations. Well, I have to say this is really helpful. I strongly support this legislation. I think that you know we lose - we don't understand data appropriately when it's not necessarily disaggregated and assumptions get made and key information gets lost when we're not able to break things down. You all spoke eloquently about the AAPI community today and the diversity within it. I think you could have a similar argument for the Latino community and the similarities between peoples experiences coming from Puerto Rico and Argentina and Mexico, vary quite a bit and how we break down this

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information, understand the differences and the
experience of Colombians, First Dominicans, First
Puerto Ricans, First Cubans, First Ecuadorian's, is
really important just as the same as very obviously
true for the AAPI community.

With that, I just want to ask the question, what
do you think if we were to do a better job - if we
were to pass this bill and have better disaggregated
data by nationality and ethnicity. What do you think
are policy areas that we would newly be able to
better tackle as a result of having more and better
information? You spoke a little bit of this in your
testimony but just interested, are there specific
areas that you think we as policy makers could do a
better job if we had better data?

JASON LEE: So, definitely we're thinking of like
social welfare programs and also kind of more
language access like we touched upon earlier because
upon like, if you're doing a general survey, it could
be kind of inferred that AAPI, like mostly know or
have access to like English Language Learning
resources but if you're able to break it down and
take kind of group by group then you can also better

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kind of see the amount of access that some
communities have towards these programs.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: That's helpful. Anything
you guys would like to add?

SABRINA ZHENG: Yeah, like as he mentioned like
social welfare programs, things like that but also
like uhm I think a lot of like, as you touched upon
it, it was like more language access especially since
people usually think like oh like people usually
think about East Asia especially when they think of
Asian, the AAPI community. So, the AAPI community,
like East Asians can get those resources, like
language access and like classes and things like that
but also there were a lot of you know what about
South Asia, like Central Asia, those people also need
the same light. Like there's many diverse languages
so they also need to be included in that kind of
welfare program where like classes, yes.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Yeah, no and I thought you
know Sabrina your points about kind of the model
minority myth and how helpful more data
disaggregation would be for us to be able to tell a
story about where we have very high rates of poverty
among Asian American communities is really powerful

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and important, especially among Asian American seniors you know across many areas in New York City. You know I will just say on the record, I, you know this is the most diversity Council that we've ever had. Our first two South Asian Council Members in the City Council and Council Member Hanif who serves on this Committee and Council Member Krishnan who is the lead sponsor on this bill and more East Asian Council Members representing diverse communities across New York City then we've ever had before with Council Members Lee and Wong and Ung and maybe I'm forgetting somebody but I'm sorry, whoever I'm forgetting and their voices and their expertise also helps to push forward really important legislation like this and so I'm just really grateful for you all taking the time to be with us today and sharing your expertise. You guys did a great job so thank you so much and I will do my best to help get this bill passed.

EMMA CHEN: Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you. Okay, we are going to go back to Community Boards. Do you think we can squeeze five people up? Is that possible? Yes. I got a yes, great. So, we're going to do

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3 District Manager Mark Diller from Community Board 2
4 in Manhattan, Jesus Perez from Manhattan Community
5 Board 6, Shawn Campbell from Brooklyn Community Board
6 14, Chair Robert Camacho from Brooklyn Community
7 Board 4, and we will also have Lloyd Feng who is a
8 member of Brooklyn Community Board 1. Thank you each
9 for joining us and appreciate the squeeze of five
10 people up at the dais.

11 Great and feel free to testify in whatever order
12 you all are so moved but Committee Counsel will swear
13 you in. The Committee Counsel will swear in the
14 District Managers, I think is the distinction that
15 we've made today. Is that right? Yeah.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good afternoon. Can you
17 please raise your right hands? Do you swear to tell
18 the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth
19 in your testimony before this Committee and respond
20 honestly to Council Member questions?

21 PANEL: I do.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, you can begin.

23 MARK DILLER: Good afternoon Chair and Council.
24 My name is Mark Diller. I am the District Manager
25 for Community Board 2 here in Manhattan. I am also a
former volunteer board Chair of Community Board 7

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1 where I reside and so I approach this work from both
2 sides of that isle. I bring to you the resolution of
3 our board with respect to Intro. 1065. I won't
4 repeat what it says, you have it before you. I will
5 share a personal aspect to that, which is that I am a
6 67 year old recovering lawyer and it is not a
7 seller's market for someone in my place. So, if I'm
8 subject to either a term limit or a term of
9 employment in four years, my resume is going out
10 tomorrow. And if the God should allow, that would
11 add to the brain drain that term limits already
12 imposes on the work of our boards as well as the
13 diminution of the role of the boards that the Chair
14 has already outlined.

16 With respect to Intro. 1250, with respect to
17 publishing bylaws on our website and updating various
18 things with respect to - those are things that we do
19 but I will tell you that it is an enormous -
20 basically I'm lucky to be able to do it and the
21 reason I'm lucky is that my staff doesn't take the
22 vacation time that they're allowed nor - and I can't
23 pay them overtime. They only get comp time. And so
24 as a result and if they ever took all the comp time
25 that they earn by working overtime in order to make

1 sure that and remember we're required to redact the
2 information that is linked to the agendas that are on
3 our website. So if I and that takes time and that
4 time is done not within the normal 35 hour a week
5 that I ask my staff to perform.

6 So, this is an unworkable model. We need more
7 staff to do these things and we need the resources to
8 do it. With respect to - I'm sorry, that's also
9 Intro. 1315. 1250 was publishing our bylaws, which
10 we do but again, having the resources to maintain a
11 website that has all this information on it and an e-
12 blast that coordinates that is difficult to do
13 without under the staffing models that we've got.

14 With respect to the requirements of video
15 conferencing, which I will distinguish from
16 livestreaming, first of all, I'm grateful for anybody
17 who can answer the question that is under the current
18 law, Section 2800 about what it means to make
19 available for livestreaming or make available for
20 broadcast. The Law Department and the general
21 counsels office have been befuddled by that for
22 years, so clarity is good but resources are necessary
23 because otherwise I am schlepping equipment to rooms
24 throughout my district to make sure that we have the
25

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facility as was mentioned earlier. Rooms that don't have Wi-Fi, don't have any of the technical requirements and we are - beggars can't be choosers about what rooms we get. I see my time is up and I thank you for the opportunity to testify.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you very much Mr. Diller.

JESUS PEREZ: Good afternoon Chair Restler and other members of the City Council Government Ops Committee. My name is Jesus Perez and I am the District Manager of Manhattan Community Board 6. I have been for the past nine years or so and I'm here to talk about Intro. 1065. My Board actually wanted to hear the remarks being made here by the rest of the package of the bills before they opine, so there may be more coming on later.

But as you know, 1065 would impose four year terms on District Managers and give Borough Presidents a new authority to remove District Managers at any time for any reason and it's our boards view that that it not oversight, that is overreach. Overreach that threatens the independence of and effectiveness of community boards across the city.

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As I'm sure you know, the City Charter already provides that district managers serve at the pleasure of their boards. So, Community Boards don't need 1065 to dismiss their District Manager. They can do it now if they want to. What Community Boards need is the autonomy to manage their staff based on merit, on performance, on the needs of their districts, not artificial timelines or political interference which 1065 unfortunately would invite.

What community boards needs are increased operating budgets. An appropriate office and meeting facilities, especially with the increased complexity and the necessity of hybrid meetings in this day and age.

What community boards need is a city government that invests in the professional development of their public servants so that those district managers who are performing well can seek to serve their communities even better and those who may have room for improvement have the support that they need to reach the heights of the community and the City Council's expectations.

This is even more important in the context of impending term limits for community board members

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because the district manager represents essential institutional knowledge that cannot now be relied upon from the members alone. There is no demonstrated need for Intro. 1065. It is a solution in search of a problem. All it does is introduce instability and confusion and risks politicizing the nonpolitical role of district manager.

Manhattan CB6 urges the Council to reject Intro. 1065 outright and instead work in partnership with Community Boards to strengthen, not weaken the systems that support good governance at the neighborhood level. Thank you.

SHAWN CAMPBELL: Good afternoon Chair Restler, members of the Committee and everybody else. My name is Shawn Campbell; I'm District Manager of Brooklyn Community Board 14. I appreciate this opportunity to speak on behalf of my board and appreciate the attention that Community Boards are getting by this Committee and through these Intro.'s and to the extent that some of the Intro.'s have merit. Others are duplicative and others are misguided. We have submitted written testimony on those because I fear that they may detract from our biggest need, which is a baseline budget increase. And I've been here

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before speaking about the fact that over the past 20 years we've gotten on average 1.5 percent budget increases in our baseline budgets while inflation was 2.5 percent. We're the only city agency to have fewer headcount than when we were founded. And so, if all of the Intro.'s pass, if none of the Intro.'s pass, if some of them pass, we will still need a baseline budget increase.

So, I was encouraged to hear some support for that today. Because as Council Member Brewer pointed out, while our budgets have not increased, our responsibilities certainly have. Covering the technology for meetings and some of the other Administrative tasks has only increased. Community Board 14 actually as it stands now with our current staff at our current budget, will never again be able to offer a merit increase to our staff. We will have to rely on the negotiated budget increases that the unionized staff get.

I had to beg, borrow, and I promise not steal, in order to put together our youth conference this year which attracts over 400 teenagers annual. It's our 16th annual and other events such as our nonprofit

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roundtable, getting really sketchy trying to put
those together.

So, I hope that that will be considered and the
Intro.'s won't be a distraction. We've done several
calculations. It seems like \$200,000 per board would
make us whole but we realize that we have more hope
in getting there incrementally. So, to the members
of the Council who supported a \$50,000 budget
increase in our baseline budgets this year, I hope
it's not too late. I hope we can still get there
this year and I hope these Intro.'s are not a
distraction from that advocacy. Thank you.

