

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS, STATE &
FEDERAL LEGISLATION 1
CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL
OPERATIONS, STATE &
FEDERAL LEGISLATION

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Thursday, September 19, 2024

Start: 10:16 AM

Recess: 1:10 PM

HELD AT: Committee Room - City Hall

B E F O R E: Hon. Lincoln Restler, Chair

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Gale A. Brewer
David M. Carr
James F. Gennaro
Jennifer Gutiérrez
Shahana K. Hanif
Vickie Paladino
Lynn C. Schulman
Inna Vernikov

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING:

Nurse, Joseph, and Hudson

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS, STATE &
FEDERAL LEGISLATION

A P P E A R A N C E S

Ya-Ting Liu,
Chief Public Realm Officer for the City of New
York

Joe Morrisroe, Deputy Commissioner of NYC311,
Office of Technology & Innovation

Pauline Toole,
Commissioner at New York City Department of
Records (DORIS)

Laura Ringelheim,
Executive Deputy Commissioner of Internal
Operations at the Department of Citywide
Administrative Services

Matthew Drury,
Chief of Citywide Legislative Affairs, New York
City Dept of Parks and Recreation

Daniel Alam,
Senior Policy Analyst from the Office of the
Manhattan Borough President

Alison Wilkey,
Director of Government Affairs and Strategic
Campaigns at Coalition for the Homeless; Legal
Aid Society; Free to Pee Campaign

Theodora Siegel,
Got2GoNYC

Jon Caceres,
Founder & CTO of PeePass

Clifton Smith,
New York City Resident, Testimony Regarding
Public Bathroom Access

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS, STATE &
FEDERAL LEGISLATION

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

Marni Sommer, DrPH, MSN, RN
Professor of Sociomedical Sciences at Columbia
University

Andrew Maroko, PhD
Associate Professor at Icahn School of Medicine
at Mount Sinai

Will Woods,
Organizing Intern for Open Hearts Initiative

Paul Krikler,
Roosevelt Island Resident; Resolution 132 for
Roosevelt Island Governance

Margie Smith,
Roosevelt Island Resident; Former Board Director
of Roosevelt Island Operating Corp (RIOC)

Joyce Short,
Roosevelt Island Resident; Resolution 132 for
Roosevelt Island Governance

Penina Gold,
Roosevelt Island Resident; Resolution 132 for
Roosevelt Island Governance

Christopher Leon Johnson,
Member of the Public

Amanda Brown,
Resolution 132 for Roosevelt Island Governance

Cathy Kross,
Resolution 132 for Roosevelt Island Governance

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS, STATE &
FEDERAL LEGISLATION

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

James Starace, Resolution 132 for Roosevelt
Island Governance

Mbacke Thiam, Housing, Health & CAN Community
Organizer from Center for Independence of the
Disabled New York (CIDNY)

1 COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS, STATE &
2 FEDERAL LEGISLATION 5

3 SERGEANT MESITI: This is a microphone check for
4 the Committee on Governmental Operations, State &
5 Federal Legislation. Today's date is September 19,
6 2024; located in the City Hall Committee Room.
7 Recording is done by Rocco Mesiti.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning, and welcome to
9 the today's New York City Council Hearing on
10 Governmental Operations, at this time, we ask that
11 you silence all electronic devices, and at no time is
12 anyone to approach the dais.

13 If you would like to sign up for in-person
14 testimony or have any other questions during the
15 hearing, please see one of the Sergeant at Arms.

16 Chair, we are ready to begin.

17 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: (GAVEL SOUND) (GAVELING IN)

18 Thank you so much to the Sergeant at Arms, and
19 it's good to see you all. Good morning.

20 My name is Lincoln Restler, I have the great
21 privilege of being the Chair of the Committee of
22 Governmental Operations, State, and Federal
23 Legislation. It's a very long name.

24 I would like to welcome my colleague, not
25 colleagues, colleague David Carr, the great council
member from Brooklyn, and a little bit of Staten

1
2 Island, for joining us today, and we have an all-star
3 panel of Administration officials. So really
4 appreciate you being here as well.

5 At today's hearing, our committee will be hearing
6 several bills relating to increasing government
7 efficiency and improving public access to and
8 utilization of City facilities.

9 We will also be hearing preconsidered legislation
10 that I'm introducing to repeal the Mayor's Elected
11 Official Agency Engagement Request Form and clarify
12 that the City Charter fully empowers agencies to
13 advise and assist elected officials without any prior
14 approvals.

15 Under the Mayor's newly implemented system, City
16 Council members are being forced to fill out a form
17 just to do our jobs.

18 In order for elected officials to work with city
19 agencies to solve neighborhood problems and address
20 critical and emergent health and safety concerns, we
21 must fill out forms so that the Mayor's political
22 operation can decide who they want to assist and why.

