

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND
BUILDINGS

Jointly with

COMMITTEE ON CIVIL SERVICE
AND LABOR

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September 29, 2025
Start: 10:10 a.m.
Recess: 12:16 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Pierina Ana Sanchez
Chairperson

Carmen N. De La Rosa
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Shaun Abreu
Alexa Avilés
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Oswald Feliz
Crystal Hudson
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Erik D. Bottcher
Kamillah Hanks
Julie Menin

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

Guillermo Patino
Deputy Commissioner for Policy and Legal Affairs
at Department of Buildings

Gus Sirakis
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Reynaldo Cabrera
Assistant Commissioner for Investigations and
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Keith Wen
Assistant Commissioner for Code and Zoning
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Thomas Currao
Chief of Fire Prevention at New York Fire
Department

Stephen Erdman
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Pete Sikora
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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Ken Schles
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Samuel Eluto
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York

Evan Simko-Bednarski
Vice Unit Chair at New York Daily News Union

Logan Needle
New York State Deputy Political Director for
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Brendan Griffith
President at Central Labor Council

Christopher Leon Johnson

Clifton Smith

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

Tabitha Ward

Alia Soomro

New York League of Conservation Voters

Kate Leitch

Citizens Housing and Planning Council

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3 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning and
4 welcome to the New York City Council hearing of the
5 Committee on Housing and Buildings jointly with Civil
6 Service and Labor. At this time, can everybody
7 please silence your cell phones. If you wish to
8 testify, please go to the back of the room to fill
9 out a testimony slip. At this time and going forth,
10 no one is to approach the dais. I repeat, no one is
11 to approach the dais. Chairs, we are ready to begin.

12 [gavel]

13 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Good morning. I am
14 Council Member Pierina Sanchez, Chair of the
15 Committee on Housing and Buildings, and today we're
16 holding a hearing on the topic of worker safety and
17 the effects of climate change on labor, jointly with
18 Chair Carmen De La Rosa and the Committee on Civil
19 Service and Labor. We are joined by Council Member
20 Cabán this morning. In June of 2023, New York City
21 was enveloped by smoke from Canadian wildfires,
22 manifesting a new climate-related threat in the form
23 of dangerous air quality. These new threats in
24 conjunction with the rising temperatures our city
25 grapples with year after year and fiercer or rain and

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snowstorms pose significant dangers to all New Yorkers, but especially these outdoor workers with little choice but to endure the climate-related conditions they must in order to make a living. As the City Council continues to work towards advancing climate-related protections for our citizens and infrastructure, we must ensure that outdoor worker such deliveristas, street vendors, construction workers, and many others are afforded necessary protections. We will be hearing a number of bills today, Intro 261 sponsored by Council Member Rita Joseph which will allow six-story residential buildings with certain parameters to be built with only one staircase. Intro 1376, sponsored by Council Member De La Rosa, would require the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to post on the Department's website information on best practices for protecting workers from extreme weather such as extreme heat, extreme cold and low air quality. Intro 1384, by Council Member Lee, would amend the definition of site safety training card in the New York City Building Code to require that an applicant for such card complete at least two SST credits related to mental health and wellness, suicide risk and

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prevention, and alcohol and substance misuse. Intro

1404, sponsored by myself is a bit unrelated, but

will correct a discrepancy in the New York City

Administrative Code to allow the occupancy of cellar

units in certain one and two-dwelling-- two-family

dwellings, excuse me. And Resolution 1015 by Council

Member De La Rosa which condemns Alden Golden Capital

cuts and managerial hostility towards unionized daily

news staff and calls on the hedge fund to reach a

contract deal with the newspaper's union. I'd like to

take the opportunity to thank my team, Chief of Staff

Maria Villalobos, my Deputy Chief of Staff for Land

Use Policy and Budget, Ben Ratner [sp?], Gerard

Fernandez, Carla Dominguez, and my Deputy Chief of

Staff for Communications and Public Engagement, Kim

Castellanos [sp?]. I'd also like to thank the Housing

and Buildings Committee staff, Senior Legislative

Counsel Austin Malone [sp?], Legislative Counsel

Billy Eck [sp?]- welcome to your first hearing--

Senior Policy Analyst Jose Conde [sp?], Policy

Analyst Dirk Spencer [sp?], Finance Analyst Carla

Naranjo [sp?], and Data Scientist Reese Hirota

[sp?]. We're joined today-- I've already called up--

anybody else? Council Member Moya has joined us

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2 virtually, and I'll now recognize Council Member De
3 La Rosa for opening remarks on behalf of the
4 Committee on Civil Service and Labor.

5 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you, Chair
6 Sanchez. Good morning and welcome to today's hearing
7 of the New York City Council's Committee on Civil
8 Service and Labor and Housing and Buildings. I'm
9 Council Member Carmen De La Rosa. I would like to
10 start by thanking Chair Sanchez and the Housing and
11 Buildings Committee for convening this hearing to
12 discuss the safety of our city's outdoor workers and
13 the ways in which they are being impacted by the
14 accelerated effects of climate change. New Yorkers
15 are known to be tough, but even the most resilient
16 among us are struggling as extreme climate events
17 have become more frequent. Excessive heat,
18 disastrous storms, and dangerous air quality hazards
19 have become increasingly common and threaten the
20 health and safety of our city. No one feels this
21 more acutely than the outdoor workers who face these
22 difficult conditions day after day. Too often
23 they're paid less and afforded fewer labor
24 protections than those employed working indoors. It
25 is our responsibility to ensure that strong safety

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guidelines are in place to protect these workers and
reduce preventable injuries and fatalities. Given
the lack of national heat protection standards, we
are glad that the State is considering the Temp Act
which would require employers of outdoor workers to
provide water and shade, monitor employees for
symptoms of heat illness and implement other
precautions to mitigate the effects of extreme heat.
This State legislation is crucial to providing New
Yorkers with a uniformed set of guidelines that
protect outdoor workers. Furthermore, I'm proud to
sponsor Intro 1376 which would require the Department
of Health and Mental Hygiene to post guidelines on
its website on how workers can be protected from
extreme climate events. In addition to the oversight
topic and the related legislation, I'm happy that we
are here hearing Resolution 1015 which expresses
support for the writers, editors, and staff at the
Daily News Union. Local journalism is a backbone of
our city's civil life, keeping New Yorkers informed
and holding institutions accountable. The cuts and
managerial hostility imposed by Alden Golden Capital
undermines the Daily News staff. I urge my
colleagues to join me and sign onto this resolution,

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3 and we are hopeful that good faith negotiations will
4 lead to improve working conditions, too. I'd like to
5 thank the Committee staff, Senior Policy Analyst
6 Elizabeth Artz [sp?], and Senior Legislative Counsel
7 Reah Osawara [sp?] for their hard work in preparing
8 for this hearing and my staff, Chief of Staff James
9 Bourke [sp?], Comms Director Ray Familia [sp?], and a
10 welcome back to our Deputy Chief of Staff Kiana Diaz
11 [sp?] who's back from maternity leave, and we've
12 recognized all our colleagues here. So, I'll turn it
13 back to Chair Sanchez. Oh, Council Member Dinowitz,
14 how can I forget my neighbor in the mighty District
15 11. Council Member Dinowitz has joined us as well.

16 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Uptown rolling deep
17 in this hearing. Before we recognize the
18 administration to read your remarks, I'm going to
19 read an opening statement by Council Member Rita
20 Joseph regarding her legislation. "Intro 261
21 proposes an amendment to the New York City Building
22 Code related to means of egress in certain new
23 buildings. Intro 261 which I first introduced during
24 my first year on the Council and reintroduced in
25 February of 2024 would allow certain new residential
buildings to be constructed with only one staircase

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if they meet the following conditions: No more than six stories tall, built to fireproof construction standards, no more than 4,000 square feet per floor, no more than 20 feet from any apartment door to the exit staircase. New York City urgently needs more housing, especially affordable housing. This bill helps facilitate new construction while prioritizing resident safety which remains one of our top concerns. I want to thank everyone who contributed to drafting this bill, and I look forward to hearing feedback from the administration, all the groups and individuals from both sides to ensure we make this legislation as effective and safe as possible for all New Yorkers. Thank you." With that, I will turn it over to counsel to administer the oath.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Please raise your right hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth and to answer all Council Member questions honestly? Thank you. You may begin.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PATINO: Good morning, Chair Sanchez and De La Rosa, members of the Committee on Housing and Buildings, and members of the Committee on Civil Service and Labor. I'm

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Guillermo Patino, Deputy Commissioner for Policy and
Legal Affairs at the New York City Department of
Buildings. I'm joined today by several of my
colleagues including Gus Sirakis, Deputy Commissioner
for Development and Technical Affairs, Reynaldo
Cabrera, Assistant Commissioner for Investigations
and Compliance, Frank McCarton, Assistant
Commissioner for Emergency Services, and Keith Wen,
Assistant Commissioner for Code and Zoning
Interpretation. We're also joined by Thomas Currao,
Chief of Fire Prevention at the New York City Fire
Department. I'm pleased to testify before the
committees regarding Intro 261 which would allow
certain residential buildings to be constructed with
only one exit stairway, Intro 1384 which would
require the Department Site Safety Training Program
to include a component addressing mental health and
wellness, suicide risk and prevention, and alcohol
and substance abuse, and Intro 1376 which would
require the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
to post guidance regarding best practices for
protecting workers from extreme weather. Intro 261
would amend Section 1006.3.2 of the New York City
Building Code to expand their circumstances in which

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single-exit stairways are permitted in R2 occupancy buildings. The R2 occupancy classification includes apartments and other residential buildings. The Department has significant concerns regarding the proposed amendments, as allowing more buildings to have single-exit stairways poses significant safety risks. Pursuant to Section 1006.3.1 of the Building Code, a minimum of two exits are required for egress in buildings where the occupant load does not exceed 500 people per floor. Section 1006.3.2 currently provides seven exceptions to that requirement by setting forth the scenarios in which a single stairway may be allowed. Item seven of Section 1006.3.2 allows a single stairway where the building is six stories or less and the square footage per floor does not exceed 2,000 square feet. In general, the 2,000 square foot standard serves to limit the number of apartments located on a single floor of a building, which in turn limits the number of occupants per floor, allowing one stairway to be sufficient for egress. Intro 261 would amend item seven to increase the floor area allowance from 2,000 square feet to 4,000 square feet per floor. An increase to 4,000 square feet per floor would

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essentially double the number of apartments per floor
and in turn potentially increase the occupant load by
100 percent. Additionally, item seven requires the
building's occupancy to be classified as R2, but does
not limit its applicability to just apartment floors.
As written, the section does not account for the
potential presence of an accessory amenity or
assembly space that may have up to 74 persons in the
gathering spaces. This, when combined with the
expansion of the square footage proposed in Intro 261
would increase the occupant load on the single
stairway to a level that poses significant safety
concerns for egress in emergency situations. The
Department has conferred with our colleagues at the
Fire Department who share our concerns with the bill.
The Fire Department also expressed concerns about the
dangers of responding to fires and other emergencies
in single-exit stairway buildings. Large single-
stairway buildings pose serious fire safety risks and
challenges to first responders and firefighting
operations. Increasing the occupant load for these
buildings would only compound these challenges. In
buildings with a single stairway, the same stairway
must be used as both the evacuation stairway for

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occupants and the stairway for firefighters to run hoses, conduct searches, perform fire suppression procedures, and other operations. This can quickly become a hazard and could impede evacuation and firefighting operations. Turning now to Intro 1384. The Department is supportive of this legislation which would require that the Site Safety Training curriculum include mental health and wellness, suicide risk and prevention, and alcohol and substance misuse training. The Site Safety Training curriculum already address drug and alcohol awareness, and the Department has no objection to incorporating mental health and wellness as well as suicide risk and prevention to the 40-hour course curriculum for Site Safety Training. Given that this bill is proposing to amend the definition of Site Safety Training card in the Building Code, the Department would like to take this time to also address issues that have come to light as the SST program has been implemented. Site Safety Training cards once issued are valid for five years and can be renewed contingent upon successful completion of the required refresher training within the one-year proceeding submission of a renewal application. The