ROBERT CAMACHO: Hey, how are you Chair? My name
is Robert Camacho. I'm the Chair of Community Board
4. I know you saw my district manager Celeste Leon.
Young lady, bright. I don't know why would you want
us to terminate someone like that? It's kind of
disheartening even to put that someone would be
walking on pins and needles wondering who will be the
next Chair. You might want to change the narrative
after the fact that you work so hard. I have been in
Bushwick all my life since 1957. I have been on the
board, it's going to be - it breaks my heart, it's
going to be almost 40 years by 2027. I was a young

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1 kid. I always thought that either I would be in jail
2 or dead. I am going to be - I just turned 64 years
3 old; I think I beat all odds. I have been in this
4 Community Board a long time and I learned from my
5 pillars, my old folks. I've been there when we had
6 rocks and bricks and crack and no fees and
7 prostitutions. I have been there now that the new
8 people are coming in and they're coming into the
9 board and they think that the Community Board is
10 something that you can go fight and beat people down.
11 No, it's all about quality of life issues, making
12 sure that our agencies are addressing our concerns
13 and needs and our Councils are working with us to
14 make sure that they do their job because they work
15 for us. We don't work for them and we really need
16 that and to put that on there is kind of
17 disheartening. Yes, we need education but let me
18 tell you what they don't educate on.

19 On how my community was with bricks and rocks and
20 I had no basketball, now there is. They're changing
21 the communities and people that are coming in trying
22 to make a change but it has to change with both of us
23 and that's what's hard with a leader. When you have
24 different narratives and different opinions but I
25

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open it up to everyone. I do follow Robert Rules of Order. I do have the City Charter in my meetings. I do have the bylaws of the Community Board. I have all those things and carry it with me when I go to my meetings and sit there and address issues.

But what we really need to do to and I do go. I think I'm 100 percent of the borough boards. All those years I've been eight years as the Chair. I'm going on my eighth year. What we do need is you guys because you're part of the borough boards and I know sometimes we don't find quorum. Your trying to penalize us.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: My staff is there every month.

ROBERT CAMACHO: No.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I'm just saying. Go ahead finish your -

ROBERT CAMACHO: I'm just saying whoever don't.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: It's a little easier for me, borough hall is in my district, so it's walking distance from my office for my staff to get there so we don't have an excuse. We show up every month. For other folks it's a little more challenging but I'm digressing. I just need to say, we're not the

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problem on quorum. I hope Lacey is still somewhere
for us to get that on the record.

ROBERT CAMACHO: And we have a quorum because you
can't paint every community with the same brush.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I appreciate very much you
being here Chair Camacho, it's always good to see
you.

LLOYD FENG: Thank you so much Chair Restler.
Good to see you. So, my name is Lloyd Feng
representing Brooklyn Community Board 1. You're very
familiar with us. You know we serve Williamsburg and
Greenpoint and I serve as Chair of the Public Safety
and Human Services Committee. I'm here testifying on
behalf of the full board because we did carefully
review the reform bills that you are discussing today
and we offer the following positions that are quite
similar to some of our colleagues across the city on
other community boards. Be it the district manager
level or from the community board level, so a member
level.

So, we strongly support the three bills that
address critical operational needs. Intro. 1250
requiring online publication of bylaws aligns quite
well with our boards action earlier this year to

1 update our bylaws finally electronically. We were
2 still using like a xerox copy from like way back and
3 then we also support the two preconsidered bills from
4 Chair Restler creating support offices, one under
5 borough presidents for legal and HR assistance,
6 another within DCAS for accessible meeting spaces.
7 This will provide essential resources for our board,
8 especially as we address the growing responsibilities
9 that my colleague from BK 14 just mentioned now. But
10 I think it's important for us to distinguish what
11 kinds of legal matters for which we could then go to
12 you know this office. What kinds of HR assistance?
13 I think all these things are good but we have to
14 really define those. I think that's something that
15 our district manager has brought up. Joanne of
16 course who's fantastic.

17 And so, we also support with amendments to train
18 related bills. This is Intro. 0472 on EO training.
19 We recommend exempting New York City agency employees
20 who are on the board who have already completed
21 required EO training to avoid this kind of redundancy
22 for the preconsidered bill from Chair Restler. We
23 support enhanced member prep but urge moving the
24 appointment date similarly from August 15th to July
25

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1st. I think we heard about that earlier. Giving the district office more time to onboard new members and complete required training in the other bills before they participate in committee work. Now, we oppose the newsletter and video conferencing requirements unless the Council includes increased funding for community boards. That would enable us to staff up and pay for any needed tech and equipment for the provision of such services. Our district office is already stretched thin serving both Williamsburg and Greenpoint, which have experienced tremendous population growth, extensive development, as you're familiar, and a proliferation of nightlife establishments that have generated numerous complaints and quality of life concerns.

This increased volume of work from development reviews to quality of life issues has significantly strained our staff's capacity. Without adequate funding, these requirements would be unfunded mandates that compromise our ability to serve our community effectively.

We also oppose Intro. 1065, similarly to other speakers here that would establish the district manager terms. This bill undermines community board

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1 autonomy by allowing borough presidents to
2 unilaterally remove district managers and appoint
3 their preferred candidate. You know we talked about
4 the ethical concerns but I also just wanted to
5 mention that managing the district office is not a
6 task that I would ever want to take on, right? It is
7 so onerous right? Really appreciate the work that
8 district managers and Joanna Pugarda(SP?) does and
9 navigating and deciphering city government, city
10 agencies is so hard right? And I think that body of
11 experience that somebody whose been with a board for
12 a long time really develops is really critical to our
13 board of being successful, so really appreciate your
14 time Chair Restler and thank you all so much.

16 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I really appreciate the
17 thoughtful testimony of this panel and I do want to
18 speak to Council Member Williams bill. I don't
19 remember what number that is but I can fully
20 appreciate the concerns that I've heard today around
21 the borough presidents empowering borough presidents
22 to be able to remove district managers.

23 I don't think I need to speak to uhm why that
24 would be alarming for folks, 1065 thank you very much
25 Jayasri.

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3 And I would certainly be opposed to a term limit
4 for district managers as well, as I can appreciate
5 that Ms. Campbell, how long have you served as the
6 District Manager for CB14?

7 SHAWN CAMPBELL: 15 years. The people develop
8 great expertise over time. Deeper relationships with
9 the community to Mr. Feng's point, deep knowledge of
10 city government and ability to navigate complex
11 issues and bureaucracies. What I have less
12 understanding of, and I appreciate particularly that
13 the district managers but if each of you could speak
14 to this is why the agita around terms? It seems to
15 me that there are instances where people are
16 appointed to a job. They stay in that job and
17 without a formal evaluation process, and a
18 reappointment process for another four year term or
19 maybe there's an alternative way to do it around just
20 requiring an evaluation every so often, as the Queens
21 General Counsel suggested, it seems to me that that
22 could be a reasonable thing for somebody to be
23 evaluated and reappointed in perpetuity if they're
24 doing their job well.

25 I think there have been instances where there
have been district managers who have remained in

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1 their jobs for decades and didn't do their job all
2 that well and I appreciate that they served at the
3 privilege of the board and the board could take
4 action but if there isn't a mechanism to force the
5 conversation then it may not happen, right and so,
6 just wanted to put that out there. If you'd be
7 willing to comment on that issue of the problem of
8 having terms, a mechanism for an evaluation and
9 reappointment. Why is that such - because I haven't
10 heard anyone essentially say they support that today
11 and I'm just interested in understanding why not.

12 MARK DILLER: I'll leave off on that if I may?
13 There is a distinct difference between having your
14 job taken away from you unless someone reappoints you
15 and being an at will employee, which is what I am
16 right now.

17 I have no problem with an evaluation schedule. I
18 am not a union member; therefore, I can be removed
19 with a minimum of process. I think one of the things
20 that from a - but as I said, if I have to - I guess
21 the first thing to remember is that now that
22 Community Board members are term limited themselves,
23 their experience with the district manager is going
24 to be different. A part from the brain drain part,

there is the fact that most boards also have a term limit for how long someone can serve as its Chair and whether you agree or disagree with term limits, that does place a finite amount of experience with the aspects of the district managers job. And by the way, something that didn't come up today but I think should factor into this part of the equation is that in addition, district managers, in addition to serving the board and the needs of the board for process and relationships with city agencies and so forth, we are also a primary constituent service provider and that is something that also requires continuity and familiarity with the district.

I'm only two and a half years into my district. I can now navigate the streets of SoHo better than I ever could but it is a learning process that would have to be -

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Again, I'm not supporting term limits. I just want to be clear, that wasn't the argument. It's just a question of I've seen protracted and ugly processes for a district manager removals and I've seen district managers that have stayed on for many years, maybe decades too long because nobody was willing to force the conversation

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1 on the board about a need for change. If you were to
2 have a process where every four years or every period
3 of time there's an evaluation and a reappointment,
4 that doesn't seem unreasonable to me. I guess if
5 somebody's an at will employee at any given time,
6 they still - it's essentially giving more job
7 security to that individual that barring an
8 extraordinary circumstance, they're going to have
9 four years to continue to serve in their job which
10 may be better arguably. It's none of your
11 perspectives. I'm just asking the question because I
12 don't think it's unreasonable and I'd love to hear
13 why I'm wrong if that's all your perspectives.

14 MARK DILLER: I'll yield.

15 ROBERT CAMACHO: I am a Chair and I do have a
16 District Manager and I am responsible for and I have
17 a board; I have an executive board. So, if I see
18 something is wrong, I go directly to the executive
19 board, I make recommendations and we correct the
20 problem just the same way you guys give to the
21 members. So, I don't think by including that in
22 there, would allow someone to work right because now
23 they're walking on pins and needles like I told you
24 every four years. So, you may not have someone to
25

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Chair like me that will go through the due process,
or you have someone already that's already
handpicked. Remember, Council and the borough
presidents pick them, the board members and the Chair
is voted in by their peers, correct?

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Right.

