

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

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April 27, 2015  
Start: 11:42 a.m.  
Recess: 12:05 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: COREY D. JOHNSON  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Maria Del Carmen Arroyo  
Rosie Mendez  
Mathieu Eugene  
Peter A. Koo  
James G. Van Bramer  
Inez D. Barron  
Robert E. Cornegy, Jr.  
Rafael L. Espinal, Jr.

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

2 [sound check, pause]

3 [gavel]

4 SERGEANT-A-ARMS: Quiet please.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOHNSON: Good morning  
6 everyone. I'm Council Member Corey Johnson, Chair of  
7 the Council's Committee on Health. Today, we'll be  
8 voting on Resolution No. 648. Sorry, we're doing  
9 that first.

10 LEGAL COUNSEL: [off mic] Yeah, that's  
11 okay. We're doing that today.

12 CHAIRPERSON JOHNSON: Today, we'll be  
13 voting on Resolution No. 648 to recognize this and  
14 every April as Organ Donation Awareness Month in the  
15 City of New York, and Proposed Introduction No. 51-B  
16 requiring the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene  
17 to issue an annual regarding Hepatitis B and  
18 Hepatitis C. Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C both can  
19 cause chronic persistent infection, which can lead to  
20 liver disease. These are two illnesses that are  
21 generally under-reported, and for which there's not a  
22 screening. There are about 100,000 HBV infected  
23 people in New York City, many of whom are immigrants  
24 who contracted their infection in their country of  
25 origin where there is limited access to the Hep B

2 vaccine, and for mothers who are not vaccinated.  
3 There is no cure for HBV, although there are drugs  
4 that can slow the progression of cirrhosis and reduce  
5 the likelihood of liver cancer.

6           Hepatitis C in some ways paints a very  
7 different picture. Those most chronically afflicted  
8 with HCV are Baby Boomers, a group that makes up  
9 about 75% of the chronic HCV population in the United  
10 States. African-Americans have a higher rate of  
11 chronic HCV than other ethnic groups. And while  
12 there is no vaccine for Hep C, thankfully, there is  
13 now a cure. This is profoundly welcome news for Hep  
14 C patients, though this good news comes with a  
15 caution. As this is still a disease in which most  
16 people do know they are infected, we need to devise  
17 ways to get people tested so they can learn of their  
18 status and ultimately get linked to care.  
19 Additionally, the cure is expensive, and for many it  
20 is not covered by insurance, or is out of reach for  
21 the uninsured.

22           Importantly, both Hep B and Hep C often  
23 go undetected making them silent killers, which means  
24 our outreach screening and detection efforts are  
25 essential. This bill will be crucial in helping the

2 Council and public get a handle on the urgency of  
3 treating this disease and how to design the best  
4 interventions we can to address these problems. This  
5 bill will help target our efforts, and hopefully  
6 broaden awareness across the city as a whole.

7 I would like to thank my co-sponsors of  
8 this bill, Council Members Margaret Chin and Peter  
9 Koo for their leadership on this issue. And I want  
10 to give them a chance to speak as well. Council  
11 Member Chin has been a truly dedicated leader on the  
12 Hepatitis, and we would not be where we are today  
13 without her efforts. And I want to pass it over to  
14 my friend and colleague, Council Member Margaret  
15 Chin.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you, Chair  
17 Johnson. Good morning. I'm Council Member Margaret  
18 Chin. I'm here to speak and to ask my colleagues to  
19 vote for Intro 51-B, which I sponsored with  
20 colleague, Council Member Johnson and Council Member  
21 Koo. Hepatitis is a serious health crisis in our  
22 city. It's also a mostly silent epidemic. Many  
23 people have it, and don't even know it. But once  
24 they develop symptoms, it is often too late for  
25 treatment. It is also an issue that affects many of

2 our uninsured and low-income residents, and community  
3 of colors. Hepatitis B predominantly affects  
4 immigrants and Hepatitis C disproportionately affects  
5 our community of colors. This bill is about ensuring  
6 that our advocates have the data they need in their  
7 fight to prevent, diagnose and treat and cure the two  
8 diseases. We work closely with the Department of  
9 Health to make sure it's a smart bill, one that will  
10 get us information we need without being too great a  
11 burden on the city. It's time for us to make the  
12 fight against Hepatitis a real priority in the city.  
13 And this is why Council Member Johnson, Koo and I  
14 worked to create a new Council initiative last year,  
15 to give our community-based health organizations more  
16 resources to work on this issue.