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Department recently became aware of an issue where workers must retake the full course and reapply for the SST card rather than renewing due to language in the Building Code that does not allow for flexibility when SST cards are up for renewal. Take for example the scenario where a worker's SST card expires today, and the worker completed all required refresher credits prior to the expiration date, but was unable to obtain the printed card before the end of the day. If the worker goes to get their card tomorrow, the provider is unable to print and issue the card because it is past the expiration date. As a result, the worker then has to take the full course again to be issued an SST card. Delays in obtaining the physical card prior to the expiration may be due to such things as the worker's inability to get to card provider's location or problems with the machine used to print the card. The Department has received significant feedback from the industry regarding the challenges this presents and the impact it has on work sites. As such, we'd like to propose amendments to the bill to allow for a grace period following the card expiration to address situations such as this. The Building Code provides for a grace period for

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other certifications such as suspended scaffold installers, adjusters, repairers, maintainers, users, or removers. So, the proposed change would be consistent with that. one additional change we'd like to propose is expanding the qualification pathways to obtain an SST card. Currently, applicants can obtain an SST card which is required for all workers at a major building site through one of three qualification pathways which includes completing OSHA training and additional SST credits as specified by the Department. Those seeking as Site Safety Manager or Site Safety Coordinator certification must complete the DOB-approved 40-hour site safety course. The 40-hour site safety course covers the topics already addressed in the OSHA 30 course, but the 40-hour site safety course is not currently recognized as a pathway to qualify for an SST card. Therefore, under the current regulatory scheme, a worker seeking an SSM or SSC certification would likely have satisfied one of the three qualification pathways for obtaining the SST card as well as completing the 40-hour site safety course. We received feedback from the industry regarding the cost and time to complete the training that is-- to

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complete training that is duplicative. If the OSHA
30-hour course is acceptable, the Department believes
the 40-hour site safety course should also be
acceptable. As such, the Department would like to
further amend this Site Safety Training card
definition to include the 40-hour site safety course
as a qualification pathway and the potential to
include additional comparable qualification pathways
by rule as other training options may become
available in the future. Finally, turning to Intro
1376. The Department has been asked to provide
testimony regarding this bill on behalf of the Health
Department. Intro 1376 would require the Health
Department to post guidance regarding the best
practices for protecting workers from extreme weather
conditions such as extreme heat. The administration
supports this legislation as extreme weather events
pose recognized occupational health risks and are
found to be associated with higher accident rates,
illness, injuries, and deaths. The New York State
Department of Labor has also produced employer
guidance to protect workers from extreme
precipitation, extreme heat, extreme cold, and
wildfire smoke. Thank you for the opportunity to

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3 testify before you today. We welcome any questions
4 you might have.

5 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Alright, I'm
7 going to start with the questions. Well, first of
8 all, thank you providing some testimony on behalf of
9 the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. So, I'm
10 going to skip some of those questions, because I
11 imagine-- you know, Department is not here, so I
12 imagine that we're not going to answer too many
13 questions around something that is under the
14 authority of the Department of Health and Mental
15 Hygiene, but I appreciate you expressing support for
16 my legislation here. And I want to-- I do want to
17 ask you a little bit about DOB's sort of role in
18 providing safety for workers. Does DOB have an
19 estimate of how many construction workers work
20 outdoors?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PATINO: We don't
22 have an estimate on how many construction workers
23 work outdoors. That number can fluctuate during the
24 lifetime of a construction project, you know, as a
25 phase of the construction project progresses.
However, the State Department of Labor has estimated

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3 that there are approximately 150,000 workers in the
4 construction industry in New York City. However, we
5 believe that might be an undercount, because
6 Department of [inaudible] providers have issued over
7 500,000 Site Safety Training cards to workers, which
8 indicates that there's more than 15--

9 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: [interposing]
10 What was that number?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PATINO: Over 500,000
12 Site Safety Training cards. I can get you the exact
13 number.

14 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you. And
15 how many construction sites to your knowledge were inspected
16 for heat safety compliance during the summer of 2024,
17 and who conducts those types of inspections?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PATINO: So,
19 Department of Buildings doesn't perform key safety
20 compliance-related inspections. That's not a matter
21 that we regulated. So, OSHA has jurisdiction over
22 worker safety provide worker safety in places certain
23 requirements on employers related to heat, which
24 include planning to protect workers from developing
25 heat-related illnesses for example, and OSHA would be
responsible for enforcing these requirements.

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3 Further, I would add that it's not common that we
4 receive reports related to Keith at the Department of
5 Buildings. Since 2020 we've received approximately
6 10 notifications that were as a heat-related incident
7 at a construction sites, and that works out to about
8 two or three hear- related incident at a construction
9 site a construction site, and that works out to about
10 two or tree heat-related incidents reported to DOB
per year.

11 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you for
12 that. I guess my other question probably you won't be
13 able to answer. But the question was how many heat-
14 related 911 calls come in through construction work
15 sites to the City? Do you happen to have that?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PATINO: Conferred
17 with our colleagues at the Fire Department regarding
18 that question, and that's not information that is
19 readily attainable. There isn't a good way to pull
20 out that information.

21 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay. No, Fire-
22 - what about FDNY, you wouldn't have that type of
23 information in terms of 911 calls that come in on
24 heat-related construction sites?
25

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CHIEF CURRAO: Yeah, that wasn't

something that we were-- I was personally asked, you know, from-- as Chief of Fire Prevention, and good morning to everybody. I think that, you know, we would have to look at that further and see what data is available. So when a patient is-- when our emergency medical services respond, they do fill out a patient care report, advanced care report if it's a paramedic, and there is information that is put on there, and especially if they're, you know, transported to a hospital, but we would have to, you know, do the data analysis on that, and if we could get back to you--

CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: [interposing]

Yeah.

CHIEF CURRAO: and try to-- see if that information is available.

CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: That would be helpful. Going back to DOB, I know you spoke in your testimony, Deputy Commissioner, about the SST cards and sort of your role in that. There was a lot of information that you provided us. If there is one step that you could identify to make that process a little bit more-- less convoluted, less complicated.

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What would be a step that you think we should be taking as a city to kind of deal with some of the different overlaps between safety protocols that exist right now?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PATINO: We've been implementing the Site Safety Training program for quite a few years at the Department of Buildings. I believe the original legislation that enacted the site safety training program was passed in 2018. We've seen very good compliance with that program, very proud of, you know, the work that the agency has done and that the industry's done to get the workers trained. \$500,000 SST cards issued over the recent years is up pretty monumental, you know, feat. And also, you know, we're seeing very good compliance from the construction industry. We issue very few violations related to site safety training cards, and I would say that two of the steps that we could take are the ones that we outlined in our testimony, one of which is expanding the qualifications pathways so that certain workers don't have to receive duplicative training. And then also providing a grace period after their card expires for some reason or another, so that workers have, you know, more

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opportunity to refresh their training versus
receiving the full complement of training. I don't
know if my colleague has anything to add to that.

CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Could you speak
a little bit more to like when the trainings are
duplicative? Like, what-- how are you receiving that
information? Are workers sort of expressing to you
all that they're having to compile proof of these
trainings? How is the Department of Buildings sort
of-- what's the role in ensuring that that
communication is happening?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER CABRERA: Good
morning.

CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Good morning.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER CABRERA: My name
is Reynaldo Cabrera. I'm the Assistant Commissioner
in charge of Investigations and Compliance. I work
with the Training Compliance Unit and that's one half
of the team that works with course providers. The
other side of the shop is the Course Provider
Administration Team. So, often we get communication
from the course providers themselves directly to us,
and the discussion is around the fact that sometimes
they have students who come to them who have to

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retake some of the courses just to-- with the requirements of the SST card. So, the proposal today would expand the pathway to allow folks to get the training without having to repeat the courses.

CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Do you feel that in your analysis of this, the communication-- like, the workers know when they're falling in between like the communication to let workers know that they're falling in between these gaps is sufficient?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER CABRERA: I mean, it can always be better, but we do work closely with our course providers to message out, and we issue through the platform that we use which is called Training Connect. That's the system that prints the cards. We have the ability to send like a mass notice. We're in constant communication with the course providers to let them know that we're seeing trends at certain areas. Sometimes we get calls directly from students. We work closely with unions. We work closely with schools, universities that are also part of the course provider program, and so there is a constant communication. And again, like I said, on the other side of the shop, the course

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3 provider team, they deal with the course providers on
4 a daily basis.

5 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you, Chair De
7 La Rosa. So, I wanted to start with questions
8 relating to staircase requirements. And so, let me
9 scroll here. So, can you-- Deputy Commissioner, can
10 you start by elaborating on why the Department of
11 Buildings believes that the bill shift from 2,000
12 square feet per floor to 4,000 square feet per floor
13 poses significant safety risks? Our understanding is
14 that six-story buildings with 2,000 square feet per
15 story can already be built with single staircase.
16 So, I just want to understand, you know, going back
17 to the formation, right, the initial writing of code
18 with 2,000 square feet versus your position today?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PATINO: Colleague
20 Keith Wen, Assistant Commissioner for Coding and
21 Zoning Interpretation, is going to assist with
22 questions pertaining to that bill. I believe he has
23 to be sworn in, though.

24 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER WEN: Good
25 morning. Yeah, I'm Keith Wen, Assistant Commissioner.

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3 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER WEN: Sorry, just
4 one second.

5 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER WEN: Yeah, sure.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Just raise your right
7 hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole
8 truth and nothing but the truth and to answer all
9 Council Member questions honestly?

10 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER WEN: I do.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

12 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER WEN: Good
13 morning. So, this is Keith Wen, Assistant
14 Commissioner for Coding and Zoning Interpretation at
15 DOB. I think to answer your question, we believe
16 that the current New York City Building Code Section
17 1006.3.2 already outlined seven scenarios where one
18 exit would be permitted, and we believe that Intro
19 261, item seven specifically, does not provide
20 sufficient safety requirements for the oen exit
21 condition.

22 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Can you elaborate
23 on what those seven sections are?

24 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER WEN: Out of the
25 seven, there are five conditions that are in line
with the International Building Code, IBC, currently.

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There's also item six which is limited to six-story--
I'm sorry four stories, three apartments per floor,
additional safety features for the staircase, and
also has to be in a noncombustible construction
condition. Item seven, as you already know, is
limited to six stories, noncombustible, and-- but
it's only limited to 2,000 square feet per floor as
opposed to the Intro 261 is looking for 4,000 square
feet per floor.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: great. Thank you.
That's helpful. Okay. So, moving onto the some of
the issues that you flagged, Mr. Cabrera, regarding
the rigid requirements around Site Safety Training
cards, can you remind us when the Site Safety
Training program came into effect, which year?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER CABRERA: The
actual program? So, the first deadline I believe was
December of 2019. There was a 30-hour requirement
minimum, and then subsequent deadlines came. You may
recall some of them were pushed based on triggering
events so that the eventual timelines were expanded.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Got it. Okay. So,
six year, 500,000 workers trained at this point. And
can you-- do you have numbers how many workers, an

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estimate, how many workers have been affected by these rigid requirements? Like, we did this course, not that course. We, you know, missed a deadline by a day.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER CABRERA: The number, no, we don't have an exact number, but there's enough-- we've received enough complaints from workers mostly through the course providers that folks are not able to print cards, because again, the platform, the Training Connect platform, the logic was built that if on that date your card expires, the system will not allow you to be able to print the card. So, what happens is a student will or a worker will take a course. Let's say on a Thursday or Friday. They complete the course. The instructor loads up the certificates into the platform, but the admin person who works at that course provider maybe doesn't show up 'til Monday. So, Monday morning they try to go to print, and they're unable to print because the card is expired.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. That is, I imagine, very frustrating. And you need legislation? The Council-- this needs to be in the

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3 Council bill in order to change? You can't do this
4 administratively or?