ROBERT CAMACHO: So, what do you have there?
Corruption, poli-tricks, I call it. Tricks, silly
rabbit tricks are for kids. So, allow us to do our
job. If the Chair is not doing their job, then the
board, all 50 board members that they appointed needs
to be removed if they're not doing their job but
they're not because you say that some boards are
allowing the district managers to do what they want
to do then they're not a board, then they need to be
addressed. And education is key but you can't teach
this in four years or in two years that you guys are
terming people out.

I'll be termed out, you're going to have
different people, different ideas. You're going to
have different people saying okay, you got the four
years, now we can get the manager we want now because
I don't think she's doing the right thing. I don't
think her time and attendance is right, which you

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1 should be evaluating and she's supposed to be
2 evaluating the members. That's the way it works.
3 That is the Chairs job.
4

5 So, you're taking away my job and creating more
6 work that I don't need because now I have to evaluate
7 her, go through an executive board and says the
8 district manager, A, B, C, D, E. What do you think,
9 she's up for evaluation. What do you think guys?
10 But it's so hard to get them a raise.

11 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Yeah, there's no argument
12 here on the budget side. I'll just add- maybe I'll
13 ask the district managers, when was the last time you
14 were each evaluated by your boards?

15 SHAWN CAMPBELL: Oh thank you. Last week or the
16 week before.

17 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay.

18 MARK DILLER: It's been quite some time but if I
19 could speak to the question as to why? Why we have
20 an issue with the terms? My board did not take an
21 official position on that particular element but I'll
22 speak as a district manager. It does introduce a
23 little bit of toxicity into the morale of the office.
24 Essentially, you have every four years, you are
25 relitigated again. If that were such a novel and

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beneficial way to go, why don't we relitigate every piece of legislation that's passed every four years? Why aren't commissioners relitigated every four years? Why aren't the Fortune 500 companies rushing to reevaluate all of their staff, every single four years, all their CEO's? There at some point, you have to put faith in the decision that you've made and if you have issues with your particular district manager as this seems to become from very isolated issues that don't touch the majority of community boards, then address those issues.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: It think that's fair. I guess you know I evaluate my staff every year, right? We do a global review and I think whenever somebody has a single boss, there's clear lines of accountability. When you're reporting to 50 people, it's a bit more desperate in just how that accountability is held. So, that's why I don't - I'm just intrigued by the notion. I don't think it would lead to - I think it would - I'm not - my goal in having a conversation about that idea is not to impose term limits or to force good district managers out of their jobs. That's not the idea at all. It's to say is it helpful for boards to have a consistent

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1 timeline for evaluations and some, actually more
2 stability and security around set periods of time
3 that people are going to be reappointed when they're
4 doing their job well. I get that that creates
5 there's anxiety when there's a vote to bring in a
6 district manager and there just kind of wrangling to
7 get those votes in and then you'd be kind of going
8 through that process ever four years which again, you
9 may not like. You know I don't love going for
10 reelection. It's not a lot of fun but it's the
11 process that we signed up for.

12
13 With that being said, Ms. Campbell, I think you
14 were going to jump in or was I -

15 SHAWN CAMPBELL: Yeah, I got the date wrong. It
16 was May 29th, we had an executive committee meeting.

17 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Close enough.

18 SHAWN CAMPBELL: So, I agree with you but I think
19 the charter does note that the Chairperson is the
20 daily supervisor. Our bylaws reiterate that. Our
21 bylaws also uhm at my request several years ago put
22 in an annual performance review. So, I agree there's
23 simpatico on the accountability that you're
24 suggesting could be improved across the city. I
25 think one of my concerns about the language, the

specific language that was in that Intro. undermined the autonomy of each board. So, if this is suggested as a best practice and when borough presidents when appointing members reiterate that, and if we're building the capacity of boards when they're appointed, in order to exercise the authority that's given them, then I think that we don't need these Intro.'s. I think a lot of these Intro.'s are sort of responses to a lack of capacity and a lack of accountability to like you know DCAS for instance.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Yeah, look I appreciate that broader point. I think you made it and a previous district manager on an earlier panel, I think essentially felt the same. I recognize that and your testimony spoke to this quite thoughtfully that community boards are underfunded, and if we gave more resources to community boards, then more community boards would fulfill many of the goals in this legislation just by having more capacity and resources right?

In my experience and I having been a community board member, having attended many, many hundreds of community board meetings over the years, I have found exceptionally uneven management of community boards.

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1 That the caliber and quality of the 59 boards really
2 ranges and helping, I think resources are important
3 and none of the bills that I have sponsored; I don't
4 think any of them but certainly a number of the bills
5 I have sponsored wouldn't work without additional
6 funding. I recognize that. I've said that plainly
7 in my opening today and I repeat that now but I do
8 think it's funding plus standards and expectations
9 and requirements to make sure that all boards are
10 operating at the levels that we should hope and
11 expect. And some are achieving it, some are not and
12 that's the purpose of why we want legislation to
13 mandate it.
14

15 And that's where the voters have a say in telling
16 people to go home if they're not doing their jobs but
17 it's a little different on community boards.

18 MARK DILLER: I completely agree with your
19 sentiment yes. Because they are 59 different
20 independent agencies, they can run 59 different ways
21 but I think that's where and if you wonder why you
22 know that we have sort of our backs up about this,
23 it's because I was heartened to hear Council Member
24 Williams say that she does not want as a consequence
25 of her bill, that a borough president can just fire a

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district manager they don't like but we can only go
by what's written in the Intro and by what's written
in the Intro, that's precisely what could happen.

And so, that's why we seem to be on the defensive
about this because there was no detail in there. We
- Community Board 6 invited Council Member William's
office to come and explain so that we can ask
questions about this bill. No response was given.

So, all we can do is go by what is in the Intro. But
what I would say, if there are standards that
district managers are not meeting, you need to
communicate those standards. You need to be clear
about those standards. Those standards need to be
written somewhere where they can be consulted by
district managers. Because I, as a manager myself, I
cannot hold my staff accountable. I cannot fault my
staff for not meeting expectations that I don't
communicate to them.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Right.

MARK DILLER: They need to be clear on that.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I appreciate that and I
will just say Council Member Williams is a very
thoughtful member of this body and welcomes feedback.
Welcomes good dialogue and you know I think you heard

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1 her say today that she's open to having real
2 conversations about the bill and didn't say that she
3 was stuck on every you know sentence as it had been
4 introduced but open to significant changes, which
5 it's always helpful to hear and I know that we were
6 texting since she had to go down to the budget
7 negotiating team meeting that she's looking forward
8 to watching the testimony after, because she really
9 cares about what you all have to say and not every-
10 not everyone takes that same approach. She really
11 does. So, I know that your testimony is being heard
12 by the bill sponsor in addition to by me and we value
13 the input. And I have not co-sponsored the
14 legislation but I do value the opportunity to have a
15 real dialogue about it for what makes sense in it,
16 what doesn't and why you know if it moves forward in
17 the legislative process.

18
19 So, with that, I will say thank you very much for
20 each of your testimony. We really appreciate it and
21 more importantly, thank you for your work. It's
22 unheralded and underappreciated as a Board Chair Mr.
23 Camacho, as a Board member, and as three great
24 district managers. We really appreciate it. Thank
25 you very much.

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3 Uhm, we are now going to switch back to data
4 disaggregation. Lloyd, stay where you are. Double
5 testimony at the same hearing, very exciting. I
6 think that could be a record. So, Lloyd Feng is
7 going to be testifying on behalf of the Coalition for
8 Asian American families, CACF, Ashley Chen will be
9 testifying on behalf - if she's still here on behalf
10 of the Chinese American Planning Council, CPC, Jeemin
11 Cha, also from CACF, and Alice Mo from Home Crest
12 Community Services. If you all four are here, great.
13 Thank you all for being here and feel free to testify
14 in whichever order your so moved. You'll each have
15 three minutes.

16 LLOYD FENG: Great well, thank you again Chair
17 Restler. Good to see you again.

18 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Long time no see.

19 LLOYD FENG: My name is Lloyd Feng from the
20 Coalition for Asian American Children and Families,
21 CACF this time, where I Co-Lead the Invisible No More
22 Campaign and I'm here to underline reasons that this
23 Committee and the New York City Council ought to
24 support and pass our bill, Intro. 1134. I think you
25 have some documents sitting in front of you that
include some information about Invisible No More and

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the FAQ. So, you can refer to that as I speak but I just first off want to give a shout out to Kyae who spoke earlier, who was our ASAP Youth Leader. She was the last speaker, the English Language Learner. She's only been learning English for two years by the way. And so, she's able to like -

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: She did a phenomenal job.

LLOYD FENG: Understand what data disaggregation is which is a pretty big word and concept. But anyway, New York City of course is renowned for its diversity, attracting people from all over the world to build a life here. According to the 2020 Census results, there are nearly 200 racial and ethnic groups represented among New York City's growing population. Despite the diversity of cultures and communities and ideas and experiences that people bring with them that we see every day around us, New York City agencies are not collecting granular high quality demographic data that reflects this diversity. Instead, relying on broad racial and ethnic categories like Asian, Black, Latino, White, etc.. that ultimately mask unique cultural nuances and different socioeconomic needs.

So, why does this matter? Well, let's look at Asian New Yorkers and diabetes problems for instance. According to the 2021 DOHMH report on Asian and Native Hawaiian Specific Islander New Yorkers health, 12 percent of Asian and Pacific Islander New Yorkers, which is quite similar to the 13 percent of New Yorkers across racial and ethnic groups, experience diabetes 12 percent, 13 percent. But this kind of data alone is of course misleading. 21 percent of Indian New Yorkers have diabetes as opposed to just 9 percent of Chinese and 7 percent of Korean New Yorkers.

This kind of disaggregated data would provide health practitioners, policy makers, and our own community members with better information about who diabetes impacts, guiding more targeted research, policy making and medical decisions. Relying solely on broad, race, ethnicity categories is no longer a useful way to measure and understand all New Yorkers needs and may actually be putting more children and families at risk.