17 I want to especially thank Dan Hafetz for  
18 his hard work as well as the advocates, and the staff  
19 at the Department of Health who worked with us to  
20 make this the best bill it could be. And I want to  
21 lastly thank Corey, our Health Committee Chair, and  
22 his staff Louis. You've been such a great partners,  
23 and I know without your close attention and support  
24 for this issue we wouldn't be voting on this bill

2 today. So I ask all my colleagues to vote in favor  
3 of this important legislation. Thank you very much.

4 CHAIRPERSON JOHNSON: Thank you, Council  
5 Member Chin. I also want to turn it over to Council  
6 Member Peter Koo from Queens who worked hard with  
7 both of us on this, and he's a good friend and a  
8 leader on this issue.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Thank you. Thank  
10 you, Chair Johnson. I just want to say I concur with  
11 Council Member Margaret Chin and you and your  
12 thoughts on this bill. It's a very important bill,  
13 and finally we get to the stage of passing it. And  
14 so I congratulate you, and I want to thank you and  
15 all the Council--and all the members on the  
16 committee. Okay, thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON JOHNSON: Thank you, Council  
18 Member Koo. I also want to thank Council Member  
19 Costa Constantinides for his leadership in sponsoring  
20 the resolution that we are voting on today,  
21 recognizing this and every April as Organ Donation  
22 Awareness Month in the City of New York. In New York  
23 more than 10,000 people are waiting for organ  
24 transplants with a large majority waiting for  
25 kidneys; 10,000 people. And hopefully people saw the

2 good news from last week that our friend and former  
3 colleague Lou Fidler found a donor and is going to be  
4 getting a kidney, which is very exciting news.

5           Registering to be an organ donor is a  
6 truly ultraistic act that is as simple as checking a  
7 box on a form. In New York a person can register as  
8 an organ donor in person, by mail or online if he or  
9 she is at least 18 years old. A person can also  
10 indicate their desire to become a donor when they  
11 obtain or renew their driver's license or State ID  
12 card as well as on their voter registration form.  
13 Even with the ease of enrollment, in 2013, only 22%  
14 of New Yorkers age 18 and over had registered to  
15 donate organs compared to the national average of  
16 48%. We need to get the word out there that there is  
17 such a strong need for this. That is why I'm proud  
18 to co-sponsor this resolution raising awareness of  
19 the great need for organ donation. We heard some  
20 pretty moving stories at our hearing last week from  
21 advocates. And I know that Council Member  
22 Constantinides personally has been touched by this  
23 issue. I'd like to recognize my colleague and friend  
24 and the co-sponsor of today's resolution, Council  
25 Member Constantinides.



2 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: Thank  
3 you, Chairman Johnson, and I can't thank you enough  
4 for your great leadership on this issue and helping  
5 to start this conversation in the City of New York on  
6 why this is so important. And we need to do so much  
7 more to ensure that you're saving a life, and by just  
8 checking that simple box we're able to save--  
9 Someone is able to save another New Yorker's life  
10 just by clicking that box. I mean last week we did  
11 hear those moving stories just about how important it  
12 is to become an organ donor. By signing up to be an  
13 organ donor, you can save up to eight lives--

14 CHAIRPERSON JOHNSON: [interposing]  
15 Amazing.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CONSTANTINIDES: --and  
17 save or heal up to 100 through tissue donation. New  
18 York, however, is now the state with the lowest organ  
19 donation rate in the nation, and that is certainly  
20 unacceptable. We have a full--a full public health  
21 calamity in the making. That's why I'm proud today  
22 to co-sponsor this resolution with you to start this  
23 conversation to bring it out of the shadows. And to  
24 ensure that we can give opportunity for those to be  
25 here in someone else's lives, to save their life, and