5 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER CABRERA: Well,
6 the code is silent on the expiration. Excuse me, on
7 the-- a grace period. So, you have other sections of
8 code in other context, scaffold cards for example,
9 where if the card expires, you have a 12-month grace
10 period.

11 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Okay.

12 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER CABRERA: Here,
13 you don't have that. in license-- a license, same
14 thing, you have a grace period. This is the only
15 card where it's silent, and so when the time came to
16 look at the code, and the laws that were built, it's
17 like well, it's silent on this issue. So, perhaps
18 that was the intent, but perhaps it was just an
19 oversight. And so, if there's an opportunity to
20 correct it--

21 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: [interposing] There
22 were some really good writers on that legislation.

23 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER CABRERA: Yes,
24 there's definitely good writers, but certainly,
25 obviously, sometimes it happens where things-- you
could not have anticipated until the issue came to

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3 light. And so when we started getting these phone
4 calls, we just started realizing, you know, if the
5 opportunity came that we would need to bring this up
6 to at least have the discussion and propose it, and
7 hopefully they'll get implemented.

8 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. I'd
9 like to acknowledge that were joined by Council
10 Member Abreu, Council Member Menin, and Council
11 Member Avilés. Excellent. Well, thank you for that
12 clarification. Okay, so taking a step back sort of
13 in line with some of the questions that Council
14 Member De La Rosa has asked-- thank you, Department
15 of Buildings for being here today speaking on worker
16 safety. You know, the umbrella of the hearing today
17 is very broad. So, what is your sister agency or
18 office that is taking up this issue of ensuring that
19 workers are safe and the context of the impacts of
20 climate change?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PATINO: My
22 understanding is that OSHA is the primary entity
23 responsible for worker safety including, you know, in
24 heat-related issues.

25 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Okay. But a city
agency?

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PATINO: I'm aware of certain work that other agencies conduct. For example, the Health Department will regularly post information on their website pertaining to working in heat conditions which is why they express support for Council Member De La Rosa's legislation, and also Emergency Management, they also send out notices when there's going to be heat conditions, air quality conditions, for example, and we take Emergency Management's lead on certain issues as well. So, we'll do weather advisories, including when there's extreme heat, and those weather advisories will point to the OSHA guidelines for working in heat conditions.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Got it. Does the Department have a position on the state's Temp Act, the proposed Temp Act?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PATINO: We don't have a position on it, no.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Do you have information, any numbers today, regarding-- I know you mentioned no 911 data, but 311 data around heat and air quality complaints on the one hand. And then do you have information-- it's not your agency, but

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3 do you have information on how many alerts if-- how
4 many alerts NYCEM issued last year relating to heat,
5 relating to air quality?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PATINO: Regarding
7 the question pertaining to the NYCEM alerts, we'll
8 follow up with our partner agency on that and get
9 back to you regarding complaints related to heat.
10 We're only aware the ones that pertain to
11 construction sites. So, contractors, permit holders
12 are required to reports incidents to DOB, and since
13 2020 we received 10 reports of heat-related
14 incidents. In 2023 and 2024 it was three per year.
15 We can certainly follow up with additional
16 information about those reports as well.

17 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. That
18 would be great. From the Department of Building's
19 perspective on construction sites they're dealing
20 with a lot of different materials, volatile
21 compounds. Are there any concerns that the agency has
22 or any guidelines around not being around certain
23 kinds of materials beyond certain temperatures?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PATINO: So, again,
25 that would be an OSHA issue. So, OSHA has, you know,
requirements that they place on employers, including

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for example, making sure that employees have the proper equipment for the scope of work that they're going to conduct. They've also done guidance related to heat.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. And are Department of Buildings Inspectors trained on these OSHA regulations? Are you looking out for them when you're on a construction site?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PATINO: No, we're not enforcing OSHA regulations.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: And there's no assistance, no?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PATINO: No.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Got it. Thank you. And then I imagine what the answer is, but on air quality concerns and the air quality indices that we've seen last year and this year related to wild fires, is that also an OSHA issue or has Department of Buildings considered any changes around worker protections?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PATINO: So, I have received some information from the Health Department related to air quality concerns. Also, that's a measure produced by the EPAs for the U.S.

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Environmental Protection Agency, but DOHMH provides the value of air quality on their environment and health data portal. So that's something they have online. So they do provide those values, and then there's also some tracking that's done related to air quality and baseline health-- the Health Department's general guidance. They recommend that New Yorkers avoid strenuous activity and more than an hour outdoors at AQIs between 201 and 300, and that all outdoor activities are ceased when there's a QI greater than 300. But the City didn't have any days in 2024 that exceeded that AQI.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. Okay.

I have a question on solar. Just thinking about-- not just solar, but any like green upgrades that buildings are conducting. I imagine that there's been an uptick in applications, permit applications, to the Department of Buildings as the federal government has done away with by December of this year with the IRA credits. So, I'm wondering if the Department of Buildings has seen an uptick in permit applications for things like solar, roof replacements, any other of the work that requires permits? I'm not sure if window replacements do in that kind of work. So, on

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the one hand, have you seen an uptick in permit applications? Two, do you have the capacity that you need to make sure that New Yorkers are able to take advantage of the IRA credits before they go away? And third, for the workforce that is doing this work, are there any safety protections that you have been considering or any concerns that the agency has and you're looking out for?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PATINO: My understanding is that we have seen an increase in applications for solar installations in recent years. I don't have the numbers with me, but I can certainly follow up with that information. From my understanding is that there has been an increase in recent years. There was also Local Laws 92 and 94 that were passed that require that all new buildings either install solar or green roofs. My understanding is that it primarily go with solar where they're able to. So, we'll certainly follow up with that data.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PATINO: I'm not aware of any issues processing those permit requests, but I'll also look into that and follow up.

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CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thanks for that.

3 Thank you. Thank you. I'd like to acknowledge that
4 we are joined by Council Member Restler, and Council
5 Member Restler, you have a question? No problem.

6 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: While he gets
7 ready, right? Let-- I do want to ask about OCME
8 investigations into deaths, and I'm not sure if
9 you're able to answer it. But in the tragic cases
10 where workers die from heat stress or from existing
11 conditions that are exacerbated by heat, how does the
12 administration communicate between agencies about
13 circumstances of that employee's death?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PATINO: I have some
15 information that OCME provided to our agency before
16 the hearing, so I'll share that with you, and then
17 certainly follow up with them if there's any
18 additional questions. So, the information that they
19 provided is that for all cases that fall within their
20 jurisdiction, they're responsible for determining and
21 reporting the cause and manner of death to the Health
22 Department's Bureau of Vital Statistics which manages
23 the City's official mortality data. OCME may also
24 provide preliminary findings to investigative
25 agencies and inquiries are received. And then once

the case is finalized, the investigative case file can be released to the family and to investigating stakeholders including agency partners upon request.

CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: So, once-- so who do they report after an autopsy or determining the cause of death, who do they report to of their findings, which agency?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PATINO: The Department of Health.

CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PATINO: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Alright.
Restler?

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Great. Thank you to both Chairs who really do a phenomenal job. Thank you, Chair Sanchez and Chair De La Rosa, for your leadership, and I really want to thank Chair De La Rosa for her great resolution in condemning Alden Golden Capital for their terrible mismanagement of the Daily News and their fundamental disrespect for workers. I wanted to just focus my questioning today on air quality. We have experienced multiple extreme air quality events in New York City during the Adams Administration, notably the wild fires from Quebec a

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couple of years ago now, where the administration was caught totally flatfooted and unable to effectively communicate after the public what we should all do to stay safe. And I'm particularly interested in what you all have learned since then and how we're communicating with workers when there are extreme air quality events. When the air quality is unsafe, what are agencies doing now to advise workers, particularly construction workers, and others who are working outside to navigate challenging conditions?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PATINO: I'll ask my colleague Frank McCarton, Assistant Commissioner for Emergency Services, to join us to address your question.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you. How are you Guillermo? Are they being nice to you today?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PATINO: [inaudible]

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Good. Frank, good to see you.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MCCARTON: Good to see you, Council, Chair. So, we convey an interagency meeting with NYCEM. That information about heat and air quality is given to us. We take that information and we put it out on social media.

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The press office goes out and sends it. On the heat related issues, what we do is we do a press release when it hits a heat warning which is 104 and above, and those qualities then go out to the industry, so make sure the industry knows what's going on.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Okay. So, just so I understand, for-- appreciate that, you know, there's a valuable bully pulpit from the Mayor's Office, NYCEM, etcetera, to get the word out about extreme weather incidents. But when we are in instances of poor air quality where it's dangerous to be outside and straining yourself for extended periods of time or extreme heat where it's dangerous to be outside and straining yourself for extended periods of time, could you walk us through in more specificity the industry engagement beyond just the kind of general notification to the public that there's a concern? What are we doing specifically to inform employers about what risks their workers are facing and what they should do?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MCCARTON: We're using social media side of that particular process basically. That's what we're doing.

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COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Do we think that we should be better engaging the sector, the construction sector, to let them know about the specific risks that workers are facing and what needs to be done to keep people safe?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MCCARTON: Council Member, I'm open to any type of communication in the event of any type of emergency is the basis where I come from. So,--

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing]
Yeah.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MCCARTON: I would love to have those conversations with you and the Council and the Chair and my Departments that respond to those type of emergencies. I'd be open to those suggestions--

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: [interposing] I appreciate it.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MCCARTON: that you have.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I think we'd be happy to-- I'd be happy to chat with you further about it. I just am-- you know, when we saw the extreme air quality event about two years ago, and

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1 you know, the administration was totally unprepared,
2 you know, we had everything from street homeless New
3 Yorkers to construction workers kind of continuing
4 their lives as normal without, you know, a shift in
5 policies and protocols that were needed to keep
6 people safe. And I, you know, have not yet seen the
7 planning and preparation for the next extreme air
8 quality event, and unfortunately for extreme heat,
9 you know, this is just a reality that we are facing
10 more and more and more every year. There's, you
11 know, twice as many extreme heat days as when I was
12 kid, and it's getting worse by the year, and we all
13 know that extreme heat is the number one source of
14 death from, you know, climate change. And so workers
15 who are outside, you know, straining themselves for
16 eight or 10+ hours a day are the ones who are in the
17 greatest-- the most vulnerable conditions. And I
18 just want to make sure that we're getting clear and
19 conservative guidance for how they can stay safe in
20 these moment and these conditions, because they are
21 an increasing reality that we unfortunately have to
22 reckon with. And I think this is a good package of
23 legislation. I commend my colleagues for their
24 innovation and leadership, but I really am most
25

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focused on how do we do a better job of making clear
to employers what are the steps they should be taking
to keep their workers safe or to shut down work
altogether as necessary. So, we'd be happy to
further this conversation offline and think about how
we can do a better job of engaging those employer--
that-- the construction sector directly, the unions,
and making clear what our expectations are for how
people stay safe.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MCCARTON: Look
forward to it, Council Member.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you,
Chair.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you, Council
Member Restler. A follow-up on your line of
questioning for Deputy Chief-- we, you know-- first,
gratitude to our first responders who dive into
dangerous conditions every single day. You know, I'm
reminding with Council Member Restler's remarks and
questions about the horrible three-alarm fires that
we've had in the Bronx in recent years. Just this
June we had a three-alarm fire that took down three
house on Devoe Terrace in my district, and I remember
walking around, you know-- I always try to stay of

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1 course out of the way of the first responders doing
2 the important work, but I try to find neighbors who
3 are affected, or you know, who are curious and are
4 sitting, and I try to tell folks you really should
5 get indoors. You should get somewhere where, you
6 know, the air is not as compromised. And I'm
7 wondering if the Fire Department or any of your
8 sister agencies given that we do have similar
9 conditions of that air quality around the site of
10 fires, if there's guidance that you have for the
11 public, if there's any way that fire-- whether it's
12 firefighters themselves or other workers, NYCEM
13 workers, whoever, if there's any way that they are
14 communicating to the public and if there's anything
15 that we should be taking from those instances. And
16 Frank, you can answer this as well, right, because
17 you're always on-site as well. Anything that we can
18 learn from these instances at home to help protect us
19 from the bad air quality that we're seeing in the
20 City?