So, the bottom line is that 1134 updates New York City's race and ethnicity data truly befitting the worlds capital and modernizes agencies demographic

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data collections now that are now a quarter of the way through the 21st Century, right? We're in 2025. This bill ensures that every New Yorker whether you're Nigerian or African American or Jamaican, Korean or Filipino, or Indian or Uzbek, Cuban or Salvadorian or Mexican, Polish or Italian or Russian, gets counted and gets served.

So, intro. 1134 prioritizes common sense, government efficiency, responsible government and ensuring our city serves everyone effectively. I urge you know the Committee to really back this bill and I hope New York City Council can really stand with all New Yorkers to make sure our needs are understood better than ever before. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you very much Mr. Feng.

JEEMIN CHA: Good afternoon. My name is Jeemin Cha and I am the Data Policy Coordinator at the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families, also known as CACF. Thank you very much to Chair Lincoln Restler and the Committee on Government Operations for holding this hearing and providing the opportunity to testify in support of Intro. 1134.

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The Invisible No More campaign, led by CACF, has been advocating for 15 years to ensure that New York City and State governments collect accurate, disaggregated data about our diverse New York City communities. Our coalition made up of more than 90 and growing AAPI serving community-based organizations are here today to express our strong support for Intro. 1134, a transformative piece of legislation that will significantly expand how New York City agencies collect and disaggregate race and ethnicity data from New Yorkers accessing city services.

The impact of Intro. 1134's passage will be immediately felt not only by our AAPI communities, but by other BIPOC communities as well. It will finally bring collective visibility to many communities who have long been ignored in the city's data collection and reporting practices by city agencies.

Intro. 1134 will especially benefit AAPI communities that have been historically undercounted or rendered invisible, including but not limited to Bangladeshi, Nepali, Sri Lankan, Laotian, Hmong, Burmese, Cambodian, and Indo-Caribbean populations.

1
2 Allowing these communities to be under the broad
3 classification of "Asian," or even worse, "Other or
4 Unknown" allows them to be overlooked in critical
5 areas such as education, employment, housing,
6 healthcare, and political representation, further
7 perpetuating their invisibility and unmet needs.

8 Any delay in passing Int. 1134 hinders our city
9 government's ability to consider those needs in
10 decision-making and resource allocation. Currently,
11 New York City agencies only collect and disaggregate
12 data for the top 30 most populous ancestry groups,
13 and just seven agencies are legally required to do
14 so.

15 This narrow scope leaves out critical populations
16 and limits the city's ability to address disparities
17 effectively. Intro. 1134 goes beyond the top 30 and
18 represents the many ethnic identities that make up
19 our city's population. It requires not just seven,
20 but all city agencies to disaggregate our data. Most
21 notably, this bill will incentivize city agencies to
22 evaluate and improve their services based on more
23 accurate, disaggregated data.

24 It's time to move beyond the familiar political
25 language that "there is not enough data on our

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communities.” We must ensure that data reflects the lived experiences of our AAPI communities and affirm that we are a force too powerful and too vital to be overlooked.

I want to thank Council Member Shekar Krishnan for his advocacy and for championing this bill, and we ask the Committee on Government Operations, State & Federal Legislation to vote unanimously in favor of this bill without delay. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you so much.

ALICE MO: Good afternoon. I’m Alice Mo, Policy and Advocacy Coordinator at Home Crest Community Services. Thank you to Chair Lincoln Restler and the Committee on Governmental Operations for this hearing.

I’m here to express Home Crest strong support for Intro. 1134. We’re a proud coalition member of the Invisible No More Campaign led by the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families advocating for accurate disaggregated data. Reflecting New York City’s diverse communities. This transformative bill expands how New York City agencies collect race and ethnicity data, by requiring collection across three tiers broad, regional and detailed subgroups.

This ensures all identities are captured, vital for nonprofits like ours to proactively design and deliver responsive services. At Home Crest, we primarily serve Southern Brooklyn's vibrant Chinese population while often treated as monolithic, our community is deeply diverse. From various regions with distinct dialects language needs add cultural nuances which collectively lead to unique service requirements. This one size fits all approach hides critical differences. Like income inequality where the richest Chinese American Families can earn 19.2 times more than the poorest.

Language only data not only misses the distinct needs of ethnic groups who may speak the same language but overlooks those - misses the distinct needs of ethnic groups who may speak the same language but it also overlooks those of second or third generation Americans who identify with their heritage yet primarily speak English.

By expanding options to capture New Yorkers specific heritage, Intro. 1134 will empower us to deliver tailored support. This means providing language specific mental health services, targeted health outreach, for prevalent diseases, culturally

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competent older adult care, and effectively
addressing challenges and public safety and schools.

Detailed data help support students from diverse
Chinese linguistic backgrounds as we heard first hand
today and develop precise public safety initiatives
that can address concerns impacting significant
immigrant groups. Intro. 1134 is vital.

Significantly improving representation and policy and
resource allocation. For not just diverse segments
of the Chinese population but for all of New York
City's diverse populations including AAPI communities
like Bangladeshi, Nepali, Cambodian, Indo-European,
Indo-Caribbean and more who have historically been
undercounted by the city agencies.

This bill empowers organizations like ours to
advocate better. Enable city agencies to deliver
more targeted and equitable services and incentivizes
them to evaluate services based on that collected
data.

I thank Council Member Shekar Krishnan for
championing this bill. We ask the Committee on
Government Operations to vote unanimously in favor of
Intro. 1134. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you so much Ms. Mo.

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ASHLEY CHEN: Thank you Chair Restler and members of the City Council for the opportunity to testify. My name is Ashley Chen, I'm the policy analyst at the Chinese American Planning Council, CPC. The nation's largest Asian American social service organization serving 80,000 New Yorkers across the five boroughs in Manhattan, Queens, and Brooklyn through 50 or more programs.

As part of CACFs Invisible No More Campaign, we know that equitable policy begins with accurate data. That's why I'm here to urge swift passage and implementation of Intro. 1134, legislation that would require city agencies to collect and report disaggregated data on at least the ten most populous groups within each broad based/ethnicity category.

Asian Americans are the fastest growing racial group in New York City and we're not a monolith. At CPC alone, we serve immigrants from over 40 countries speaking 25 languages. Yet the broad Asian category conceal stark disparities between communities.

During COVID 19 data masked urgent health needs among subgroups like Mandarin speaking elders who faced unique barriers to care. Disaggregated data will make disparities visible allowing the city to

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design smarter, more targeted solutions. With federal support for comprehensive data under threat, New York must lead. We thank Council Member Krishnan for championing this bill and urge the Committee to vote unanimously for in favor of Intro. 1134 because data equity is the foundation for justice. Thank you for your time and consideration.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Yeah, I just really want to thank you all for your thoughtful testimony and I'm really pleased that we're able to hold a hearing on this bill today because I think it's really important and I strongly support it and you have my full commitment to work closely with Council Member Krishnan to help advance its passage. And you know I think each of your organizations do a great job and I just want to thank you for the work that you do on behalf of all New Yorkers and for your advocacy for this legislation. I think having comprehensive accurate data is critical for us to set the right policies and it's not always the like most exciting thing in the world to talk about data disaggregation but it is really important and so, thank you for focusing on it and pushing and it's making a difference and we'll do our best to help get it over

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the finish line. So, thank you all very much.

Really appreciate it.

We're going to do one more panel on data disaggregation then we're going to take a three minute break and then we'll go to Zoom. So, with that, Naima Dahir from District 33's own Arab American Family Support Center. Thank you for being with us. Oumaima excuse me, Benyahya I'm sorry from MALIKAH. Please forgive my mispronunciation. Sarah Fajardo from the Korean American Family Service Center and Kimberly Gee Powell or Gee Powell from Asians Fighting Injustice Invisible No More.

If you're all still with us, feel free to join and testify in whatever order you all are so inspired.

NAIMA DAHIR: Good afternoon Chair Restler and members of the Committee. My name is Naima Dahir and I'm from the Arab American Family Support Center. AAFSC provides culturally and linguistically competent trauma informed multigenerational social services for the growing Arab, middle eastern, north African, Muslim and South Asian communities across New York City.

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As a proud coalition member of the Invisible No More Campaign led by CACF we work to advocate for equitable, accurate, and disaggregated data collection by New York City and state agencies. We are here today to express our strong support for Intro. 1134, which represents a critical step forward in improving how city agencies collect and report race and ethnicity data. As one of the largest organizations in the nation serving middle eastern and north African communities, AAFSC witnesses every day the consequences of erasure due to insufficient data that properly showcases our communities.

Despite New York City's immense diversity we in homed hundreds of ethnicities, cultures and languages. MENA communities remain invisible in official data. The lack of disaggregated data has far reaching consequences across education, health care, employment, political representation, and more. Immigrants, refugees, and their children from Yamin to Palestine, to communities across North Africa have been forced to identify as White on government forums, a category that fails to represent their lived experiences.

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This classification not only erases their identity but actively obstructs access to services, protection, and representation. As social service providers, we see the devastating effects of misclassification daily. When a student is being bullied for being Arab and they're asked to check white on school forums, our case managers are unable to effectively advocate for culturally responsive support in schools. When anti-Arab and anti-Muslim rhetoric rises, our mental health clinicians lack the information to demonstrate the unique mental health needs of Armena communities, resulting in underdiagnosis, stigma and adequate care.

The data gap also distorts how government resources are distributed. Without recognition in data, our communities are left out of decisions across language access services, health care investment and public safety measures.

It is essential that New York City pass this bill now as federal government continues to jeopardize our access to high quality data by slashing funding to the census borough, driving staff departures and effectively eroding public trust in both current and future census collections.

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Political uncertainty and ongoing budget cuts at the federal level have already made it difficult to gather accurate, timely, and comprehensive data. In the absence of consistent federal leadership, New York City must take action in strengthening our local data systems.

As the city continues to grow more diverse, the passing Intro. 1134 is a bold and necessary step forward to securing detailed disaggregated race and ethnicity data that truly reflects the communities we serve every day. Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you. Always good to see you.