23 As leaders elected by and representing the people
24 of New York City, our most important responsibility
25 is effectively serving our constituents.

1
2 Since the Mayor implemented this form in April,
3 that work has become needlessly difficult and far
4 more bureaucratic.

5 My colleagues and I have received unclear and
6 inconsistent responses from city agencies, police
7 precincts, even City Hall staff, as all of us are
8 simply trying to ensure that our neighborhoods are
9 safe and clean. We have been collectively hamstrung
10 by a policy that undermines collaboration and
11 coordination.

12 I hope that this legislation, which already has
13 the support of a veto proof, super majority of
14 council members -I'll just say that again - It has
15 not been formally introduced, yet it already has a
16 veto proof, super majority of council members - I
17 believe that's the first time in Council history -
18 will allow us to focus on constituents and navigate
19 our city government in the way that it was intended.

20 By repealing this bill, we can work together to
21 achieve solutions and improve conditions in our
22 community.

23 We're also going be hearing 11 other
24 Introductions and a Resolution. These bills address
25 how the City is utilizing our public facilities and

1
2 how we are ensuring New Yorkers can easily and
3 equitably access government resources and navigate
4 city bureaucracy.

5 Two bills will help address the dire lack of
6 public bathrooms in New York City:

7 Intro 267, sponsored by Council Member Rita
8 Joseph, will require the City to make rooms and city
9 government buildings available for public use.

10 Intro 694, sponsored by Council Member Sandy
11 Nurse, who has just joined us, will require the City
12 to develop a long term citywide bathroom strategy.

13 Bathroom access is critically important as an
14 accessibility issue, a disability justice issue, and
15 a quality of life issue for every single New Yorker.

16 My office recently received complaints regarding
17 outdoor bathroom use on the streets and sidewalks of
18 downtown Brooklyn, and I have too often seen it
19 myself. So, we created a new map of free public
20 restrooms in the area and put it up on LinkNYC kiosks
21 and distribute it to community stakeholders. But, we
22 need more bathrooms, especially more accessible
23 bathrooms, and these bills will help set us on a path
24 to achieving safe, clean, public bathroom access for
25 all.

We will also be hearing three bills relating to
city buildings:

Intro 162, sponsored by Council Member Eric
Dinowitz, who has joined us as well, will require the
City to provide bicycle storage in city owned
buildings for City employees.

Intro 563, sponsored by Council Member Gale
Brewer, who is notably late, she likes to give me a
hard time, so I like to give it back, will require
that water bottle filling stations and City buildings
be accessible for use by the public.

Intro, 191, sponsored by Council Member
Gutiérrez, who will be joining us shortly, will
require DCAS (Department of Citywide Administrative
Services) to provide tenants of City leased property
with two years notice before expiration of their
lease.

We will be hearing three bills to improve 311
operations:

Intro 587, again, sponsored by Council Member
Dinowitz, will require 311 to conduct customer
satisfaction surveys after agencies have closed
cases.

1 Intro 7744, again, Council Member Dinowitz, will
2 prohibit agencies from automatically closing
3 duplicate 311 requests.
4

5 Intro 523, sponsored by Council Member Brannan,
6 will require 311 to develop a protocol for handling
7 nonemergency calls about properties that are being
8 harassed.

9 Finally, we'll be hearing four other bills about
10 improving government efficiency and efficacy:

11 Intro 246, sponsored by Council Member Crystal
12 Hudson, will require city agencies to provide an X
13 option for gender on certain forms.

14 Intro 478, sponsored by Council Member Julie Won,
15 will require that city agencies translate and
16 distribute federal and state documents relating to
17 emergencies affecting New York City.

18 And Intro of 564, sponsored by Council Member
19 Brewer, will require the Department of Records to
20 create a public archive of all official social media
21 accounts and require agencies and elected officials
22 to provide account information to DORIS (The New York
23 City Department of Records and Information Services)

24 And Resolution 132, sponsored by Council Member
25 Menin, calling on the New York State Legislature and

1
2 Governor to amend the New York State Public
3 Authorities Law by granting residents of Roosevelt
4 Island the power to vote for members of the board of
5 the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC).

6 We look forward to discussing all of these
7 bills, and I'd like to thank our committee staff
8 Jayasri Ganapathy, Senior Legislative Counsel, and
9 Erica Cohen, Legislative Policy Analyst, who do a
10 great job for their work preparing for this hearing.

11 I'd like to thank my Communications Director,
12 Nieve Mooney, who's a star, and I'd especially like
13 to just take a moment to thank my Chief Of Staff,
14 Molly Haley, who does an absolutely extraordinary job
15 is the brain power behind our office, so, thank you,
16 Molly.