21
22 CHIEF CURRAO: Sure. Thank you very much
23 for the question. It's an excellent one, because
24 unfortunately, the byproducts of fire are going in
25 the wrong direction with, you know, the introduction

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of synthetic materials and plastics. The toxins have become not only more varied, but more quantity. The heat release rate is that much more as opposed to what we-- you know, what we traditionally say would be a legacy fire, fire with materials that were many, many decades ago. What we do is in any type of events, whether it's a structure fire or some other kind of incident that maybe has a hazardous material, we base everything off a unified command post. So, we would-- you know, we're there with all our representatives, certainly New York City Emergency Management, and we do-- you know, we are focused on the main function of fire suppression and rescue. However, we do have layers of chiefs that are looking at like the bigger picture, right? Like, and just as you mentioned, right, you know, where should we-- if we need to evacuate, if we need to shelter in place-- sometime shelter in place is a better option depending on the type of building, or the type of fire or incident. But we consider that at-- really at every type of fire incident, and we are working as well as to try to make sure that we are getting the word out. What could be the issues in that particular area. So, as far as firefighters, you

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1 know, we do-- we're keen to all those different
2 topics that you all have brought. We follow a
3 temperature humidity index. We make sure that our
4 firefighters are not unnecessarily exposed to that
5 heat. Obviously, we never stop responding, but maybe
6 certain activity that-- outdoors like drills and
7 things like that, we might curtail. We are very,
8 very focused on respiratory protection for our
9 members to make sure that, you know, they're doing
10 their job. It's a dangerous job anyway, but to make
11 sure that it's done safely.

13 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. I'd love
14 to continue that conversation to-- I just think
15 there's so much that our first responders, FDNY first
16 responders, they-- I mean, I feel like you have lungs
17 of steel. I don't understand how they're able to go
18 into these sites and just face all types of
19 conditions, but I'm sure that there's so much that
20 you all have learned and, you know, could be shared
21 with the public. I have one more question, and just
22 note to any colleagues that have additional so you
23 can get on stack, but I wanted-- I'm not sure if--
24 HPD is not here, so I'm not sure there's anyone to
25 answer this particular question, but on Intro 1404

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3 regarding occupancy of cellars in certain one- and
4 two-family dwellings, can you-- is somewhere here who
5 can just get on the record about why this change is
6 necessary? Why the-- if there was thinking that the
7 language in the administrative code right now is not
8 straightforward enough?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PATINO: I believe
10 HPD is here, but the admin's position--

11 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thanks for being
12 here.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PATINO: Take that
14 back.

15 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: We'll administer
16 the oath first. Thought I recognized you.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Please raise your
18 right hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the
19 whole truth, and nothing but the truth and to answer
20 all Council Member questions honestly?

21 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ERDMAN: I do.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

23 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ERDMAN: Thank you
24 for having me. I'm Steven Erdman, the Assistant
25 Commissioner for Homeownership Opportunities and
Preservation at HPD. And thanks for the question

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about why we need to pass Intro 1404. So,
unfortunately there was a drafting error when we
passed legislation back in November to facilitate the
creation of ADUs and the legalization of basement
apartments across the City. So, at the time we
failed to address a provision in the Housing
Maintenance Code 27-2087 that prohibits the use of
cellars of apartments in new construction. So, as a
result, any new construction cellars can't be used as
apartments. So this, we believe, is contrary to the
intent of the bill that had been passed and the
public representations that we made about that bill,
and so that's the reason for Intro 1404 to correct
that error to facilitate, you know, what we all had
hoped would be possible back in November.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Excellent. Thank
you. Just wanted to make sure to get that on the
record as well. Thank you. Alright, with that,
thank you so much to the members of the
administration for your testimony today. One second.

CHIEF CURRAO: I was wondering, Chair, if
you would indulge me, I'd like to just speak a little
bit about the single stair just to--

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CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: [interposing]

Absolutely.

CHIEF CURRAO: Just from a Fire

Department standpoint and a life safety standpoint.

We have a lot of experience with unfortunately how

challenging it is to fight fires in single-stair

buildings, and you know, we have many, of course,

right because of different construction codes that

were in existence at the time. But the stairway of a

building, it's really at the core of any basic

firefighting life safety search and rescue operation.

And to-- when we only have one single stairwell, we

have to conduct two things at once. We have to be

able to stretch hose lines. We can only stretch two

up a single stairwell, and we also have to effect

searches. We have to be able to-- and people are

evacuating at the same time. That stairwell can

become really contaminated really fast. In 2017, we

had a terrible tragedy, Prospect Avenue in the Bronx

not too far from the zoo where really a basic fire, a

stove fire really, was extended into the hallway.

The occupants had fled. And you know, we do try

through our public safety campaign to try to really

make sure that-- you know, to send that message that

not only for yourself, but your neighbors, to close the door behind you. In this particular case it wasn't done, and it completely rapidly contaminated the stairwell with heat and fire and toxic fumes and led to the fatality of 14 people altogether. So, it was really quite a tragic circumstance. We really do try as much as we can to advocate for a second, you know, a second stairwell, and that's really helpful not only most importantly for the life safety of the occupants, but also for our firefighting operations and our ability to do our job effectively. So, just wanted to-- I appreciate the opportunity. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: No. Thank you. That perspective is really important, right? I think a lot of us on the Council believe that items should be debated and perspectives shared, so that is invaluable information and perspective. Thank you so much for that. Recognizing Council Member Avilés.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: I have a tendency to be like, I have the question now as you're leaving. Thank you, Chair. Thank you all for being here today and the work that you do. I think under the guise of-- many of you may have heard one of the major warehouses in Red Hook had a serious fire last

1 week. I think this question of air quality certainly
2 was on the top of residents' minds as this fire
3 certainly ablazed [sic] and it wasn't clear where
4 they should be going to get information, right? As
5 obviously, the first responders were focused very
6 much on making sure the building was safe and
7 everyone was out. So, I guess I wasn't sure if I
8 clearly heard directions of what you would tell New
9 Yorkers around where they should reach out when they
10 have those kinds of questions and the instances that
11 arises. And also, on the question of air quality and
12 how I guess, you know, given our recent history of,
13 you know, all these climate events happening, what's
14 the threshold that the City uses in terms of
15 protocols to say for a worker it is not safe for you
16 to be outside? So, yeah. I'll stop there.

18 CHIEF CURRAO: Thank you for the
19 question. I can handle the fire if you want first.
20 So, any type of incident like that, we have a very
21 robust hazardous materials response, and that's
22 really-- it's really a force multiplier across-- all
23 our units get it. The certain units have more
24 expertise than others, but we always have hazmat
25 component that's on the scene. So, when we have a

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1 fire such as that, they can begin to at least start
2 to take some basic readings around the particular
3 fire, right? So, immediately we get some acute
4 knowledge, right? What's going on here? And many
5 times, it's what we would expect, right? But if we
6 were to say-- if we were on our instruments be able
7 to take out like higher readings or particularly, you
8 know, worrisome contaminants, right? So we would take
9 immediate actions, right, so that maybe say somebody
10 who's right next door we might have to evacuate them,
11 get them out of that particular plume or that
12 particular area. But we work very, very closely with
13 the New York City Office of Emergency Management. We
14 needed the assistance of the New York City Police
15 Department to be able to get people out of harm's
16 way, and then from there that would probably build
17 out to public messaging if there was an area that
18 needed to be, you know, secured or areas of residence
19 needed to be relocated along those lines. So, it's
20 kind of like a-- it's an evolving type of event
21 depending on the incident.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: So, the teams
24 were exceptional in their response and their working
25 together, Emergency Management and all the other city

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agencies in this instance. You know, folks were calling us, and we were like calling other people. So, is 311 also an appropriate place to inquire these questions outside of our offices, or is there a NYCEM office where we could direct constituents to in these circumstances?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MCCARTON: Good morning. Council Member, my name is Frank McCarton. I'm the Assistant Commissioner for Emergency Services, and I spent several years in this emergency world, and my-- I did pass through NYCEM twice. I went through them twice for about 14 years. So, I can speak a little bit about the notify system. This would be a good way to plug, and I know Commissioner Iscol would be very happy that I'm plugging his notify system which has over a million people that subscribe to them, and you could do that via your zip code. It was created that way going back after the Deutsch Bank fire when we had no way of communicating to people. So that is a primary way in which the City of New York communicates with the residents. They set up-- it's an opt-in situation in which they can opt in. When there is a fire, anything above a second alarm or above, that notify system is

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activated and sends out a message which basically is telling the people in those areas to shelter in place, meaning stay in their homes, close their windows. It was a very thorough process in which the Department of Health, Emergency Management, and the City came up with the wording from it. So, if you want to tell your folks to do anything, tell Commissioner Iscol that I told them to call you. You give them a call, and he'll give you all the flyers you want that you could put in your council office. And it's an opt-in thing, and I think it's a wonderful way in which the citizens of the City of New York are getting real-time information from the City, from the Emergency Operations Center what they should be doing. So, any time there's an evacuation, anytime there's an NYPD issue, like there was one up in Midtown this morning. Any time there's any type of situation, that information comes from the Ops center out to the citizens. So, that's an opt-in, and that's the way that you should tell your folks and your constituents to be able to communicate.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: We'll continue to do so. Notify NYC is very helpful and multilingual which is--

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ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MCCARTON:

[interposing] 311, too, by the way. 311 is a very
good--

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: [interposing]

Yeah. So, on the issue of air quality, and kind of
what is-- what's the kind of protocol and-- excuse
me-- protocol and thresholds around air quality
reaches a certain level. When do-- when are workers
advised that they should be pulling back from their
work sites?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER MCCARTON: I think
I answered this earlier with the Councilman Restler.
I think we need to have a communication a little bit
more with all of us as a city of how we go ahead and
move on that. And you know, as I sit here and I
think to you, like, maybe I should think out loud,
and maybe you'll be mad at me, but you know, I think--
- I was asked to look at everything when I came in
these doors about three years ago, and I looked at
the weather events, and I looked at the heat events,
and I looked. Now the air quality is coming up
again. Maybe there's a threshold in which we work
with NYCEM the same way we did with the heat, right?
It hits the warning. We send a notice to industry.

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1 And speaking out loud now, but I mean, maybe that's
2 the way we go forth. And we would like to have a
3 discussion with you if that's the way we move
4 forward. I don't think that's a bad way of doing it,
5 is sending a notice out to industry so industry then
6 has that information. So, when they come in the
7 morning-- and I say they, the construction workers,
8 they always a pre-safety meeting, right? It's going
9 to be hot today. It's going to be bad, you know, bad
10 air today. Maybe they do [inaudible] aside. I don't
11 know what the issue-- you know, how we go forth with
12 it, but I think it's a good discussion to have.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Yeah, I think we
15 had-- we're working on some potential that--
16 legislation around this particular issue of air
17 quality, and I think, you know, our unionized
18 workforce has a good number of safety protocols in
19 there for their workers. I think the concern is the
20 non-unionized portion of the workforce and industry
21 who may not be quite connected, and you know, could
22 push their workers in very unsafe conditions. So, I
23 think it's a work in progress, and thank you for the
24 consideration.

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3 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you so much,
4 Council Member Avilés. With that, I want to thank
5 the members of the administration for your testimony
6 today. We'll be moving to public comment.