OUMAIMA BENYAHYA: Hi good afternoon. My name is Oumaima Benyahya and I'm the Organizing Fellow at MALIKAH, a nonprofit organization that also serves the MENA community in Astoria Queens and we're an antiviolence training and mutual aid based building organization that builds power and safety for communities specifically the MENA community mostly through self-defense, financial literacy, organizing and healing programs.

So, I recently joined but as a proud member of the Invisible No More Campaign, led by CACF, which has been advocating for a while to ensure that New York City and state governments collect accurate disaggregated data and information about our diverse New York City communities.

I'm here today to express my organizations strong support for Intro. 1134, a transformative piece of legislation that will significantly expand how New York City agencies collect and disaggregate race and ethnicity data from New Yorkers accessing city services.

At MALIKAH, we serve the MENA community through mutual aid based organizing and the lack of data has prevented our communities from receiving instrumental access to housing, healthcare and education. Our community doesn't feel seen when they fill out demographic forms, applying for food stamps or even simply when seeing a doctor for a routine checkup. As part of the MENA community, I know how important that disaggregated data is and ever since I joined MALIKAH this need has only become increasingly apparent.

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A yes in one dialect of Arabic is a no in another. Any time our mothers, aunts, neighbors or small businesses seek help from government agencies, they are either refused, ignored, or simply unseen. They are told to seek help from another doctor's office. They are given missed diagnoses and unable to understand what's happening during their court hearings.

This creating an additional burden to community based organizations like ours. We need data that represents all the groups that we serve, who are not White and not just Arab, not just middle eastern and not just [INAUDIBLE 03:24:12] but part of different groups that will be disaggregated through this bill. And they are parts of different groups that have different needs and different wants that we are responsible to serve.

So, yeah, I want to thank again the Council Member for his advocacy in championing this bill and we ask that you vote unanimously in favor of this bill without delay. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you.

SARAH FAJARDO: Good afternoon. My name is Sarah Fajardo and I serve as the Senior Director of

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Community Outreach and Advocacy at the Korean
American Family Service Center.

For over 35 years, KAFC has worked to support
immigrant survivors of gender based violence,
offering safety, healing and hope through culturally
and linguistically accessible services. Thank you
very much to the Chair and the Committee on
government operations for holding this hearing and
providing the opportunity to testify today in support
of Intro. 1134.

We too are a proud coalition member of the
Invisible No More Campaign led by CACF and we
together have been advocating for over a decade to
ensure that New York City and state governments
collect aggregated data and information about our
diverse New York City communities. At KAFSC we rely
on rely on data and research to help plan and
efficiently deliver services to meet our communities
needs. In our work providing culturally specific
mental health, housing, youth, after school and
community outreach programming, we know that
knowledge is power and that information is absolutely
essential to breaking silences and ending violence.
We provide services in language to thousands of New

Yorkers and have designed our programs to reflect and include Korean culturally specific features. This program design has helped drive effective service delivery and shows New York City what culturally specific data informed services can look like.

It looks like survivors thriving and healing and building healthier violence free communities. Better data collection by city agencies would allow us and our service provision partners to better quantify and understand community needs and more efficiently and effectively target culturally specific services. We are proud that Intro. 1134 will be the nations most inclusive data disaggregation bill by expanding and collecting data on as we have heard minimum categories, regional subgroups, and detailed subgroups.

Currently, New York City agencies only collect and disaggregate data for the top 30 most populous ancestry groups and only seven agencies are required by law to do so. This limited approach means that many communities are left out of data collection efforts. As a result, communities unique needs go unrecognized and unaddressed by government agencies,

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invisibilizing these communities and policy and
resource decisions.

Intro. 1134 will also incentivize the city
agencies to evaluate their services based on the
collected data, which is absolutely crucial. We want
to thank Council Member Shekar Krishnan for his
advocacy and we ask that the Committee vote
unanimously in favor of the bill without delay.
Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you.

KIMBERLY GEE POWELL: Hi, good afternoon. Thank
you to the Chair and the Committee for this
opportunity to testify today. My name is Kimberly
Gee Powell and I serve as the Executive Director of
the Asians Fighting Injustice. We're a relatively
young community based nonprofit dedicated to food
justice, education equity and cross racial
solidarity.

So, we're a proud member of the Invisible No More
Campaign and I'm here to express our strong support
for Intro. 1134. This transformative piece of
legislation will significantly expand how New York
City agencies collect and disaggregate race data,
race ethnicity data from New Yorkers accessing city

services, ensuring that all community members are properly counted and represented. Intro. 1134 is set to be the most inclusive data disaggregation bill in the country and it's about time.

For too long, our community members are Bangladeshi, Lon, Indo-Caribbean Burmese and Nepali neighbors have been lumped into a single box that erases their needs and their stories. We've seen first hand how this land of data impacts real lives. It makes it harder for us to get funding to build afterschool programs, to advocate for culturally grounded food justice or to offer the right support for students and families.

When we're invisible in the data, we're invisible in solutions as well. Our communities aren't monolithic. We're diverse, we're complex, and we're deeply rooted in this city. We deserve to be counted.

So, at AFI, we have seen how this lack of detailed data makes entire communities feel unseen. When demographic forms only offer the broad categories like Asian or limited ethnicity options, it erases our vital differences that matter when we're trying to meet students where they are. The

needs of an student in Jackson Heights are going to be very different from those of a Korean student in Marie Hill but the data that we rely on to ensure that our students are getting the resources they need don't reflect it.

This kind of information isn't just useful, it's absolutely critical for ensuring our work remains impactful. As AFI prepares to launch our first ever afterschool tutoring program and expand our Dumplings of Love Initiative into schools to provide culturally responsive nutritional education, we're using disaggregated data to help identify the best fit school partners for our pilot. Without we risk overlooking communities that need the support the most.

I want to thank Council Member Shekar Krishnan and the other Co-sponsors of this bill for their support and we ask that the Committee on the Government Operations State and Federal Legislation to vote unanimously in favor of this bill without delay. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you so much. We really appreciate your thoughtful testimony today and you know it's - many of you have underscored in your

testimony just the breath of the diversity of the
AAPI community and your stretching from Indo
Trinidadians and Indo-Guianese to folks from all over
Asia and the middle east. It's critically important
that we have clear, precise, accurate data to
understand the populations that we're serving and how
to devise the best policy solutions to meet the
targeted needs of specific communities with the right
language skills, to be able to provide services
effectively.

So, I just want to thank you all for your
testimony today and for joining us. Your
participation really does make a difference and we'll
do our best to try to move this bill forward as
quickly as we can. Thank you for being with us. I'm
going to - we're going to just take a break for three
minutes and then we'll shift to Zoom and I'm going to
run to the bathroom.

[03:31:09]- [03:37:11]. Okay, [GAVEL]. Okay,
thank you very much. I'm sorry, I didn't know you
wanted to testify in person today Mr. Quinones, so
Julio Quinones, Jr. we'll have you go and then we'll
go to Zoom.

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2 JULIO QUINONES: Good afternoon Chair. My name
3 is Julio Quiñones Jr., a proud lifelong Bronx
4 resident, a member of Bronx Community Board 9 and an
5 elementary physical education teacher serving the
6 same youth and families that community boards are
7 meant to uplift.

8 I see firsthand how policy, planning, and
9 participation intersect. I appreciate the
10 opportunity to testify today and thank you the
11 Committee for holding this important hearing.

12 Our Community boards shape so much of daily life
13 from the safety of our streets to youth programs to
14 equitable resource distribution but without the right
15 tools and support our boards cannot function
16 equitably or effectively. That's why I strongly
17 support Intro. 0472 for EEO training and Preconsidered
18 legislation to create support offices that assist
19 with legal tech, planning and human resources.

20 I want to thank Council Member Rafael Salamanca
21 Jr for allocating \$310,000 to Bronx Boards for
22 critical technology upgrades. This is proof that
23 advocacy works, however these are one time capital
24 investments, boards still need permanent
25 infrastructure, dedicated tech support, translation

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services, and ongoing training to keep board
digitally connected and accessible.

I also want to acknowledge and thank Bronx
Borough President Vanessa L. Gibson for her ongoing
leadership and commitment to strengthening our
community boards including through the creation of
the Bronx Youth Council, an important step toward
civic engagement for the next generation.

As an educator, I also believe we should explore
structured opportunities for youth participation and
community boards through advisory roles, internships
programs or civics partnerships with public schools.
Engaging youth early builds lifelong civic habits and
helps boards stay responsive to the next generation.

I also urge the Council to ensure hybrid access
is standard for all board meetings, fund ongoing
development for district managers, board Chairs and
committee members, provide operational equity across
boroughs so that the Bronx and CB9 receive the same
staffing and training support. Let's make it easier
for residents to participate without needing to be
appointed, simplified public comment systems, clear
language summaries of agendas and welcoming community
liaisons can go a long way toward making boards truly

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accessible and inclusive. Empowering boards empowers entire neighborhoods. Let's make this a turning point not just in policy but in practice.

I also want to strongly advocate for expanding the full time staffing capacity of Community Boards. Many boards are expected to engage in city planning, outreach and policy review with minimal support. Often just a district manager and one assistant. This is simply not enough. If we want boards to be effective, responsive and equitable, they need staff who can support constituent services, land use and zoning reviews, community engagement and event planning, translation and accessibility coordination, data tracking and reporting. Investing in personnel is investing in participatory democracy. It's how we go from symbolic representation to meaningful impact.

Thank you for your time and for your service to New Yorkers.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you very much for your service on the Community Board and for your work as a teacher and really appreciate your patience and your participation in our hearing today. It means a lot.

JULIO QUINONES: Thank you.

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3 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you. Have a great
4 day.