2 to give that ultimate and special gift. So, as--as  
3 someone who's been touched by organ donation, my wife  
4 being a double transplant patient, and waiting--what  
5 it is to wait for that phone call. And she did it  
6 before I met her, but having to wait for that phone  
7 call and everyday is today going to be the day where  
8 my life is going to be changed through the gift of  
9 someone else. So having that conversation is so  
10 important. And, I appreciate your--this opportunity  
11 and I appreciate my colleagues' support on this  
12 resolution. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON JOHNSON: Thank you. Thank  
14 you, Council Member Constantinides. Before we vote--  
15 before we vote today, I want to acknowledge my  
16 colleagues on the Health Committee who are with us.  
17 Council Member Mathieu Eugene from Brooklyn; Majority  
18 Leader Jimmy Van Bramer from Queens; Council Member  
19 Rafael Espinal from Brooklyn; Council Member Peter  
20 Koo, who is a member of the Committee from Queens;  
21 Council Member Maria Del Carmen Arroyo from the  
22 Bronx. And I also want to thank my Legislative  
23 Director Louis Cholden-Brown; the Health Committee  
24 Counsel, Dan Hafetz. It's almost the end for Dan.  
25 We're not quite there yet. We have one more marathon

2 hearing for him before he leaves this Friday. The  
3 Policy Analyst for the Health Committee Crystal Pond  
4 and Crilhien Francisco, the Finance Analyst for the  
5 Health Committee for their work in preparing for this  
6 vote today. I also want to thank the staff, for the  
7 sponsors of this legislation. I especially want to  
8 thank Council Member Chin's Chief of Staff Yume for  
9 her incredible work and relentless eye on the detail  
10 of this working with my Legislative Director, Louis  
11 Cholden-Brown and the Health Committee staff. I'm  
12 very grateful. We first heard this bill in June of  
13 last year. And we have really worked in a  
14 collaborative fashion with the Department of Health  
15 and Mental Hygiene, the Administration, advocates,  
16 and the central staff here at the Council to turn  
17 this into an important and good piece of legislation.  
18 So with that, I want to turn it over to the clerk  
19 Billy Martin to call the roll.

20 CLERK: William Martin, Committee Clerk.  
21 Roll call vote Committee on Health. Chair Johnson.

22 CHAIRPERSON JOHNSON: I proudly vote aye  
23 on both.

24 CLERK: Arroyo.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER ARROYO: Aye.

2 CLERK: Eugene.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER EUGENE: May I explain my  
4 vote?

5 CHAIRPERSON JOHNSON: Yes, sir.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER EUGENE: Thank you much.

7 I just want to congratulate and thank Council Members  
8 Chin, Johnson and Koo for this very important bill,  
9 and also Council Member Johnson. Thank you very  
10 much, and you know this resolution addresses a very  
11 important health issue affecting so many people in  
12 New York. And as we usually say in medicine,  
13 preventive medicine is the best medicine. It is very  
14 important that we--we screen people, and we--we--we  
15 ensure that people know about those disease that are  
16 out there, you know, and eliminate them. They are  
17 affecting so many people. And again, this is a  
18 common sense bill, and I commend you and congratulate  
19 you for that. Thank you very much, and I vote aye.

20 CLERK: Koo.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: [off mic] Aye.

22 CLERK: Van Bramer.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER VAN BRAMER: Aye on all.

24 CLERK: Espinal.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER ESPINAL: Aye on all.

2 CLERK: By a vote of 6 in the  
3 affirmative, 0 in the negative and no abstentions,  
4 both items have been adopted.

5 CHAIRPERSON JOHNSON: Thank you. We're  
6 going to hold the vote open for-- How long should we  
7 hold it open? We're going to hold the vote open 10  
8 minutes in case other colleagues show up. Again, I  
9 want to thank you all for being here today.  
10 Congratulations to my colleagues.

11 [gavel]

12 CLERK: Continuation of roll call,  
13 Committee on Health, Introduction 51-B and Resolution  
14 648. Council Member Cornegy.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: I vote aye.

16 CLERK: The final vote in Committee on  
17 Health is now 7 in the affirmative, 0 in the negative  
18 and no abstentions.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: The Hearing on  
20 Health is--

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1 COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

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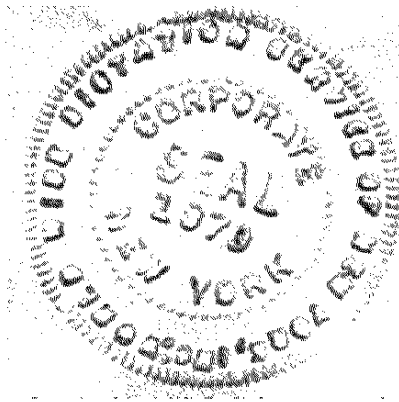
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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date May 5, 2015