

1 COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER AND WORKER PROTECTION 1

2 CITY COUNCIL
3 CITY OF NEW YORK

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5 TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

6 Of the

7 COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER AND WORKER
8 PROTECTION

9 ----- X

10 July 13, 2022
11 Start: 10:52 a.m.
12 Recess: 11:06 a.m.

13 HELD AT: HYBRID HEARING - COMMITTEE ROOM -
14 CITY HALL

15 B E F O R E: Marjorie Velázquez, Chairperson

16 COUNCIL MEMBERS:

17 Shaun Abreu
18 Amanda Farías
19 Shekar Krishnan
20 Julie Menin
21 Chi A. Ossé
22 Linda Lee
23 Rafael Salamanca, Jr.

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2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: This is a mic check for
3 the Committee on Consumer Affairs and Worker
4 Protection. Today's date is July 13, 2022. Located in
5 the Committee Room. Recording done by Pedro Lugo.

6 SERGEANT LUGO: Committee on Consumer
7 Affairs and Worker Protection. Everyone, please place
8 all electronic devices to vibrate or silent mode.

9 If you wish to submit testimony, you may
10 send it to testimony@council.nyc.gov. Again, that's
11 testimony@council.nyc.gov.

12 Thank you, everyone, for your
13 cooperation. Chair, we are ready to begin.

14 CHAIRPERSON VELAZQUEZ: Good morning. I am
15 Council Member Marjorie Velázquez, Chair of the
16 Committee on Consumer and Worker Protection, and I'd
17 like to welcome you to our vote.

18 We'll be voting today on Proposed
19 Introduction 506-A by Council Member Rivera in
20 relation to requiring the Department of Consumer and
21 Worker Protection to implement an outreach and
22 education campaign on facilities that deceptively
23 advertise or are otherwise misleading when offering
24 reproductive health services. As we now live in a
25 country where Roe v Wade is no longer the law of the

2 land, New York City will become a safe haven, I
3 repeat, a safe haven for those that are pregnant to
4 access safe and quality reproductive care. As those
5 New Yorkers and residents from other states travel to
6 New York City to access care, we must ensure that
7 people that enter pregnancy service centers are aware
8 that these centers are unlicensed and unregulated
9 providing clients with anti-abortion misinformation.
10 Pregnancy service centers in New York have been known
11 to delay appointments with clients multiple times in
12 an attempt to prolong the process past a point when
13 someone can have access to a safe abortion. While
14 abortion is not under attack legislatively in New
15 York City, PSCs are an insidious industry seeking to
16 impair New Yorkers access to safe and quality
17 reproductive care. Intro 506-A would require the city
18 to produce a public education campaign about
19 deceptive advertisements and misleading information
20 by facilities that present like they provide
21 reproductive health services. The campaign would
22 provide residents with information of what these
23 facilities typically provide, how they advertise
24 their services, how these facilities can impact
25 timely and safe access to pregnancy care, and how a

2 person can file a complaint about the deceptive
3 practices they may experience. By equipping New
4 Yorkers with this essential information, the City
5 will minimize the harmful impact of pregnancy service
6 centers.

7 We are also voting today on a package of
8 legislation related to Con Edison and other energy
9 utilities. This past January, many city residents
10 experienced dramatic and unexpected increases on
11 their Con Ed bills. Over 400,000 New Yorkers are 60
12 days or more behind on Con Ed payments, totaling over
13 800 million dollars, once again, 800 million dollars,
14 and utility arrears in New York state have increased
15 by over 1 billion dollars since the start of the
16 pandemic. While the price increases that occurred in
17 January 2022 may have been caused by forces outside
18 of Con Ed's control, it's time for the City to
19 increase its oversight over utility companies. I'm
20 proud that we're voting on my bill, Proposed
21 Resolution 174-A, which calls on Con Ed to improve
22 communications with city residents about increases in
23 utility costs. Con Ed has a robust notification
24 system to alert city residents before major storms of
25 the possibility of power outages. The purpose of this

2 notification system is so residents have the
3 necessary time to prepare for potential outages.
4 Given that many residents were shocked to see the
5 increase in their utility bills this past January,
6 Con Ed clearly could've done more to preemptively
7 notify city residents of this expected increase and
8 what steps residents could have taken to decrease the
9 cost of their bills.

10 We'll also be voting today on Proposed
11 Introduction 372-A, a bill sponsored by the Speaker
12 by request of Borough President Levine, which will
13 establish an Office of Utility Advocate that can work
14 directly with city residents to make their voices
15 heard in Albany so that Con Ed and other public
16 utilities cannot ignore the struggles of their
17 biggest consumer base.

18 Resolution 162 by Council Member Lee
19 would call on our State Legislators to set a
20 percentage cap that an annual rate increase cannot
21 exceed which would enhance consumer protection by
22 ensuring a utility cannot request a high-rate case.