7 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Alright. I now
9 open the hearing for public testimony. I remind
10 members of the public that this is a formal
11 government proceeding and that decorum shall be
12 observed at all times. As such, members of the
13 public shall remain silent at all times. The witness
14 table is reserved for people who wish to testify. No
15 video recording or photography is allowed from the
16 witness table. Further, members of the public may
17 not present audio or video recordings as testimony,
18 but may submit transcripts of such recordings to the
19 Sergeant at Arms for inclusion in the hearing record.
20 If you wish to speak at today's hearing, please fill
21 out an appearance card with the Sergeant at Arms and
22 wait to be recognized. When recognized, you will
23 have two minutes to speak on today's hearing topic of
24 worker safety and the effects climate change on labor
25 and the associated legislation Intros 261, 1376,
1384, and 1404, as well as Resolution 1015. If you

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have a written statement or additional written testimony you wish to submit for the record, please provide a copy of that testimony to the Sergeant at Arms. You may also email written testimony to testimony@council.nyc.gov within 72 hours of this hearing. Audio and video recordings will not be accepted. I will now call the first public panel, and excuse me if I pronounce your name incorrectly. Matan Diner from the New York City Comptroller's office, Samuel Eluto from the Building Trade Employers Association, Pete Sikora from New York Communities for Change, John Kellerman from Climate Jobs NYC, and Ken Schles, Food and Water Watch. And whoever is ready can begin when ready.

PETE SIKORA: Alright, let's go. My name is Pete Sikora. I'm with New York Communities for Change. Thanks so much for this opportunity to testify. It's not on the agenda today, but we wanted to urge the Council Members to cosponsor Intro 1180 and the Speaker to move it on an agenda. It would have been great to have seen it on today's agenda, but there's still time left in the session, and it should move. Intro 1180 closes a loophole that Eric Adams in his infinite wisdom put into Local Law 97 by

improperly using regulatory power. This council should override him on that move to protect jobs, lower utility bills, and prevent the climate crisis and improve air quality. I was up there when Local Law 97 passed. Ninety-two percent of buildings are now, as of 2023 data, below Local Law 97's pollution limits, a full year before the law kicked in. Forty-nine percent of multifamily is now below the law's pollution limits for 2030 to 2035. Both of those are huge improvements since the law passed. So, congratulations to this council for moving that, because it is working. It's creating thousands of jobs cutting utility bills and cleaning up the air. That's great. It's relevant to the topic of this hearing on air quality. So, the Speaker should move it. We want to see it passed. There's 22 cosponsors. Those of you who are not cosponsors, please cosponsor it. Council Member Dinowitz, we'd love to have you on it. And it's great. You should pass it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you, Pete.

KEN SCHLES: Hello. My name is Ken Schles. I'm a Food and Water Watch volunteer leader. I want to thank Chair Sanchez and the Committee on Housing and Buildings for allowing me to speak. In

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looking at the effects of climate change on housing
and labor, we should be talking about the restoration
of New York's critical climate law, Local Law 97, and
I urge the Council to schedule a hearing on Council
Member De La Rosa and Restler's Intro 1180. Mayor
Adams gutting of Local Law 97 is a textbook example
of the corporate capture of a corrupted city
government. Instead of faithfully protecting and
implementing Local Law 97 passed by the City Council
in its wisdom, the Adams administration has
unceremoniously administratively eviscerated it.
Local Law 97 is the world's most powerful urban law
to tackle the climate crisis. Enacted in 2019 in
recognition of the existential threat the climate
breakdown represents to New York City, it set in
motion the elimination of fossil fuel pollution in
New York's largest buildings by demanding retrofits
to antiquated heating and cooling systems.
Disgracefully, as the law's timely and measured
provision were being implemented ahead of schedule
and with near universal adherence, corrupt Mayor
Adams at the behest of the real estate lobby
administratively gutted the law, allowing polluting
landlords to purchase compliance instead of actually

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eliminating pollution. In 2019, New York City
declared a climate emergency. It's 2025. We must
stop adding fuel to the fires. We call for a hearing
on Intro 1180 to restore Local Law 97. Pass Intro
1180 and protect our futures. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you.

SAMUEL ELUTO: Good morning. My name is
Samuel Eluto. I'm the Director of Member Relations
for the BTEA. I'd like to thank Chair Sanchez, Chair
De La Rosa, and the members of the Committee on
Housing and Buildings as well as Civil Service and
Labor for holding this important hearing. On behalf
of the entire board at BTEA, we greatly appreciate
the introduction of Intro 1384 and the commitment to
prioritizing the health and wellbeing of our
workforce. The BTEA is made up of more than 1,200
union construction managers, general contractors and
specialty trade subcontractors across New York City.
Our contractors set the standard for safety,
maintaining the safest job sites in the nation. At
the same time, we have been directly affected by the
mental health and substance abuse crisis that
continues to impact our workforce. Too many lives
have been cut short and the BTEA has resolved to take

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action and be a part of the solution. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2023 nearly 16,000 construction workers nationwide died from opioid-related overdoses, and more than 5,000 died to suicide. Despite these staggering numbers, substance abuse and suicide remains a silent epidemic. Families often hesitate to speak publicly about overdose related deaths or suicides, but the lack of publicity does not diminish the magnitude of the problem. The BTEA is determined to confront the health crisis by providing resources focused specifically on mental health and substance abuse awareness. We host presentations. We distribute educational materials and partner with leading nonprofits to expand support and break the stigma. We strongly support Intro 1384 as conversation and education are essential to addressing construction worker suicide and substance abuse because SST cards are required for the vast majority of construction workers. This legislation has the potential to create profoundly positive impact across our industry. Too often, workers struggle to express feelings of depression, to ask for help, and incorporating this training into the SST framework

will give them the tools and language necessary to show in a familiar environment. We also support Intro 1376. We think that addressing both physical and mental health, this legislation will be important resources for our members' safety directors. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: That was very impressive. Thank you.

SAMUEL ELUTO: I had a lot written down. I had a lot written down, so I wanted to get to it all.

JOSH KELLERMAN: Good morning the Committee Chairs and members. My name is Josh Kellerman. I'm the Director of Policy and Researcher at Climate Jobs New York. Climate Jobs New York is a coalition of labor unions representing two-and-a-half million workers at the center of New York's economy. We are united around a shared goal of combatting climate change while reversing income inequality. We are heartened that your committee are paying close attention to worker safety and extreme weather. We must continue to draw attention to how climate change is impacting working people and seek solutions that mitigate these impacts and reduce our emissions while

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creating good union jobs for all people. As the committee report noted so well, outdoor workers will be disproportionately impacted by extreme heat, and among those outdoor workers, low-income workers of color and immigrant workers are most likely to be impacted. It is also important to note that union workers are much less likely to be impacted by extreme heat, as their collective bargaining agreements often already have provisions for worker health and safety, and empowered workers acting in solidarity are much better able to protect themselves from dangerous work conditions. A recent report by the Solidarity Center found that, "unionized workers experience half as much heat stress as nonunionized workers, and found that collective bargaining is the most effective form of collectively protecting workers from heat stress." Workers are the experts in their industry and it shows up when workers are organized and have power. They not only demand to be protected, but they do so often in smart and innovative ways. Accordingly, law makers should consistently advocate for expanding workers' rights to organize, free from intimidation and coercion and where appropriate, all public work including

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3 contracts and procurement should have project labor
4 agreements and labor peace agreements connected to
5 them. We support Intro 1376 which requires the
6 Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to post
7 worker guidance for best practices for protecting
8 workers from extreme weather. This is an important
9 step to ensuring workers have access to relevant
10 information to keep themselves safe. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you.

12 MATAN DINER: Good morning. My name is
13 Matan Diner and I serve the Policy and Research
14 Analyst for Workers' Rights at the Office of the New
15 York City Comptroller Brad Lander. Thank you to the
16 Committee on Civil Service and Labor, the Committee
17 on Housing and buildings, and to Chairs De La Rosa
18 and Sanchez for the opportunity to testify today. We
19 thank the Council for holding this hearing on
20 workers' safety and the affects of climate change on
21 labor, and applaud Council Member De La Rosa for
22 sponsoring Intro 1376 requiring the Department of
23 Health and Mental Hygiene to post best practices for
24 protecting workers from extreme heat and weather.
25 I'd also like to add the thank you to Council Member
Lincoln Restler for his leadership in introducing a

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package of bills, Intro 71, 72, and 74 regarding the City's response to air quality emergencies which are housed in another committee. With rising temperatures and worsening air qualities, it's essential for New York City to have stronger regulations in place to protect workers from the deadly risks of extreme heat, poor air quality, and other effects of our changing climate. That's why our office published a report last year titled, "Self-guarding Outdoor Workers in a Changing Climate," authored by myself, our former Chief Climate Officer Louise Young [sp?] and our Deputy Director for Workers' Rights, Rebecca Lynch. The report analyzes the health impacts of extreme temperatures and unsafe air quality quantifies New York City's outdoor worker population and identifies national best practices for labor standards. The report concludes with policy recommendations for New York City and State. Our report found that 1.4 million workers, or a third of New York City's workforce, work outdoors for prolonged periods of time. These workers are disproportionately composed of immigrants and Latino and Black New Yorkers. Extreme heat is the leading cause of weather-related

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deaths in the country and in New York City and outdoor workers face significantly higher heat risks compared to the general public. Heat exposure can result in accidents and injuries on the job as well. To address this, our office recommends that City and State officials enact both employer requirements like providing water, shade and paid rest breaks, along with increased public health initiatives.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. Thank you so much. And I'd also just like to express my support for Co-Chair De La Rosa's Intro 1180 that we were not able to hear today. We need to find a way to, you know, close loopholes and not allow renewable energy credits to be used in the wrong way. Thank you. Thank you. I'd like to call on the next panel: Susan DeCarava, the News Guild of New York, Evan Simko-Bednarski, the Daily News Union, Michael Sheridan, the New York Daily News Union, and Logan Needle, CWA District One. You may begin when ready.

SUSAN DECARAVA: Thank you. Good morning, Chair De La Rosa and Chair Sanchez and esteemed members of the Council. My name is Susan DeCarava. I am the President of the News Guild of New York, and I want to take a moment just to thank in

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particular Council Member De La Rosa for her continued support in putting forth this resolution and all the other Council Members who have continued to recognize the vital and necessary work that New York City's journalists provide for the people of this city. I'm here today with many of members from the Daily News Union here at the table and also behind me in the chamber. Our local represents nearly 6,000 media professionals of which the Daily News reporters are a part. They are hard-working journalists who at every turn in this city's history have been there to tell the story of its people. Beginning as the nation's first tabloid, the news has been the newspaper for everyday New Yorkers winning multiple Pulitzer prizes for stories that cover everything from horrific police brutality to the after effects of workers exposed to September 11th environmental toxins to widespread abuse of eviction rules affecting immigrants to everyday labor, health, and safety issues, many of which you addressed this morning. Unfortunately, we are faced with a crisis. Alden Global Capital, a predatory hedge fund with a rather notorious reputation purchased the news in 2021. A former Washington Post media columnist

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Margaret Sullivan described Alden best. She said,
"It is one of the most ruthless of the corporate
strip miners seemingly intent on destroying local
journalism." Alden acquired the Daily News, adding
it to its portfolio which now makes it the owner of
the second-largest newspaper chain in the country,
and this has had a profound effect on the coverage
that the newsroom has been able to provide to New
York. Alden Global Capital is led by its Managing
Director Heath Freeman, has a playbook that it
follows when it comes to local news. It acquires the
property, strips out all the assets and liquidates
it, slashes staff and freezes salaries. Here in New
York, Alden sold off the New Jersey printing plant,
pocketing \$90 million as it moved print operations to
a more distant location. Did we see any of that
money? No, New York did not benefit from that sale.
Instead, Alden slashed staff, cut salaries and froze
funding for the newsroom. Our editorial staff at the
Daily News has shrunk to 65 employees tasked with
covering a city of 8.5 million people. Many of those
who remained after the acquisition by Alden have
either had their salaries cut or frozen. None of the
asset sales that Alden has engaged have in any way

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benefitted in an investment in the newsroom or an investment in the City. Those profits have gone directly into the pockets of Alden and its partners. In 2021, the journalist at the Daily News unionized with our union, the News Guild of New York. They understood that collectively as a union, that was their best possible way to protect their work from the ravages of Alden and their partners. And as Alden continues to devour more newspapers, including most recently its failed attempt to buy the Dallas Morning News, they have grown increasingly intransigent at the table, refusing to agree to a contract with the Daily News Union with anything close to a living wage. We are fighting at the table for everything. We want our members to have, as every New Yorker should have, job security, living wages, PTO, paid time off, affordable health care, and the ability to plan for their future and for their families, for retirement. Just as a small example, Alden reps want our union to accept a starting salary of \$55K which is nearly \$6,000 less than the bare minimum--

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: [interposing] I'm sorry, if you can summarize. We're a bit over time.