5 JULIO QUINONES: You to.

6 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: We are now going to shift
7 to Zoom and we will I think firstly do a panel of
8 district managers and then we'll do a panel of board
9 chair- well, can we just - Okay, we're just going to
10 do the Board Chairs and the District Managers all
11 together, one big mega panel, so get ready. It's
12 getting exciting at the Gov Ops hearing. Gary
13 Giordano from Queens Community Board 5, the District
14 Manager, Christine Nolan, Queens Community Board 6,
15 also the District Manager, Heather E. Beers-
16 Dimitriadis; I hope I didn't mess that up too badly,
17 our Chair of Queens Community Board 6, Theresa Scavo
18 Brooklyn Community Board 15, our Chair for many
19 years, Laura Singer, the District Manager of Brooklyn
20 Community Board 15, Nadeen Gayle, Brooklyn Community
21 Board 3 District Manager. Way to go Bed Stuy. Taya
22 Mueller, Brooklyn Community Board 2, District
23 Manager. Great to have you Taya and Julio Pena,
24 Chair of Brooklyn Community Board 7. Oh and lastly
25 Tammy Meltzer from Manhattan Community Board 1 the
Chair.

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3 Thank you all for being with us. I'll just call
4 out names for the order that we can go. We'll do it
5 in that order so we'll start with Gary and you have
6 three minutes.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

8 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: We can hear you Gary. No,
9 we can't hear you anymore. I think you might be
10 muted. Oh, can we unmute Gary? I don't know,
11 somebody is doing something.

12 GARY GIORDANO: Oh I got it now.

13 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: There we go. Hey, good to
14 hear you.

15 GARY GIORDANO: I think when I was unmuting, they
16 might have been unmuting me at the same time.

17 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Alright, we're starting
18 your time now, you're good.

19 GARY GIORDANO: Oh thank you. Thanks for the
20 opportunity and the support for Community Boards. I
21 think that most of you have and you might want to
22 make us more perfect and I think that has a lot of
23 merit.

24 Intro. 472, which is equal opportunity and other
25 trainings for community board members, including
sexual harassment training. Well, the district

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managers take that, the staff takes that. I think it's very beneficial. I don't know to what extent board members will want to do that but I think it is important for them to do it and probably before they become - before they're inducted as board members.

Intro. 1065, I believe that that proposed legislation with regard to the district managers, especially the portion where the borough president can just remove the district manager is unfair and would politicize the community boards.

Intro. 1250, which requires community boards to publish their bylaws, is certainly reasonable. I was around our website that wasn't very hard for us to do and we did update them fairly recently and the borough president, the last two borough presidents were working on getting those bylaws to be more similar to each other.

What I thought was Intro. 1330, uhm, we currently publish a monthly board meeting, notices on our website with a description of the important items, especially public hearings. We also have been streaming our meetings for quite some time but it costs us \$4,000 a year and it's difficult financially because our OTPS budget is only \$15,585.

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3 Intro. what I thought was 3396 and I believe it
4 is corrected to be 1314, requiring borough presidents
5 to provide legal information, technology assistance,
6 community planning and human resources support,
7 certainly has a lot of merit. The community boards
8 need that.

9 In Queens they have done that to some extent but
10 less though in recent years and I think that the
11 other Intro. is similar to that with regard to DCAS
12 and whether DCAS should have an office of community
13 board support within there.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you. Your time is
15 expired.

16 GARY GIORDANO: So, I don't really have a
17 preference on which it is, as long as we can get the
18 support that we need. The Queens Borough Presidents
19 Office has tried but I think there's limited as far
20 as an understaff that they could dedicate to that.

21 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay, thank you.

22 GARY GIORDANO: As far as the training for
23 community board members -

24 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Mr. Giordano, your time is
25 expired. We really appreciate your testimony today
and if you'd like to submit written testimony, we'd

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be very happy to review it. Thank you for being with
us.

Next up is Ms. Christine Nolan, District Manager
of Queens Community Board 6. You have three minutes.

CHRISTINE NOLAN: Good afternoon. My name is
Christine Nolan; I'm the District Manager of Queens
Community Board 6 and I'm here to speak about two
things in particular. One being Intro. 1065 and the
other being community board budgets. I'm happy to
hear Council Member Restler and other members
recognize the fact that the requirements in these
bills would require funding. Many of these bills
include things that many of our community boards are
already doing like producing some type of newsletter
and recording streaming meetings, but they come at a
cost.

We need the necessary qualified staff to perform
these roles and we often need to hire outside
companies to do it. The City Council should not be
increasing the requirements of Community Boards
without also increasing the small budgets that we
work with it. We are one of the smallest city
agencies with the smallest budget and yet we are the

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agencies that have the most direct communication with the public.

When a resident has a problem, they don't usually go to the city agency directly, they come to the community board office or to a community board meeting and we assist them with their request.

With respect to Intro. 1065, I have a few issues. First, when time limits for Community board members start to take effect in 2027, the district managers will be the only link between outgoing community board members and incoming new members.

As you know, nothing happens quickly in the City of New York. We've been advocating for a new library since 1994. If District Managers turn over as often or not, then as community board members, who will be able to brief the new members on these projects that have been in the works for 5, 10, 15, or more years?

A lot of valuable time will be wasted during research and duplicating work that has already been done. Second, it will difficult to fill the district manager position with an employee who is focused and dedicated to the job. I have only been district manager for about a year now but before that I spent 17 years working for the Community Board as a union

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employee with job security, benefits, etc.. I applied for this position because I had the experience and knowledge and the commitment to the community that I thought would be a great fit for our board. However, if I had known that I would have to essentially reapply for my position every four years and could be removed from my position at will, I would have stayed in my Monday through Friday nine to five union protected job.

This would have left my boards to replace a retired district manager with a much less experienced district manager that would have to learn the job from scratch.

I urge you all to reconsider Intro. 1065 and consider all the information you have heard today with respect to the challenges faced by Community Boards. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you very much Ms. Nolan. Next up, we have your Board Chair Ms. Heather E. Beers-Dimitriadis. You have three minutes.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

HEATHER BEERS-DIMITRIADIS: Okay, I am now unmuted. Okay, I will begin. My apologies. Chair Restler and Council Members, my name is Heather

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Beers-Dimitriadis, Chair of Queens Community Board 6,
serving Regal Park and Forest Hills. Thank you for
taking the time to consider the needs of Community
Boards and recognizing the important role we play in
local governance. We sincerely appreciate the
thoughtfulness behind many of the proposed measures,
especially those in and increasing transparency,
strengthening outreach to community, and bolstering
support of our staff. These steps reflect a
meaningful commitment to inclusive and responsive
civic engagement, however, these initiative cannot
succeed without concrete sustained and increased
funding.

Thank you Council Member Brewer for bringing this
up. An unequivocal accountability measures built
into their implementations as currently outlined some
of the proposals fall short of meeting that critical
threshold. Queens Community Board 6 already
satisfies many of the goals set forward in this
legislation. All meetings and briefings are recorded
and shared. Our bylaws are current and routinely
refined and updated. A copy can be found on our
website. We distribute weekly updates to our very
large community mailing list. We also supply

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training for our new board members each as a
supplement to the crash course supply by the Borough
Presidents Office.

We are also pleased to say that our district
manager does not hold a political position.

Concerning Intro. 1065, I have several concerns.

Though I understand the rationale behind the creation
of such measure, is currently there is a clear gap in
oversight when it comes to district managers as the
Chair, head of agency, who serves in a volunteer
capacity, it can be challenging to maintain
visibility into the day to day operations of the
district office.

This lack of structured oversight has long been a
point of tension and deserves thoughtful attention.
While community board chairs are designated as head
of agency, they serve in a volunteer capacity and
often have limited time to spend in the district
office as a result. They may not have a clear or
consistent view of the day to day operations, making
it difficult to assess how effectively the office is
functioning or whether key responsibilities are
fulfilled. This dynamic creates a significant gap,
however, this bill fails to address the core problem

and instead introduces new ones, allowing the removal of the district managers by borough presidents undermines the autonomy and integrity of community boards. This practice removes any semblance of due process offering no standardized performance evaluation criteria or formal mechanisms to review. The proposed process leaves a leadership vacuum in frequent turnover, not only disrupting daily operations but also threatening the preservation of institutional memory and the continuity of long term planning, both of which are essential for effective governance and community engagement.

To strengthen the stability, accountability and effectiveness of community boards, we strongly recommend several key improvements to the current framework governing district managers. First, borough presidents should only be permitted to remove district managers for cause, such as misconduct, incompetence or violation of city policy through a transparent process that includes written notice and an opportunity to respond and public explanation.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you. Your time is expired.

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HEATHER BEERS-DIMITRIADIS: Second, an annual performance evaluation process should be established and conducted by the community board ensuring fair and consistent assessment based on clearly defined job responsibilities.

As a Community Board Chair, I want to respectfully acknowledge that I have often felt a lack of sufficient legal support from the Borough Presidents Office. A concern that was further underscored by the limitations expressed by Allan Swisher today.

As public servants, deeply committed to serving our communities -

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Your time is expired. We just we have to -

HEATHER BEERS-DIMITRIADIS: It is essential that we receive the support and assurances needed to carry out our responsibilities effectively and competently knowing -

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Ms. Dimitriadis, your time is expired. We have to ask that you just wrap up please. Your time is expired. If you could just conclude.

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3 HEATHER BEERS-DIMITRIADIS: I'm sorry, I didn't
4 see that. Just the conclusion basically says, as
5 public servants serving, we're committed to serving
6 our communities but it's important to know that our
7 city stands behind us when we encounter certain legal
8 concerns.

9 As this legislation progresses, we welcome future
10 discussions with any of you and I'm very proud of our
11 board and even prouder of the work our office staff
12 does to serve our community. Thank you for your time
13 and consideration.

