

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

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July 18, 2024
Start: 10:24 a.m.
Recess: 10:35 a.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Lynn C. Schulman
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Joann Ariola
Carmen N. De La Rosa
Oswald Feliz
James F. Gennaro
Kristy Marmorato
Julie Menin
Mercedes Narcisse
Kalman Yeger
Susan Zhuang

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

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2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning and
3 welcome to today's New York City Council hearing for
4 the Committee on Health. At this time, we ask you to
5 silence all cell phones and electronic devices to
6 minimize disruptions throughout the hearing. Thank
7 you for your cooperation. Chair, we are ready to
8 begin.

9 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: [gavel] Good
10 morning everyone. I am Council Member Lynn Schulman,
11 Chair of the New York City Council's Committee on
12 Health. Thank you to my colleagues for joining us at
13 today's vote on Proposed Introduction 435-A by
14 Council Member Pierina Sanchez in relation to
15 expanding availability of rapid testing for sexually
16 transmitted infections. I am joined by Council
17 Members Narcisse, De La Rosa, Ariola, Marmorato,
18 Yeger. Today, we are voting on legislation
19 requiring-- and Council Member Feliz. Today, we are
20 voting on legislation requiring the Department of
21 Health and Mental Hygiene to make no-cost and low-
22 cost rapid testing services for sexually transmitted
23 infections, or STIs, more widely available throughout
24 New York City. While traditional STI testing results
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2 can take up to a week to report-- we have to pause
3 for one second.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Check one, two. Check
5 one, two, are you picking us up on Zoom?

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GENNARO: I can hear.
7 This is Gennaro.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you, Council
9 Member Gennaro. We shall resume in a moment.

10 UNIDENTIFIED: I'm on the Zoom, too.
11 Just to make sure you can hear me. Thanks.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Picking you up loud
13 and clear, Council Member.

14 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Today, we are--
15 first, I want to acknowledge that we've been joined
16 by Council Member Pierina Sanchez. Today, we are
17 voting on legislation requiring the Department of
18 Health and Mental Hygiene to make no-cost and low-
19 cost rapid testing services for sexually transmitted
20 infections, or STIs, more widely available throughout
21 New York City. While Traditional STI testing results
22 can take up to a week to report, rapid STI testing
23 which includes HIV testing allows individuals to
24 receive confidential, fast, and highly-accurate
25 results so that they can take quick action to obtain

1 care and necessary treatment. DOHMH currently offers
2 rapid STI testing five days a week at its Chelsea and
3 Fort Green Express Clinics. Anyone who is 12 or
4 older can receive services at any clinic regardless
5 of immigration status. Parental consent is not
6 necessary. Proposed Introduction 435-A represents
7 the next step in our continuing efforts to expand
8 access to fast and accurate STI and HIV testing,
9 ensuing that such testing is available to more New
10 Yorkers. Under this legislation, DOHMH will be
11 required to open two additional rapid testing
12 facilities, the first by 2026 and the second by 2027.
13 With recent data showing an increase in STI rates in
14 New York City over the past several years, it is more
15 important than ever that the City take action to
16 promote safe sex practices and expand access to rapid
17 STI testing. As Chair of the Health Committee and
18 someone's who healthcare advocacy was formed during
19 the heights of the HIV and AIDS movement, I am
20 extremely proud of our efforts to not only restore
21 \$5.3 million for HIV and AIDS services providers in
22 New York City in the FY25 budget, but to baseline
23 this funding to ensure our city's lasting commitment
24 to caring for New Yorkers living with HIV and AIDS.
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2 However, there is still work to be done. New HIV
3 infections in New York City have plateaued after
4 significant year over year decreases prior to the
5 COVID-19 pandemic. As we reaffirm our commitment to
6 compassionate and comprehensive care for people
7 living with HIV and AIDS, we must also invest
8 significantly in public education, outreach and
9 testing to continually lower the rates of new
10 infection. Thank you to my staff and to the Health
11 Committee staff for their work, and I will now ask
12 Council Member Sanchez to give a brief statement.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you so
14 much Council Member Schulman, and the first thing I
15 want to do is shout out our SYEP intern class of 2024
16 sitting in the back and some over there because
17 there's a lot of them.