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3 SUSAN DECARAVA: Oh, I'm sorry. Okay.

4 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: It's okay.

5 SUSAN DECARAVA: We very much appreciate
6 this resolution. We urge all the Council Members to
7 support it. It necessarily and urgently calls out
8 Alden for its hostile and predatory actions against
9 everyday New Yorkers. Without the journalists who
10 make up what is left of the newsroom of the New York
11 Daily News, so much of the daily life of New York
12 city and what makes it great will be lost. Thank
13 you.

14 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you.

15 MICHAEL SHERIDAN: Good morning and
16 greetings, Chair De La Rosa and Sanchez and all the
17 members of the Committee on Civil Service and Labor.
18 My name is Michael Sheridan. I'm a video and photo
19 editor at the New York Daily News. I also serve as
20 the Unit Chair of the New York Daily News Union and
21 I've been part of the Bargaining Committee. The
22 Daily News has been a part of my life for as long as
23 I can remember. My father, Dick Sheridan, started
24 working there in the 1980s when I graduated-- and
25 when I graduated high school in 1993, my first job
was as a copy boy, one of the last generation of copy

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boys to work at the newspaper, thanks to the advent of digital technology. I've left and returned to the paper a few times over the decades, but have been working there since 2006. There isn't a job I have not done at the news. I've taken photos, reported stories, laid out pages, edited pictures, edited videos, and written headlines. I even wrote a car column for the paper for about a year. I have never in my life set out to be a newspaper man, but life had other plans. So, when I speak about the Daily News, I do so as someone who has spent most of life being a part of what I sincerely believe to be the greatest city newspaper in the country. And it simply breaks my heart to watch it, and the immensely talented and dedicated people who fill its pages be treated so unfairly and dismissively by Alden Global Capital, the hedge fund that has owned the tabloid for the last four years. For more than three years, we have been fighting for nothing more than a fair contract, a fair contract in the nation's most expensive city, a fair contract in a city of more than 8 million people where news breaks day and night, and you won't find a more dogged collection of reporters and photographers than those at the Daily

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News. These bleed ink. They love what they do and they care about their city, and what they want isn't anything different than what everyone wants: fair wages, job security, decent health care. They want to know that if they get sick it won't cost them a day's pay. They want to know that if they called to jury duty, they won't get penalized and lose one of the handful of days off they get each year. They want to know that they'll be able to buy groceries without taking out a loan and still be able to make their rent at the end of the month. But Alden Capital-- Global Capital doesn't seem to care about its employees or investing in its newspapers. They don't seem to care about journalism despite owning hundreds of newspapers across the country. The only papers they seem to actually care about are the dollars they take away from the men and women who cover this city and many other towns and cities throughout the United States. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you.

EVAN SIMKO-BEDNARKSI: Good morning, Chair De La Rosa. Good morning, Chair Sanchez. Good morning, Council Members. My name is Evan Simko-Bednarski, and I'm the transit reporter for the New

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York Daily News and the Vice Unit Chair for the Daily News Union. I'm here today to express my support and that of the Daily News unionized reporters, photographers and editors for Resolution 1015. The Daily News has been a part of the fabric of New York City for more than 106 years. With our big front page fonts and our blunt tabloid talks, we've stood up for everyday New Yorkers like us. Whether it was dubbing Queens Boulevard the Boulevard of Death and getting the City to kick off decades of street safety improvements that are still underway, or being the first to sound the alarm after September 11th that the air downtown wasn't nearly as safe as those in power would have had us believe. The Daily News has always stood on the side of the neighbors, the regular, everyday New Yorkers trying to carve out a life in this town. Personally, I grew up reading baseball stats in the news at my grandfather's kitchen table. I can't overstate what an honor it is to get to write for that same paper today as I raise my two sons in Brooklyn. With the systematic disinvestment that has come at the hands of our owner, private equity rater, Heath Freeman [sp?] and his firm Alden Global Capital, threatens to undo the

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reputation that generations of reporters before me
have built and the trust they've earned among New
Yorkers. My colleagues and I are a skeleton crew.
We have no newsroom. Reporters who leave are not
replaced. We have no reporter in Albany covering the
state capital or the Governor. We have reporters
assigned to courts in only two of the five boroughs.
There are so few editors at any given time that
stories we file from the field bunch up like so many
delayed subway trains. We reporters have on more than
one occasion gathered around one another's kitchen
afterhours to talk through important stories in lieu
of editorial meetings. We love what we do. And I
think that if you ask our colleagues at other
outlets, the folks down in room nine right now, or
the many flacks [sic] that populate this building,
they'll tell you maybe begrudgingly that we're pretty
good at it. That despite all this disinvestment we
are still holding power to account in this city.
We're still out there knocking on doors, riding the
trains and working the phones to get stories that no
one else has, and all we're asking in return is that
we be able to afford to live in this city. We're
asking for a modest wage increase to keep up with our

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rent. We're asking for affordable health care, especially for our part-time workers. We're asking for parental leave so that my colleagues and I can raise our families in New York. Heath Freeman made \$90 million in one fell swoop selling our printing plant in Jersey City. All we're asking is that some of that money that we make for him get put back into our newspaper. What we're asking for isn't radical. We want a fair contract that makes it possible for us to keep doing our jobs. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you.

LOGAN NEEDLE: Good morning. Thank you, Chairs De La Rosa, Sanchez, and all the Council Members. My name is Logan Needle. I'm the New York State Deputy Political Director for the Communications Workers of America District One. We represent about 145,000 workers across CWA local unions in New York, New Jersey, New England, and eastern Canada. Our members work in telecommunications, health care, higher education, manufacturing, broadcast and cable television, commercial printing and newspapers in state and local and county government, among other job titles that keep New York City running. Alden Global Capital, a

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predatory hedge fund with the moniker "Destroyer of
Newspapers" is lining their pockets at the expense of
essential, high-quality, local journalism, both
nationally and here in New York City. In 2021, Alden
acquired New York's hometown newspaper, and since
then the New York Daily Newsroom, as you've heard,
has been decimated, a blueprint they have followed in
local newsrooms across the country. The Daily News
staff has been fighting for a fair contract for three
years, fighting for straightforward terms that would
allow them to continue doing their jobs with dignity,
fair wage floors and guaranteed annual cost of living
raises in one of the most expensive cities in the
world, job protection and fair benefits for part-time
workers, job security provisions to protect their
work from being subcontracted permanently,
maintaining standard benefits like time off, sick
time, parental leave, and 401K match. We are seeing
the concerning trend regarding the treatment of
journalists. Local newsrooms are under attack,
profit is prioritized over coverage, and reporters
and outlets have been barred from covering press
conferences. At the same time and not unrelatedly,
we're seeing a rise in authoritarianism and attempts

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to roll back basic democratic rights. Now is the time to increase our investment in local journalism, ensuring institutions are held accountable, and that independent sources are delivering the news. We cannot allow a hedge fund who is not invested in the future of our city to compromise the quality of the Daily News' 106-year-old newsroom. Council Member Carmen De La Rosa's resolution sends a clear and strong message to Alden Global Capital, the cuts they've made to the Daily News, their hostility towards unionized journalist and their refusal to reach a fair contract are unacceptable. We urge you to stand with New York's hometown paper and pass this resolution. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: I want to thank the panel for being here. To the Daily News union, to all of the journalists that have told us their stories repeatedly, the News Guild, CWA, thank you all for organizing. You know, it's really sad that we have to be here tacking this Reso onto this worker safety hearing, but I want to make the connection there. When corporate greed looks to decimate workplaces, it impacts all workers across the board.

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In a moment where our democracy is under attack, the free press that is thriving is vital, is the forefront of that fight. And when I hear your testimonies about the things you're asking for in these contracts, wages to afford to live in this city, health care for part-time workers, dignity and respect for people who have kept our hometown paper going is not only sad, it is embarrassing that we've allowed companies like Alden Capital to continue to do business in our city with no remorse and with no consequence. I do want to ask two questions of the panel. And again, I thank you for your time. But I want to know from your perspective-- and anyone on the panel can answer. How does the reduction of Daily News staff affect coverage of worker safety and other labor issues across our city?

SUSAN DECARAVA: Well, I think-- thank you, Council Member De La Rosa. I think the impact is pretty profound, actually. Journalists speak truth to power. They ask necessary questions. They shine light in places where often times someone doesn't want light to be shown. And that is a fundamental public service. That is part of the core of what makes journalists so central to the functioning of

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our democracy. They also tell worker's stories.

Journalist are themselves workers, lest we not forget. And when we talk about, you know, some of the health and safety issues that this committee was interrogating earlier, whether we're talking about fire codes, fire safety codes, or the impact of the environmental crisis on the health of people that work outside. When we're talking about-- I think about actually not that long ago I was speaking at the anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire, and the fact that journalists are called the first draft of history for a reason-- we know these stories and the reforms that came out of these tragedies because of the work that people like our Daily News members who are fighting tooth and nail to be able to do that work unrestrained-- because of that, we know about these things and we're able to make a difference. They are able to make a difference in the lives of everyday New Yorkers. There is no dedicated labor reporter at the Daily News. There is no dedicated health and safety reporter at the Daily News. And the fact is, is that when we don't pay attention to these issues, what ends up happening is Alden Global Capital ends up determining what it is New Yorkers

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know about their own city, about their own safety,
about what they're entitled to, about what they
should be asking for. And so you end up having this
amorphous entity that is basically a billionaire
slush fund determining what you know, what vital
information you are or are not getting. And they
don't do it obviously. It's not because they're
turning to a reporter and saying you can't report on
this. They do it by defunding the newsroom. They do
it by withholding the possibility of having a real
career, of being able to sustain a family so that
people leave the profession, they leave the newsroom,
they don't come back, and we lose that insight. We
lose those voices, and we lose those people asking
the very necessary questions as to why something
happened. And I would further add that without
having that kind of investment and constant
reinvestment in the Daily News in particular as New
York's hometown paper, but also in local news in
general, it means that we don't even have the
opportunity perhaps to prevent the tragedies from
happening in the first place, because there aren't
enough reporters to cover the stories and ask the
questions before we get to a crisis point, and that

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is a profound impact on all of us. You don't know what you can't-- if you don't know what to ask for, then we're in trouble.

EVAN SIMKO-BEDNARSKI: Chair, if I may?

CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Yeah.

EVAN SIMKO-BEDNARSKI: The reporting on a single incident is relatively easy, but reporting on the trends, reporting on the failures that lead to a specific incident, reporting on the culture of workers safety or lack thereof in any of our beats takes time. It takes time to talk to source. It takes time to parse rumor from fact, and that is time that we don't have if we need to end our day early because we can't afford childcare. It's time that we don't have if we can't meet in a newsroom to collaborate amongst ourselves. The work that we do for-- the work that is representative of the best of the Daily News requires a level of consistency and a level of collaboration that is difficult to do while making not enough to live in the City.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. I just want to join in all of Council Member De La Rosa's, you know, sentiments and statements shared. You know, I'm completely in agreement and view the media

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as the fourth branch of government in many ways,
right. You are able to sometimes show up even in the
face of these cuts. The Daily News and our local
outlets throughout the city are able to show up and
highlight issues sometimes before we hear about what
is going on, and that is a partnership that allows us
to work with our council, to work with our colleagues
to identify legislation that can protect New Yorkers.
so just joining myself to those statements. We have
a question from Council Member Cabán, and I'll
quickly ask this question in connection to some of
your testimony. You said that what we're seeing
Alden Global Capital do here in the City of New York
with the Daily News is a part of their playbook. So,
I'm wondering if you could share examples of
newsrooms in other parts of the country that have
faced these sort of attacks I will call them and how
they were able to fight back or not fight back in
other parts of the country.