14 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you so much Chair
15 Dimitriadis. We appreciate you being with us today.
16 And now, we're going to move to Brooklyn's Community
17 Board 15. Chair Scavo, thank you so much for being
18 with us, Theresa Scavo.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

20 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Chair Scavo, can you hear
21 us? We cannot hear you. Okay, we're going to move
22 to the next person. Okay we will go to the next
23 person and if you'd like to join in, we'll come back
24 to you. Next up, District Manager from Brooklyn
25 Community Board 15 Laura Singer.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

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3 LAURA SINGER: Hi, my name is Laura Singer and
4 I'm District Manager for Brooklyn Community Board 15
5 Sheepshead Bay, Garrington Beach, Manhattan Beach and
6 Home Crest. I want to discuss Intro. 1315.
7 Community Boards have not been voted a budget
8 increase in umpteen years. Yet with each new mandate
9 imposed, we are expected to absorb these financial
10 hardships and produce items or provide additional
11 services we are neither funded for, equipped for or
12 staffed to do. This proposal, a mandate for a
13 monthly email newsletter is not funded and would take
14 up valuable man power and resources which will be a
15 hardship on my agency, which is currently comprised
16 of two staff members.

17 We use our website to alert the community of
18 meetings, information and events. In regards to
19 teleconferencing mandate for our meetings, we were
20 quoted a minimum of 300 a meeting to set up a video
21 conferencing per meeting and that figure is now a few
22 years old. Without the proper funding, the resources
23 and the man power necessary, these mandates would
24 cause unnecessary financial burdens to our office.
25 We're working with budgets that predate the
technology you are now proposing be required. The

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board office with the guidance and the financial
resources develop these proposed mandates. The
Borough Presidents office, the Mayor's Office and the
City Council office, all have dedicated IT staff. 59
community boards have one OTI person assigned to us
and that is more grid towards our computer needs in
any video conferencing projects. It would require
additional dedicated financial resource to an outside
vendor outside of our allotted \$46,000 yearly budget
to run our office.

Regards to Intro. 1065, limiting district
managers to four year stints. What city agency
manager has a term limit? What agency manager would
take a job outside of an elected official if they
potentially lose it in four years' time?

Currently resourcing and attracting staff with
our very small budget has been challenging. Now I'm
not being extended past the four year term would only
further turn potential hires off. What members with
historic knowledge are now being termed out? You
want to take a potentially long standing staff member
with institutional knowledge and place the on the
chopping block as well.

Boards have bylaws that determine how employees are hired and terminated. Even an outside agency such as the Borough Presidents Office is not due to resourcing or hiring. Firing a district manager seems quite frankly absurd.

In regards to Intro. 1314, I would be remiss if I didn't mention the proposed support given by Borough President's Office to Community Boards for the accounting FMS Assistance, which is mostly [INAUDIBLE 03:56:28] in your description. Our financial systems that are geared towards agencies of larger staff due to require three people to pay a bill. With a staff of two, many Community Boards, such as myself, are reliant on borough hall as being our third sign off. That is critical to our operation and must remain in place. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you very much Ms. Singer. We really appreciate your thoughtful testimony. We'll now try to return again to your Board Chair Theresa Scavo from Brooklyn Community Board 15. Chair Scavo, are you with us? Okay, we can't hear you Ms. Scavo. I'm sorry to say, so she's coming to you. She's coming to Ms. Singer, alright amazing technology. Uh what a move, alright. Nice

to see you. We still can't hear. Can we unmute Ms. Singer? We're working on it. There we go. Now talk.

THERESA SCAVO: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Hey.

THERESA SCAVO: We'll try it again. I'm Theresa Scavo, Chair of Community Board 15 in Brooklyn. Today, I will be discussing a mockamole to amend the New York City Charter in relation to requiring borough presidents to establish and maintain in office to assist community boards by providing legal, information technology, community framing, and human resources.

You got to excuse me, I'm a little confused. Under Section 82, paragraph 12 of the City Charter under duties, it states that the borough president must provide training and technical assistance to community board members. The simple Google definition of technical assistance refers to specialized support provided to organizations or individuals to help them improve their skills, knowledge and capabilities in this specific area.

It can be in a variety of forms, including training, mentoring, and resource sharing. The goal

of technical assistance is to address a particular need or problem and help the recipients achieve a desired outcome. Technical assistance is already mandated as well as training. So, I'm a little more confused. Years ago, all I had to do was pick up a phone, call borough hall directly for a legal question. If I had an HR question, a zoning question a budgetary question. I don't know why this has changed. Why now would an office need to be created? It just seems to me that every day there is another proposal to establish another office or agency. Government is growing and we the residents don't see any improvement in services.

Today, everyone just assumes to fix a problem, add another office yet we existed perfectly before. Thank you for today.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay, thank you Chair Scavo. We will now move to our Brooklyn's Community Board 3 District Manager Nadeen Gayle. Thank you so much for being with us Ms. Gayle.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Do we have Nadeen Gayle? No, okay we are moving to Brooklyn Community Board 2. I'm not supposed to have favorites so I won't say

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that I have a favorite but you can read between the
lines. Taya, our district manager, you're up next.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

TAYA MUELLER: Hello, uhm City Hall appears to be
muted but I have been unmuted.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: You're good, we can hear
you. Can you hear us?

TAYA MUELLER: City Hall is muted.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Talk, talk, you're good.
You're good. I don't know what's happening. Why is
this so hard?

TAYA MUELLER: City Hall is still muted.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: You can talk. We can hear
you.

TAYA MUELLER: Hello, hello, Council Member
Restler, very happy to be here today and so grateful
to the Committee and to my talented and passionate
and brilliant colleagues. The point of agreement
that is the most clear to me in this occasionally
spicy discussion, is that Community Boards are
persistently understaffed and under resourced and I
just wanted to touch on one aspect. I think that our
board meetings are certainly the most publicly
visible aspect of a district office but they are not

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our only administrative burden and in our case, they're not even our greatest burden. I believe that district offices have a triple mandate. First, we do serve our board members and we produce those meetings.

Second, we support our colleagues in city and state agencies and elected offices. In fact, the number one request that we hear from city agencies during our annual borough budget consultations is the request for more partnership in our shared local public outreach and education aims.

As the Council Member knows, our district office has undertaken significant digital transformation since 2020, to meet that need but we cannot possibly sustainably continue to do more with less.

And third, we serve an extremely diverse district resident population. We are their trusted nonpartisan coach in navigating local government. So, at current headcount, the loss of one full time staff person actually represents the loss of 29 percent of our entire agency workforce and institutional knowledge. So, staff turnover is normal and it's expected for all of the usual reasons of retirement or a medical or parental leave or most

commonly for better wages at a different agency.

However, district offices experience normal turnover, normal turnover as a period of crippling understaffing. And on a personal note, I so wish I could be with you in person today but on Friday, one of my key staff people was recruited to a different city agency.

So, in summary, I just wanted to -I don't know if archaic was the right word but I do agree with the general characterization that the full potential of community boards and their district offices remains untapped. Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you Taya and thank you for your great work at CB 2, we really appreciate it. We will go- do we have Nadeen with us or no? No, Nadeen left, alright. Maybe we'll see Nadeen at the board meeting a week from today.

Next up, Brooklyn's Chair of CB 7 District leader and wears many other hats and does a lot for the borough Julio Pena the III.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

JULIO PENA: That's me. Thank you. Good afternoon Chair Restler, members of the Committee. My name is Julio Pena III, Chairperson of Brooklyn of

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Brooklyn Community Board 7. I am here today to speak on several proposed bills effecting boards and their operation. I speak today in my personal capacity, not as Chairperson but with almost a decade experience on the board. Eight of those years serving in leadership. First I must express my strong opposition to Intro. 1065, which many have spoken today. Granting borough presidents the power to remove district leaders and imposing terms for these positions.

District managers are the backbones of our boards. They provide essential continuity and additional knowledge, qualities that are already under threat due to term limits and posed on board member. Making the hiring and firing of district managers subject to political influence undermines the stability and effectiveness of our boards. It risks turning a critical nonpartisan role into a political appointment which could discourage qualified professionals from serving and destructive consistent service our neighborhoods rely on. Our communities deserve experienced and partial managers who can serve as steady hands through political

transitions and not individuals who must constantly
look over their shoulders.

Second, I do support Intro. 1318, changing
appointment dates for new board members. However, I
do urge the Council to consider moving the date to
early in the summer rather than the end of summer.
An early summer appointment allows us for us to move
or onboarding process, avoids busiest months of the
fiscal year and gives new members time to acclimate
before the fall when board activity typically ramps
up. This adjustment would improve the transition for
both new and outgoing members.

Finally, I want to highlight the urgent need for
increased budgets for community boards. Our board
has not received a budget increase in over two
decades. In that time, demands on our services have
only grown particularly post COVID. For example, we
are under increasing pressure to provide translation
services at every meeting to ensure accessibility and
equity. Yet if we were to provide these services at
every meeting, the entirety of our budget will be
exhausted by November.

This is just one example of how stagnant funding
is forcing boards to choose between essential

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services. Investing in community boards is investing in the democratic process at the grassroots level. We are the first line of engagement between residents and city government. Without adequate resources, our ability to serve, inform, and include all members of our community is severely compromised. Thank you so much for the time.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Uhm, we have now Tammy Meltzer, Manhattan Community Board 1 Chair. Ms. Meltzer.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

TAMMY MELTZER: Okay. Thank you very much Chair Restler and members of the Committee for the opportunity to testify at today's oversight hearing on the proposed legislation. My name is Tammy Meltzer and I serve as Chair of Manhattan Community Board 1, representing Lower Manhattan.

Community Boards face a longstanding lack of budget priority within the city and no meaningful funding increase has happened since 2014. This underfunding hinders our ability to recruit, retain skilled staff, adopt critical post pandemic technology and ensure accessible broadcasting public meetings, increasing the residents to turn to AI for

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local problem solving are often directed back to their Community Boards, underscoring our essential role. Boards do Yoman's task and rarely recognized for resolving complex issues spending multiple layers of government and jurisdictions and instead their only recognition is being scapegoated for positions that they take that may not always align with the current - those currently in power.

I urge the Committee to retain the community boards charter mandated independence and urge you to strongly advocate for increased sustainable funding for community boards in this in future budgets.

Turning to today's proposed bills, Intro 1065, community boards aren't independent bodies. And this proposal would undermine that independence and our stability. It would diminish share of knowledge and hobble the Charter mandated role of CB's.