23 Resolution 172 by Council Member
24 Salamanca calls on New York State to increase the
25 number of Commissioners in the Public Service

2 Commission and give the Mayor the power to appoint 2
3 Commissioners.

4 Proposed Resolution 173-A by Council

5 Member Ung calls on the Governor to expand financial
6 relief programs to residents struggling to pay their
7 utility bills. The communities experiencing the most
8 significant impact of rising utility prices are low-
9 income communities and communities of color that have
10 been hit hardest by the pandemic. This Resolution,
11 therefore, calls on the State to take further action
12 to ensure city families are not plunged into further
13 debt.

14 I am proud of the legislative package we
15 are voting on today, and, as Chair of this Committee,
16 I'll fight and legislate to ensure that the consumers
17 of this city are properly protected. Whether you're a
18 New Yorker or a tourist seeking quality reproductive
19 care or a family experiencing utility debt, this
20 Council hears your concerns and is taking action.

21 With that said, I'd like to thank my
22 central staff team, Senior Counsel Stephanie Jones,
23 Senior Policy Analyst Noah Meixler, my Chief-of-Staff
24 Alex Anderson, and my Deputy Chief of Staff Jackie
25 Crossan for their hard work.

2 I'll now turn it to Council Member Lee
3 for her statement.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Hi, everyone. Thank
5 you so much, Chair Velazquez and Colleagues. It's my
6 pleasure once again to speak on Resolution 162 which
7 calls for amendments to the New York City Public
8 Service Law, and it's a privilege to have this bill
9 be part of the larger legislative package involving
10 the Speaker, Chair Velázquez, Council Member
11 Salamanca, and Council Member Ung. As New Yorkers
12 continue to fight through the pandemic, experience
13 inflation, gas prices, supply chain shortages, it is
14 even more important for us to make sure that their
15 bills are not hiked and that they're paying unfair
16 prices. We're currently in the middle of the summer,
17 increasingly relying on AC units and utilities to
18 stay cool, and our families and constituents should
19 not have to worry about keeping the lights on and the
20 water running. Thank you so much, Chair Velázquez,
21 and I want to thank my Colleagues for their support
22 as we look to get Resolution 162 on the Stated Floor
23 for a vote. Thank you.

24 WILLIAM MARTIN, COMMITTEE CLERK: We'll
25 conduct the vote now. William Martin, Committee

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2 Clerk. Roll call vote Committee and Worker
3 Protection. All bills are coupled. Chair Velázquez.

4 CHAIRPERSON VELAZQUEZ: Aye on all.

5 WILLIAM MARTIN, COMMITTEE CLERK: Ossé.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSE: Aye on all.

7 WILLIAM MARTIN, COMMITTEE CLERK: Abreu.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: Aye on all.

9 WILLIAM MARTIN, COMMITTEE CLERK: Farías.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: I vote aye on all.

11 WILLIAM MARTIN, COMMITTEE CLERK:

12 Krishnan.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Aye on all.

14 WILLIAM MARTIN, COMMITTEE CLERK: Menin.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER MENIN: Aye on all.

16 WILLIAM MARTIN, COMMITTEE CLERK: By a
17 vote of 6 in the affirmative, 0 in the negative, and
18 no abstentions, all items have been adopted by the
19 Committee. Madam Chair, we will leave the roll open
20 for outstanding Members.

21 CHAIRPERSON VELAZQUEZ: Hi, everyone. If
22 you're voting for the next room, you're more than
23 welcome to dismiss if you've placed your vote.

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2 Now I'm turning it over to Council Member
3 Salamanca who will be issuing an opening statement
4 and then he will also give us his vote.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Thank you,
6 Chairwoman Velázquez and Members of the Committee,
7 for letting me speak today. Reso 172 will call on the
8 State to increase the number of Commissioners on the
9 Public Service Commission and permit New York City to
10 appoint 2 of its Commissioners. Overseeing and
11 regulating the State's electric, gas, steam,
12 telecommunications, and water utilities, the 7-member
13 Commission is entirely made up of nominations
14 appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the State
15 Senate for 6-year terms. The sole public entity who
16 oversees the state electric utility companies, PSC,
17 regulates Con Ed's presence in New York City,
18 approving their license, service offerings, and rate
19 increases. As too many of our Constituents know, Con
20 Ed has been the source of much aggravation and
21 stress, both mentally and financially. Despite the
22 well-documented blackouts, service cuts, shocking
23 customer bill increases, in some cases thousands of
24 dollars of unexpected cost, the PSC continue to
25 approve Con Ed's unchecked monopoly on New York City.

2 As the body that represents the 8.9 million people
3 who are forced to utilize Con Ed services, we must
4 demand that New York City has a seat at the table.

5 That is why I introduced Reso 172 which calls on the
6 State to increase the number of Commissioners on the
7 PSC and subsequently allow the Mayor with the New
8 York City Council approval to appoint 2 members to
9 the Commission. Having 2 city-appointed Commissioners
10 will ensure the voices and interests of the City
11 residents are adequately heard, and I ask that all
12 the Members of the Committee vote yes on Reso 172.
13 Thank you, Madam Chair, for allowing me to speak.

14 CHAIRPERSON VELAZQUEZ: All right. Thank
15 you all and have a great day.

16 WILLIAM CLARK, COMMITTEE CLERK: Hearing
17 is adjourned.

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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 August 22, 2022