18 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: And I have my Simon
19 [sic] Reisenthal [sic] and Forest Hills High School
20 interns over there.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Very excited to
22 have them in here today. Thank you so much for your
23 leadership, Council Member Schulman, and to members
24 of the LGBTQ+ Caucus, the Women's Caucus, BLAC
25 Progressive Caucus. We all did this together working

1 with advocates for over a year to try to have this
2 bill passed, and of course, want to thank the
3 Committee staff for [inaudible] Suture [sp?], Sarah
4 Liste [sp?], Andrea Vasquez [sp?], and Jeff Baker for
5 all your support. As the Chair mentioned, since
6 COVID-19 began, racial inequities in sexually
7 transmitted infection rates have skyrocketed, most
8 harshly impacted New Yorkers at the intersection of
9 Black, Latino, low-income, and LGBTQ+ communities.
10 In New York City, Black and African-American people
11 and Latinx people make up over 80 percent of new HIV
12 infections in 2022. The Bronx, in particular,
13 suffers from the highest rate of HIV infection and
14 death across New York State's 62 counties, the
15 highest rate of chlamydia infection, and the second
16 highest rate of gonorrhea in the five boroughs. It
17 is not reflected in the kind of access to services
18 that we have. And nationally, we have seen Hispanic
19 and Latinx people see a 17 percent increase in HIV
20 infection rates in recent years. But study after
21 study from the CDC, Centers for Disease Control and
22 Prevention, shows us that there's actually less
23 sexual risk behavior among Black and Latino
24 Americans. Nationally, we are less likely to have
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1 unprotected sex. It is white people, actually, who
2 are having more unprotected sex. So these horrific
3 inequities are only about access, access to
4 education, access to testing, prevention, treatment,
5 and care, and that is why Intro 435 is so important.
6 It represents major investment in expanding access to
7 rapid STI testing with a dedicated focus on
8 communities that are most impacted and struggling the
9 most. And with that I will conclude, because this is
10 a committee hearing and I'm just very excited. So,
11 thank you SYEP interns for being here and thank you,
12 Chairs.

14 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Thank you. I also
15 want to acknowledge we've been joined virtually by
16 Council Members Gennaro and Menin. I'll now turn it
17 over to the Clerk to call the roll.

18 COUNCIL CLERK: Good morning. William
19 Martin, Committee Clerk, roll call vote Committee on
20 Health Proposed Introduction 435-A. Chair Schulman?

21 CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: Aye.

22 COUNCIL CLERK: Yeger?

23 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: Aye.

24 COUNCIL CLERK: Gennaro?

25 COUNCIL MEMBER GENNARO: Aye.

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2 COUNCIL CLERK: Thank you, Council
3 Member. Feliz?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: I vote aye. Just
5 want to congratulate my colleague, Council Member
6 Sanchez, also Chair Schulman and all the advocates.

7 COUNCIL CLERK: De La Rosa?

8 COUNCIL MEMBER DE LA ROSA: Aye.

9 COUNCIL CLERK: Menin?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Aye, and
11 congratulations to Council Member Sanchez.

12 COUNCIL CLERK: Thank you. Narcisse?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Second to
14 explain my vote? I'm so excited for two things.
15 There's SYEP and intern that's in the house. Thank
16 you, because that show me that the leadership I can
17 go and rest because you're going to take the
18 leadership very well. So, thank you. Second, I want
19 to say thank you to my colleague Sanchez, because as
20 a registered nurse, you know-- that's what I said,
21 when you hire 34 women to work for you, this is what
22 you get. Even the nurse don't get it, but the other
23 women will get it. Sorry, guys, I love you. But as
24 a registered nurse and advocate to public health, I'm
25 so excited and proud to be here today to celebrate.

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COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

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This is the passage of Intro 435. It's a celebration. And you heard the statistic, the numbers don't like to you. This legislation is certainly a significant step forward in expanding access to everyone, and to address the inequities in New York City where else we should be doing that. Chair Schulman, I thank you, and of course, aye.

COUNCIL CLERK: Ariola?

COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: I vote aye.

COUNCIL CLERK: Marmorato?

COUNCIL MEMBER MARMORATO: I vote aye.

COUNCIL CLERK: By a vote of 9 in the affirmative, 0 in the negative, and no abstentions item has been adopted by the Committee.

CHAIRPERSON SCHULMAN: With that, the hearing is closed. Thank you very much.

[gavel]

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COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

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 30, 2024