SUSAN DECARAVA: I can answer that
question, Council Member Cabán, very generally and
broadly speaking.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Sorry, that's my
question. She will have another.

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3 SUSAN DECARAVA: Oh, that was your
4 question. Oh, I'm sorry.

5 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: She will have a
6 better question, I promise.

7 SUSAN DECARAVA: Okay. I can answer that
8 question broadly. As you understand, I'm sure, we
9 have been very singularly focused on the Daily News
10 fight which we've been in for three years, but we do
11 know that in other papers across the country if you
12 think about Chicago or recently their aborted attempt
13 in Dallas and in other local tribune-owned papers,
14 they have essentially followed this playbook, right?
15 They sold off the real estate. So, a lot of times
16 the newsroom doesn't exist anymore, and then the cost
17 of maintaining a home office and all that implies, as
18 Michael and Evan talked about, is shifted onto
19 reporters. They have consistently suppressed wages.
20 We are, as I mentioned in my testimony, fighting to
21 raise the minimum wage, the floor of which people
22 are paid at the Daily News, and that is higher than
23 anywhere else in the country at any other newspaper
24 that Tribune owns. We have been fighting to maintain
25 retirement benefits, so 401K benefits which they
cancelled at other papers. Or they grandfathered in

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for a specific period of time, and then they retire so that new hires will not have the same 401K retirement benefits that existing employees do. They have consistently left positions unfilled. This is one of their biggest tactics in terms of reducing the size. So, they can't say that they've laid off anybody or intentionally targeted anybody. They just made the working environment so untenable that when people leave and then they don't fill the positions, the amount of work that's required gets spread among a smaller and smaller number of journalistic staff. Part of what we are fighting against here in Daily News is trying to go against that trend and that tide which they have established at all the other Tribune [sic] newspapers across the country. And it is-- I mean, we've been at it for three years. Many of our counterpoints-- counterparts have similarly fought really long and hard, sometimes longer than three years, frankly, for first contracts. It's really disheartening to see, and I think the one thing that has helped-- A-- is our members' commitment to each other and to the work that they do in spite of the long time it takes to get to a contract. The solidarity and the understanding-- I mean, our

members are so deeply invested. You heard it in the testimony today. No one becomes a journalist because they're going to become rich. They become a journalist because they want to tell the stories and ask the questions, because they feel that there's something important that must be conveyed, and they're deeply mission-driven, often times more mission driven than the entities that they work for, and that is the thing that sustains them, and it fuels their solidarity and their commitment to supporting each other and helping each other kind of raise the levels however we can through collective bargaining.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. I'd like to acknowledge that we're joined by Council Member Bottcher and turn it over to Council Member Cabán.

COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Thank you. I have so many thoughts here, and I want to share some of them before I get to my question. But you know, there's this one piece of the fact that you all are workers and every single worker deserves a living wage, a dignified workplace, no matter what the work is. And then we put the work that you all do in the context of this moment, of this political moment, the

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state of our government not just local but global politics. I think about, you know, other newspapers that kind of were in some ways our hometown newspapers also deciding to focus on national news and giving up that local coverage and lens. I think about from somebody who, you know, is a nerd and admires the work of historians and how critical it is, that they are able to come back and look at archives that are hyper, hyper local to understand who we are, where we are, where we're going, how do we make the changes we want to see in the future and how critical your work is to that. And then finally, I just want to say like, thank goodness you guys are fighting. Thank goodness you are persevering, because we often talk about right now local government being the front lines, but local news, local journalists are absolutely the front lines in the face of fascism in the face of a democracy that's in danger. So, thank you for continuing your fight. I don't even think I can articulate how important it is that you all are supported to do the very, very critical work that you do. But here's my question to you. How can the public and electeds support Daily News workers who are fighting for their livelihood,

who are fighting to save the paper, and who, you know, like even bigger than that, like fighting to be a part of protecting our democracy?

MICHAEL SHERIDAN: I think for the most part that what people need to be aware of, and it's kind of a hard message to get out is that local journalism matters. I think, you know, there's-- journalists are not the most popular people on the planet. Maybe up somewhere around politicians, but maybe somewhere around there. But I feel like people mix up mainstream commentators on cable news networks with journalists--

COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Pundits versus journalists. Yeah.

MICHAEL SHERIDAN: Right. Who are the people that are covering local governments, that are covering incidents that happen in the cities, in your local towns, and they mix all that stuff up, and then everybody kind of gets jumbled into that one bunch, and I think it's important to kind of keep in mind that local journalism matters more than anything else when it comes to news and information. I mean, national news wouldn't even exist without local news coverage, and I think it's just really important to

1 kind of define those differences and to support local
2 journalism as much as possible. If that means just,
3 you know, buying a newspaper from time to time, then
4 do that. You know, subscribe to your local
5 newspapers. And that's how you-- that's the best way
6 to show support for local journalism, because it
7 matters. And I think, you know, for the most part,
8 the people who are covering in local journalism are--
9 you know, they're residents and they're neighbors
10 just like you, and I think that's what the most
11 important thing is and the most-- best way that
12 people can help support them is just by simple
13 ingesting that information and not confusing them
14 with, you know, commentators.

16 EVAN SIMKO-BEDNARSKI: Council Member, I
17 spend several years of my career working at a
18 national cable news outlet, and the first thing, the
19 first task at every 6:00 a.m. shift was to read all
20 of the local papers for the region. When those go
21 away, there's nothing. There's no news that trickles
22 up. Even the largest cable news outlets, they only
23 have a handful of teams to send all over the country.
24 We know things in this country because there are
25

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local newspapers that find them out, and without that
our information space gets much worse.

SUSAN DECARAVA: I would just like to add
that we have seen over the past five years an
incredible wave of unionization in newsrooms across
the country and it has been precisely to push back
against what we see as the decimation of local news,
where reporters are realizing that the only way to
maintain the standards and the ethics of what they do
is to come together and to fight for it, and to make
the public aware that this is what they're fighting
for. When the public is angry at media, it's not the
people doing the work itself that should carry the
brunt of that criticism. It's the bosses and the
companies that are deciding how those newsrooms get
funded which directly impacts what kind of news
people are actually receiving.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. Thank
you so much. I think we have one more question, a
round of questions from Council Member Restler, and
we'll call up our next panel.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you so
much, Chair Sanchez and Chair De La Rosa, and credit
again to Chair De La Rosa for this important

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resolution, and thank you to Logan and Susan and the
CWA team for your great leadership. I just would love
if you could you help me-- my recollection was like
back when the Tribune company owned the Daily News.
They cut the newsroom in half by about 50 percent
about a decade ago, and since Alden has taken over
we've seen significant further cuts. Could you just
help me, walk through what have been the cuts in the
newsroom staffing since Alden has come in?

MICHAEL SHERIDAN: Well, yeah. When
Tribune took over in 2018, they decimated the
newsroom. Alden came in a few years after that. They
were slowly kind of buying their way into Tribune and
there was a battle for a while, as I understand it,
and they eventually took over the Daily News along
with several other newspapers. Since then, it's
really just been a case of a slow progressive
measures of letting the staff get smaller and smaller
on its own by just simply making it a more difficult
place to work at.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Yeah.

MICHAEL SHERIDAN: The people that leave
for better opportunities, because they're all
extremely talented people, they don't get replaced.

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There are positions that are just left unfilled.

This goes not just on the reporter end, but on the editor side. I mean, the number of editors that we have has dwindled to just a handful which in a city like this and where we're in the midst of having to deal with breaking news coverage, it is virtually impossible to get things out in a timely fashion like we used to. You know, I used to run the national desk on the website in the mornings, and we used to be dealing with a lot of breaking news, mostly crime stories and things like that where it's like you had to move at lightening speed and get stories out there. You got to get them on the site, get them out on socials, got to get them out as quickly as possible, and that came with a lot of people working together and making this happen quickly and efficiently, and that becomes more and more difficult when you have fewer and fewer people dealing with multiple things at any given time. That's been probably the largest effect that their apathetic treatment to the newspaper has been. Because you know, the interest of Alden has never, as far as I've seen, been about investing in and building journalistic institutions like the Daily News and

1 making them better. They're only interested in
2 siphoning whatever money they can get off of it,
3 regardless of what happens to the newspapers that
4 they own. And that's been my experience for the last
5 four years under Alden of just watching it dwindle
6 slowly through their inaction.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Yeah. I mean,
9 I'd like to just remind people that the districts
10 that each of us represent are each significantly
11 larger than New Haven, right? So, think about that,
12 51 Council Districts that are each quite a bit larger
13 than the City of New Haven and yet the media
14 landscape as a whole is just shrinking and shrinking
15 and shrinking, and there's less attention, less
16 eyeballs, less oversight, less effort to hold the
17 powers that be accountable. And the Daily News has
18 been, you know, the-- just a critical paper of record
19 that provides necessary information to all of us each
20 and every day. You know, I remember when there was a
21 Brooklyn office, and there were designated Brooklyn
22 reporters, and there was reporters covering the
23 courthouses in every day. There were reporters who
24 were paying attention to local issues across our
25 neighborhoods and districts. And as we've seen the

1 paper just shrink and shrink and shrink, there just
2 isn't bandwidth to do it anymore, and you all do the
3 work. I mean, the journalists at the Daily News do an
4 impressive job covering education, covering
5 transportation like Evan, covering our criminal
6 justice system like Graham, and many other-- covering
7 City Hall right here, but New Yorkers deserve more
8 robust coverage. They deserve-- and the workers
9 deserve decent wages, decent benefits. We can see
10 what Alden is doing and these efforts to shrink the
11 paper really undermine integrity in New York City
12 government and undermine our ability to hold the rich
13 and powerful and influential in New York accountable.
14 And we need you out there, and we have your back
15 1,000 percent of the way to get the contract that you
16 deserve. Anything that I can do to help, my
17 colleagues can do to help, we're fully here for it.

18
19 MICHAEL SHERIDAN: And I just want to
20 note that there-- in addition to just letting people
21 go and not replacing them, and there have been
22 buyouts, and they ended our internship programs.
23 They've found other ways of sort of cutting the staff
24 and ultimately putting more of a burden on the
25 individual people who still remain.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Well, look, we need a strong Daily News. We understand that the paper is kind of a shadow of what it was, but there's still many, many great people doing essential work every day and you deserve our support, and I hope that in the not distant future we'll be talking about, you know, improved worker retention and growing the paper, because what you all do is really valued.

MICHAEL SHERIDAN: It's always important to me-- like, I agree to the sentiment that the Daily News is a shadow of what it used to be, but I just always want to counter that with the idea that there is nothing that is diminished in the dedication of the people, the men and women, the photographers and the journalists who work there in terms of their compassion and their dedication to doing their jobs.

EVAN SIMKO-BEDNARSKI: I do want to jump in very quickly, Council Member, and just say in terms of, you know, while it has been an attrition, that attrition has had real effects. We don't have a metro editor. We don't have a politics editor. We don't have an Albany reporter. We are down to two very talented-- two court reporters in Brooklyn and

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in Manhattan. There are-- just because it's not one massive, you know, cleaver across the newsroom doesn't mean that there haven't been tangible cuts. You know, no enterprise editor which speaks to the larger how do you cover safety? How do you cover trends? How do you make sense of what happens in a town of more than 8 million people when you can't zoom out and have people who's job it is to guide that. So, there have been some very, you know, tangible if not cuts, absences.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Well said.

Thank you, Evan.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. I want to thank this panel, and we're going to call the next panel.

SUSAN DECARAVA: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Brendan Griffith from the Central Labor Council. And I'd like to acknowledge that we've been joined by Council Member Hudson.