Currently, district managers are nonpartisan professional civil servants, at will employees subject to ongoing performance evaluations and thus far not subject to political timelines. I have seen this successfully work with three district managers in my time on the board. The DM's are an integral part of strong foundations for effective city and

public engagement and I strongly oppose this bill.

For all the other Intro.'s that propose training and data collection requirements, the intent is really laudable and we urge a review of implementation. For example, the city already provides training, infrastructure for employees that could be adopted for board use providing access for nongovernmental email addresses is resolved.

Intro. 1315 and 1515 and 1250, mandate boards to send newsletters, livestream meetings and publish materials. We do much of this already. I fully support these transparency efforts but they come with real costs.

Without increased budgets and technological support, such mandates risk being underfunded and unsustainable for all boards across evenly.

Intro. 1316 requires DCAS to assist boards in securing adequate office and meeting space. Meeting space should be a guaranteed component for any board office arrangement and I support this bill on behalf of all the other boards that lack this benefit. CB 1 is fortunate to be in a DCAS building with space to host meetings and we highly appreciate all Manhattan Borough Presidents continue support. It is a

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critical component for efficiency and our
effectiveness.

Thank you again for your time and your continued
support of community boards. I invite any of you to
attend a Community Board 1 meeting at 1 Center
Street. We welcome your engagement on any issue.
We'll submit a more detailed written testimony on the
topic and I also hope you allow the district manager
from Manhattan Community Board 3 Susan Stetzer, who
is also one of mine, to testify as well because I
noticed she was left off in the roll call and I hope
I made my three minutes.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: You so well did. You not
only concluded exactly in three minutes but you know
we have a current Council Member who is a former CB 1
Chair, so in Julie Menin, so we appreciate you being
with us and for your very thoughtful testimony and
recognize the thoughtfulness in your recommendation.
So, thank you very much for joining us Chair Meltzer.
And then I, sadly, missed that Susan Stetzer is
online. The longtime District Manager from
Manhattan's Community Board 3 on the lower east side.
Susan, if you're still with us, we'd love to hear
from you.

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2 SUSAN STETZER: I'm always with you. Thank you.

3 Good afternoon I guess and thank you for holding this
4 hearing on Community Boards. I'm Susan Stetzer,
5 District Manager for Manhattan Community Board 3.
6 I've been DM for 21 years and was a member of the
7 board before that. I would like to speak on Intro.
8 1065 and also the need for increased funding.

9 I'll repeat as many others, we are independent
10 nonmayoral agencies. I have a very detailed test and
11 standard description of my responsibilities and it's
12 in a format provide by DCAS and it is on my website
13 as our bylaws and most everything else. And I've
14 received reviews by four different community board
15 chairs. There is a very big difference between being
16 reviewed and evaluated and having to be reaffirmed as
17 a district manager. I don't know any other city
18 staff that do that and I doubt most of us would even
19 take a job under those circumstances.

20 Allowing a borough president to terminate a
21 district manager would politicize the position and
22 community boards should not be involved in or subject
23 to politics.

24 Uhm, I don't want to repeat so much of what other
25 people have said. To better serve their communities,

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1 the CB's need an increase in funding. As we've
2 testified previously, the world has changed since
3 we've seen an increase. We now have technology to
4 pay for. I just had a mixer replaced for \$700 for my
5 Zoom set up to improve the quality of sound for our
6 meetings. For some boards it's very difficult to
7 find locations that have their own Zoom equipment.
8 We need to hire tech to run the Zoom for the meeting,
9 which can be \$600 a meeting.
10

11 We have software we can buy to be more efficient
12 and transparent and some of us have a lot more work
13 to manage outdoor dining and cannabis applications.
14 We see agencies such DOT set up whole new divisions
15 to manage these programs but we're expected to
16 accommodate this additional work without an increase
17 in staff. At this point, I have 188 out door dining
18 applications and they haven't even started also
19 applying to the SLA. We could hire additional hourly
20 staff to manage these. The biggest staff history for
21 my board is pay parity. I lose assistant district
22 managers to other city agencies who pay as much as
23 \$10,000 more. This has happened to me in the last
24 few months.
25

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Community Boards encourage and facilitate community input into decision making and we're the best bang for the buck where we can partner with city agencies. We know the unique needs of our communities and working together makes us much more effective.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you. Your time is expired.

SUSAN STETZER: Oh, I just wanted to say I would certainly support a lot more standardization and I think if we had more resources and more support you would find that we would be a lot more standardized.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: That's very helpful. Can I ask you a question Ms. Stetzer? Uh, you noted in your testimony that there's a distinction between evaluations and having to be reappointed for a new term. Do you think that - I'm not - I'm probably over speaking about a bill that's not mine, but if somebody received a subpar evaluation that there would be some - creating some mechanism for a vote or something along those lines would be a reasonable consideration? Oh, could we get Susan unmuted?

SUSAN STETZER: Yes, absolutely and that exists right now. It is assumed when we're evaluated, if

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you're not doing well, you either will be terminated

because there's - all the board has to do is vote or

you would be given a warning and then a follow up.

We don't want community boards - we don't staff to be

incompetent. Absolutely, they should be terminated.

Again, that's very different then having to kind of

reapply or be renewed.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Hmm, okay. That is it for

me on questions. I want to thank uh, the Chairs and

District Managers for your thoughtful testimony and

for participating today. I will make sure that the

other bill sponsors have it and if you'd like to send

anything to us in writing, please don't hesitate to

do so. It's always easy to review but we really

appreciate you being with us. Thank you for your

time and expertise. We have two more folks to

testify this afternoon. Calman from India Home and

Christopher Leon Johnson. We can start with Calman

and you have three minutes. You will be unmuted

momentarily.

CALMAN: Can everyone hear me?

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Great, alright good

afternoon. My name is Calman Boco(SP?) and I am the

Development Coordinator for India Home. Thank you

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very much to Chair Lincoln Restler and the Committee on Government Operations for holding this hearing and providing the opportunity for me to testify in support of Intro. 1134.

So, I'm here today to express India Homes strong support for Intro. 1134. I believe it's a transformative and critical piece of legislation. As an organization that exists to serve south Asian and Indo-Caribbean seniors in Queens, India Home recognizes that the term Asian American alone is not enough to describe our clients who are largely from immigrant backgrounds and have roots in a variety of countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Viana, Nepal and [INAUDIBLE 04:16:59]. Many of the seniors struggle with poverty, food insecurity and low English proficiency as well as health issues specific to South Asians including being seven times more likely to have Type 2 diabetes and experiencing higher rates of hospitalization.

Collecting data about South Asians in particular will help India Home and other South Asian organizations to better understand their needs and how they can be served. At a time when new federal administration appears to be disinterested in if not

hostile toward the value of data for efficient and effective policy making, New York ought to show the way and lead America forward. We believe that the passing of this bill will enable data collection that has a potential to bring forward the issues our community faces and it will result in a more accurate and equitable picture of who New Yorkers are.

I want to thank Council Member Shekar Krishnan for his advocacy and for championing this bill and I would also like to thank Chair Lincoln Restler and this Committee for their support of this bill. We ask the Committee to vote unanimously in favor of this bill without delay. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you very much Calman, we really appreciate it, and last we will hear from Christopher Leon Johnson.

CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Yeah, hello, hello. My name is Christopher Leon Johnson. Thank you Chair Restler. I want to make this clear that I support every bill that is in the City Council today in this Committee related to the Community Board. I think Community Boards need a lot of transparency; I think that the Council Member Lincoln Restler to introduce the bill to ban lobbyists from being on the community

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board. Not only lobbyists, anybody that have a title of governmental relations to be on the community boards because what's going on is that there's a lot of conflict of interest when it comes to stuff. I think you know about the Community Board, I think her name was Rebecca Steinberg or Rebecca Fienberg. She's worked for City Council in the 69th District last year. She's a lobbyist for Keyser and she's the Vice Chair of Land Use operations at Keyser which is the [04:18:52] land use of the City of New York and she's just the Vice Chair of the Committee inside Community Board 8 in Manhattan.

So, like I have the Community Board 7, 8 but they need to make sure people like that are not allowed in the Community Boards because the fact that it is a big conflict of interest and everybody knows that. The lobbyists easy pay her a lot of money under the table to push things through the Committee and to make sure that they need ban transportation alternatives and open plans and open New York Law and derive lines from anybody that associate with that with those nonprofit organizations cannot be on a community board because what's going on with the community board is that there being an influence by

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these nonprofits like [04:19:31] and open plants and they recruit these people that join these community boards and what they do is they sway, they really unethically sway the vote to get anything in their favor and the nonprofits favor.

So, as long as this City Council like with Chair Restler to make sure that uhm no lobbyists are - and TA are not allowed to be on Community Boards anymore. But at the same time, that I know that a lot of people don't like - not being political but to make sure that this doesn't happen again, anybody that got accused of anybody that's being litigated for sexual harassment should not be allowed on community boards. Anybody that is actively being sued for harassment, stalking, sexual harassment, like Kevin Lacero who is a member of Community Board 1 should not be on the Community Board and let's make that clear. So, like I said I know there's a lot of women rights organizations that Cuomo and you Lincoln Restler but at the same time, that you really care about women. I know you do. You should introduce a bill to make sure that anybody that's current litigated in a court, any court, for stalking, sexual assault, sexual harassment, harassment, rape, anything like

that should be banned from community board meetings.

Not only banned from Community Board meetings, they should be banned from any sway inside Community Board. That means it will effect Kevin Lacero who is backing the mayor. So, like I said, this needs to start happening more in City Council. Lincoln, if you really care about women's rights, you need to put that bill where the ban, anybody that's been sued for stalking, sexual harassment, like Kevin Lacero for being anywhere near the Community Board meeting.

So, that said, -

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you. Your time has expired.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Your time has expired. We appreciate you being with us today and hope you have a wonderful afternoon. With that, we are going to adjourn the hearing. I want to thank the Sergeant at Arms and the Committee Counsel for your patience and assistance and I hope you have a wonderful day.

[GAVEL]

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 July 31, 2025