17 I think we have a couple members who are going
18 offer some brief introductory opening remarks.

19 We can start with Council Member Nurse followed
20 by Council Member Joseph. And if Council Member
21 Dinowitz is so inspired, he can go after that.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Thank you, Chair Restler,
23 I'll try to be brief.

1
2 Thank you for convening this hearing and hearing
3 a ton of bills. (LAUGHTER) I have one next Friday,
4 too.

5 Public bathrooms are a fundamental part of any
6 modern city's infrastructure. And when properly
7 planned, they ensure that everyone has the right to
8 fully participate in public life. Without sufficient
9 access to public restrooms, we exclude entire groups
10 of people from our shared spaces. In fact, New York
11 City has not meaningfully increased its number of
12 public bathrooms since the 1970s, and this ongoing
13 policy failure disproportionately affects our most
14 vulnerable populations: Seniors, people with
15 disabilities, pregnant individuals, families, our
16 unhoused neighbors, people who are menstruating, and
17 our workers such as delivery workers, street vendors,
18 and taxi drivers. This is not just about convenience,
19 it is about human dignity, public health, and
20 inclusion.

21 With just about 1,100 public restrooms across the
22 five boroughs, roughly one restroom for every 7,500
23 residents, give or take, New York City ranks 93rd out
24 of the 100 largest U.S. cities in public bathroom
25 availability.

1
2 My bill, Intro 0694, aims to change that by
3 creating a citywide network of public toilets and
4 establishing a dynamic goal of one toilet per every
5 2,000 residents by 2035.

6 This would nearly quadruple the number of public
7 restrooms and position New York City as a national
8 and global leader in public bathroom access.

9 By incorporating public restrooms into our city's
10 long term planning processes, we ensure that as New
11 York grows access to public base grows with it.

12 I do acknowledge the steps this Administration is
13 taking to improve bathroom access, like piloting
14 prefabricated and modular designs.

15 I recognize the "Ur in luck" Initiative and the
16 Google Map layer of all public rest rooms. I'm still
17 figuring out how to put it on my phone, but that
18 should not represent everybody.

19 We look forward to the "Loo York City" Working
20 Group to expand access, and my district is currently
21 piloting the Portland Loo in Irving Square Park,
22 which we are thrilled about. It's under construction,
23 and it looks like it's moving really quickly.

24 So, we're just excited to talk about this, and
25 I'm glad to be partnering with Counsel Member Rita

1 Joseph on this issue, and the borough president...
2
3 Manhattan borough president, Mark Levine. Really,
4 this is about how can we make it work? We know there
5 are so many challenges, costs, citing, it's so
6 challenging, but we've got to make it work, because
7 we all "Got2Go".

8 So, I just want to thank my colleagues, Council
9 Member Rita Joseph, uh, as I said, Manhattan Borough
10 President, my Legislative Director, Ryan Hickey, our
11 outgoing Legislative Fellow, Leticia (INAUDIBLE),
12 VOCAL-NY, Coalition for the Homeless, AARP, Carroll
13 Gardens Nanny Association, Park Slope Parents, Street
14 Venders Project, Los Deliveristas, and many more who
15 have worked tirelessly to push for these changes. I
16 look forward to continuing this important
17 conversation. Thank you, Chair.

18 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you so much, Council
19 Member Nurse, and to our other great bathroom justice
20 champions, Council Member Joseph.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER JOSEPH: Good morning, thank you,
22 Chair Lincoln Restler and members of the Council.

23 I'm thrilled to present my bill, Intro 267, which
24 was introduced in partnership with my Manhattan
25 Borough President, Mark Levine.

1 Intro 267 is one of my four bills aimed at
2 addressing the bathroom accessibility issue in New
3 York City.
4

5 Through this legislation, we are asking the City
6 to make certain bathrooms and city facilities
7 available for public use.

8 The bill requires a DCAS , in coordination with
9 other agency heads, to allow public access to readily
10 accessible bathrooms in public facing municipal
11 buildings during business hours.

12 It also mandates signage indicating location,
13 hours, and accessibility of these bathrooms of
14 persons with disabilities.

15 Additionally, the bill calls for implementation
16 report periodic updates to be submitted to the
17 Council, Mayor, Public Advocate, and community
18 boards.

19 The location of these bathrooms will be posted on
20 the City website listing all public bathrooms
21 included in the City Land Use list maintained by DCAS

22 Access to clean and accessible bathrooms in New
23 York City should not be a luxury. Too often residents
24 and visitors have to plead with business owners for
25

1 bathroom access - sometimes being forced to make
2 unnecessary purchases just to use the facilities.

3
4 For our homeless population finding clean, safe,
5 and accessible bathrooms, this is even a greater
6 challenge.

7 This bill will help address these injustices. By
8 opening some City facility bathrooms to the public,
9 we are showing New Yorkers and visitors that we care
10 about their health and well-being.