BRENDAN GRIFFITH: Good morning, Council Members. Much better. Couple more minutes of morning. My name is Brendan Griffith, and I'm the President of the New York City Central Labor Council,

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AFLCIO. The New York City Central Labor Council, representing more than 300 affiliated unions and over one million working people across all five boroughs supports Resolution 1015-2025, condemning Alden Capital-- Alden Global Capital cuts and managerial hostility towards unionized Daily News staff and calling on the hedge fund to reach a contract deal with the newspaper's union. Given the assaults on free speech, democracy, and truth, now is a critical moment for newspapers to invest in their workers and staff. The unionized journalists at the Daily News have been fighting for three years to secure fair workplace standards in the face of Alden's refusal to bargain in good faith. Alden Global Capital earned its reputation as the destroyer of newspapers by slashing staff and hollowing out newsrooms across the country from Chicago to Oakland to Baltimore. New York has not been spared either. Since acquiring the Daily News in 2021, Alden has sold off its printing plant and offices for \$90 million, gutted its newsroom and left just 65 journalists to cover a city of 8.5 million people. The Daily News and its journalists serve an essential function in our city. For more than a century they have chronicled the

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hearings, elections and everyday struggles that shape our communities. Their reporting has won Pulitzer prizes and held power to account while also ensuring that no story big or small goes untold, and when these newsroom jobs are undermined, it's not only workers who suffer. It's the entire city that will lose. The unionized staff at the Daily News are seeking standards that will safeguard the future of local journalism. Fair wage floors and cost of living adjustments, equitable treatment for part-time employees, protections against subcontracting, and preservation of their benefits, these are basic common sense measures to ensure the stability of the newsroom and the ability of journalists to serve the public. The New York City Central Labor Council AFLCIO urges the Council to pass Resolution 1015. This resolution will send a clear message that New York City will not tolerate predatory corporate practices that strip workers of their dignity and communities of their voice. Labor is proud to stand in solidarity with the journalists of the Daily News, and we call on Alden Global Capital to reach a fair contract without delay. Thank you.

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3 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you so
4 much for being here and for your continued solidarity
5 and partnership in getting this to the finish line.

6 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. I would
7 like to call the next panel consisting of Clifton
8 Smith, Christopher Leon Johnson, Tabitha Ward, and--
9 I know it's not Alice, but I'm going to say it
10 anyway, Alice Nacimiento [sp?]. Whoever's ready can
11 begin when ready.

12 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Yeah, hello. My
13 name is Christopher Leon Johnson. I know I have two
14 minutes, but I want to give my first shout out to the
15 Daily News union. I support that resolution. Free
16 Chris Summerfelt [sp?]. I'm calling on the City
17 Council with the help-- free Chris Summerfelt. I
18 want to call for the City Council to make a bill to
19 ban Kayla Mal Mackaltis [sp?] from serving the next
20 administration. It does not matter if it's the Cuomo
21 administration, or Mamdani administration. Kayla Mal
22 Mackaltis should be barred from serving in the next
23 mayor administration because she's a cancer to room
24 nine. She's a cancer to New York City. I want to
25 make clear that I support the bill, Intro 1384. I
believe that 1384 should be passed. I support this.

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1 follow-up from Friday's hearing with Linda Lee, we
2 need more of this training inside not only the OSHA
3 trainings, we need this inside the SST trainings,
4 too. This is a big problem in the City of New York.
5 Another thing I'm going to show my support is to
6 Intro 1376. I support that. Problem is the real
7 estate developers, and these companies support Intro
8 1180 in the New York City Council. I'm showing
9 support for-- and I think-- yeah, and so basically--
10 oh, yeah, Intro 376, the deliveristas should get paid
11 more money on days off-- I mean, on hot days.
12 Anytime over 80 degrees, they should get paid a
13 higher wage. But going back to Resolution 1015, like
14 I said, the City Council with the help of these
15 unions should make a bill to make it where that
16 people from like Kayla Mackaltis should be barred
17 from serving the Mayor's administration. So, like I
18 said, this City Council needs to find a way to make
19 sure that lady does not serve in the next
20 administration because she's going to really-- it
21 doesn't matter who becomes the mayor. Like, Cuomo or
22 Mamdani, but if she still says as a press secretary
23 or as the Deputy Press-- or the press mayor
24 communications, she's going to make it way worse than
25

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Adams. So, it's going to be a continuation of Adams.

3 So, I hope the City Council find a way to really call
4 her out for what she did as the press secretary
5 making this whole city look like a problem. So, like
6 I said, I support these bills. Shout out to the
7 Daily News union. Free Chris Summerfelt. And for
8 the thing I said deliveristas-- shout out to the
9 deliveristas, but they need more protections in these
10 bills, too. So, I got-- I know I-- thank you. Thank
11 you.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you. Thank you.
13 I'd like to acknowledge that Council Member Feliz is
14 on Zoom.

15 CLIFTON SMITH: Good afternoon. I'm
16 Clifton Smith, and I'm an organizer with the Food and
17 Water Watch. So, I want to thank for the Food and
18 Water Watch to be here. This is the reason why I
19 testified because of the Local 97 is-- don't-- is
20 don't have time. We need to pass Local 97-- to
21 demand Local 97 to pass and for 1180, because of the
22 [inaudible] is this-- because everything is that we--
23 we are planning to reduce the 80 percent, reduce it
24 in the citywide by 2050 with a nearly 70 percent
25 carbon emission can be attached back to the fossil

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fuel used to the heat, cool, power, and that is building. Local 97 addresses this issue by setting carbon emission limits before the city [inaudible]. With the first [inaudible] building for Local 97 already extended, and still have-- we still have time to building and reversing [sic] and reporting. We have to prepare for the DOB. Not sure if it's-- what the next step is going to be. Our team is here to guide through the passage [inaudible] to ensure your building stay on track. So we have to please-- so, which means that we got about 25 years from now, okay? Thank you guys for having me, and thank you for having me once again.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you.

TABITHA WARD: Yes, my name is Tabitha Ward, and I would like to ask the support from the Council for the housing vouchers that New York City, New York State and even the United States of America, that they are directly deposited to the housing voucher recipients. That would include CityFHEPS, Section 8, Section 9, and any other housing program. Currently, they're being paid directly either through a check or through direct deposit to the landlords. By allowing the housing vouchers to be directly

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deposited or directly given to the housing recipients, they can go-- they can be directly deposited either on their benefit cards or through their-- to their direct deposit-- directly deposited into their checking accounts. This would allow the recipients to have a say and control in where they live, how they live, and it will eliminate slumlords. As it stands today, the landlords have no reason or no incentive to make repairs or to ensure that the person is living in a safe and healthy environment, but by allowing the housing voucher recipients to directly receive their housing-- the full award amount-- by allowing them to receive the full award amount, they will be able to control where they live. They can choose where they-- you know, where they can live within their payment arranges, and if they choose to live in some-- in a place that is more than their-- more than what they are receiving, they'll have to pay that directly themselves. And I could, even though I don't have-- we don't have enough time, I would like to share a story about my experience. I'm a recipient of the CityFHEPS housing voucher. I live in a payment-- a low-income housing, not NYCHA, but a low-income housing, and city-- my landlord he

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1 refused to-- he did not provide the adequate
2 information to the City Marshals Office and they put
3 a lock on my door. And I went down to CityFHEPS and
4 I showed proof that I was-- that my payments were
5 being made, and the judge had them remove the locks
6 from the doors.
7

8 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. I
9 believe you are not in the right hearing. This
10 hearing is about the impacts of climate change on
11 labor. There's a hearing at 1:00 p.m. about housing
12 vouchers, so I'm not sure if you want to sign up for
13 that one.

14 TABITHA WARD: Absolutely.

15 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: But thank you for
16 your testimony. It's on the record either way, and
17 thank you to this panel.

18 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Thank you.

19 TABITHA WARD: Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Okay. We will now
21 turn to remote testimony. Once your name is called,
22 a member of our staff will unmute you and the
23 Sergeant at Arms will give you the go-ahead to begin.
24 Please wait for the Sergeant to announce that you may
25

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begin before delivering your testimony. Next is Alia
Soomro.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

ALIA SOOMRO: Good afternoon. My name is
Alia Soomro and I'm the Deputy Director for New York
City Policy at the New York League of Conservation
Voters. Thank you, Chair Sanchez, De La Rosa, and
Committee Members for the opportunity to testify. I
have submitted longer written comments. As the
climate crisis continues to wreak havoc on our
residents and environment, and given the Trump
administration's hostility to any environmental,
public health, and worker safety policies, NYLCV
urges New York City and New York State to take
leadership to develop labor standards, mitigation
measures, and public education and campaigns in light
of the climate and public health emergencies such as
extreme heat events and air quality emergencies.
When it comes to our city's workforce, about a third
of New York City's workforce work outdoors for
prolonged periods of time. These figures are
conservative, underestimates given many outdoor
workers such as street vendors, app-based workers,
and day laborers are self-employed and not captured

by official data sources. On top of this, the climate crisis is colliding with the City's affordability crisis, and it highlights the need for worker protection since outdoor and/or low-income workers have to risk their health and sometimes their lives in order not to miss a paycheck. NYLCV supports Intro 1376 requiring DOHMH to post on the Department's website information on best practices for protecting workers from extreme weather. We recommend adding that the legislation take into account best practices for protecting outdoor workers during extreme rainfall and flooding as well. NYLCV also calls for more comprehensive solutions tailored to different weather-related emergencies and different types of workers. This includes mandatory rest and water breaks, access to bathrooms, drinking water, shade, cooling, face masks, as well as heat illness prevention and emergency response plans. We're aligned with the Comptroller's report recommendations on public health initiatives as well. On the flipside, the climate crisis also presents an opportunity for a [inaudible] transition [sic] and increasing well-paying green jobs in the public and private sector.

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

5 ALIA SOOMRO: [inaudible] I'm just going
6 to wrap up. Green job opportunities--

7 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you, Alia.
8 We have to move to the next panelist who is Kate
9 Leitch.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

11 KATE LEITCH: Good afternoon, Chair
12 Sanchez, De La Rosa, and members of the committee.
13 My name is Kate Leitch and I'm a Senior Policy
14 Analyst at the Citizens Housing and Planning Council.
15 We're an 88-year-old policy and research
16 organization. I'm pleased to testify today in strong
17 support of Intro 1404 which clarifies the
18 Administrative Code regarding cellar occupancy. This
19 is an important and timely clarification. By
20 explicitly aligning the Administrative Code with the
21 reforms that were enacted at the end of the 2024,
22 which include zoning for housing opportunity, Local
23 Law 126, and Local Law 127, the Council ensures that
24 those changes can work as intended. Together, these
25 reforms create a more promising path to bring
basement and cellar apartments into safe and legal

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1 use. Intro 1404 closes a lingering gap that could
2 otherwise undermine that progress. And we applaud
3 the Council for sustaining its commitment to this
4 issue. By-- unfortunately, clarifying this law is
5 only the first step. The City must now follow
6 through with implementation of the state authorized
7 conversion program by issuing rules that govern
8 financing and tenant protections, establishing an
9 implementation committee across agencies and
10 stakeholders, partnering with trusted community-based
11 organizations, and setting clear benchmarks so that
12 the Council and the public can hold government
13 accountable. New Yorkers are living in these units
14 today outside of government oversight. Each day of
15 delay risks their lives, perpetuates instability and
16 narrows the window for low and moderate income
17 homeowners to participate in the pilot. Thank you
18 for your time and your leadership on this issue.

19
20 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you so much
21 for your testimony. If we have inadvertently missed
22 anyone that has registered to testify today and has
23 yet to be called, please use the Zoom raise hand
24 function if you are testifying remotely, and you will
25 be called in the order that your hand has been

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raised. If you are testifying in person, please
visit the Sergeant at Arms. Seeing none, we will now
close the hearing. Thank you to the members of the
administration and the members of the public who have
joined us today. This hearing is adjourned.

[gavel]

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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 October 19, 2025