11 Access to clean and safe bathrooms is a matter of
12 equity, public health, sanitation, and base basic
13 human rights -- as Manhattan Board President Mark
14 Levine has emphasized.

15 By considering this bill today, Chair Restler,
16 and Committee members, you're doing your part. Let's
17 get this passed quickly. New Yorkers and visitors
18 have been waiting too long. It's time to do the right
19 thing.

20 Thank you to all the advocates, my Council
21 colleagues, who co-sponsored this bill, and the
22 staffers who worked diligently to bring this to this
23 stage. Thank you so much.

24 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you so much, Council
25 Member Joseph. We are joined by my friend and

1 neighbor, Council Member Shahana Hanif, on Zoom, and
2 Council Member Gale Brewer, who did join us a little
3 late, uh, would like to make an opening statement as
4 well.
5

6 (LAUGHTER)

7 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much. I've
8 been at two meetings already today, so just want to
9 let you know.

10 (LAUGHTER)

11 I'm talking about Intro 563, which is expanding
12 public access to drinking water. I bring this to your
13 attention based on my friend who has passed, Richard
14 Murphy. He was a commissioner under Mayor Dinkins,
15 and he always said that every young person in New
16 York, in schools in particular, should get a water
17 bottle, and there should be water filling stations
18 everywhere. Because you cannot tell young people not
19 to drink soda if there's no water available.

20 Everyone has a right to free water, no matter
21 where they are or what season it is. Drinking
22 fountains are often inaccessible, even in the
23 schools, and it's even harder to tell people, "don't
24 buy sugary drinks or single use plastics" if they
25 can't access free water.

1 Intro 563 would require the Department of
2 Citywide Administrative Services to make water bottle
3 filling stations open to the public in city
4 buildings, fire stations, police stations, and so on.

5 This bill is supported by the NRDC Natural
6 Resources Defense Council, the League of
7 Conservation, and Peggy Shepherd and those wonderful
8 folks in Harlem. They're not able to be here today,
9 but they have submitted written testimony.

10 I know this cost money. But not a lot. And I
11 would think very hard about making sure that we have
12 free water available. Right now, it's either in the
13 place where you work or whenever the Department of
14 Environmental Protection harangues, correctly, the
15 fire hydrants and (INAUDIBLE) but it's very far and
16 few between.

17 Into a 564, Government Social Media Archive, and
18 I know that the commissioner, wonderful commissioner
19 of DORIS is here.

20 Social media posts and websites are official
21 government records as defined by the City Charter,
22 and DORIS, Department of Records, maintains a
23 publicly accessible archive of official social media
24 accounts used by city agencies.
25

1 While some accounts like at NYPD chief of
2 department are carried over from one administration
3 to the next, others are unique to the individual who
4 occupies a position such as at NYPD, Kaz Daughtry.

5 Intro 564 would require city agencies to submit
6 to DORIS the names of *all* of their social media
7 accounts, so that none of the left out of the
8 archive. It would also require certain elected
9 officials submit the names of their accounts to DORIS
10 -- specifically, the Mayor, Comptroller, Public
11 Advocate, each borough president, and each member of
12 the Council.

13 DORIS has submitted testimony in support of this
14 bill, and if they have any suggestions, they're all
15 welcome.

16 I want to say, I'm a real advocate for archives
17 in our city. I have to say a lot of elected officials
18 leave, I won't mention them, I have their list, and
19 do not submit their papers.

20 I have all my papers submitted from 22 years of
21 being in the City Council and borough president. I do
22 think that it is really important for our future to
23 have quality archival material. Thank you very much,
24 Mr. Chair.
25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you very much, Council
3 Member Brewer. I look forward to reviewing those
4 papers one day.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Oh, please.

6 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: And, now, Council Member
7 Dinowitz would like to make a brief opening statement
8 as well.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Thank you, Chair
10 Restler. It's great to be here at the Gov Ops
11 hearing.

12 Today, we are discussing three bills related to
13 our quality of life here in New York City. I first
14 want to thank Chair Restler and members of the
15 Committee for hearing this legislation.

16 I remember the first time a student, I was
17 teaching (INAUDIBLE), and a student wanted to bike to
18 school. I was a high school student, and I thought it
19 was a great thing. Unfortunately, for that student,
20 in order for him to bike to school, I needed to meet
21 him downstairs, and we needed to figure out a way to
22 get his bicycle in to the building, and then figure
23 out a way for him to store that bicycle.

24 Also, he could do what we want so many of our
25 students to do, and that's bike to school. And that's

1 not too different from so many municipal workers who
2 just want a bike to work. But, for the fact that they
3 have no place to put their bicycle during the day.
4

5 So Intro 162, introduced in collaboration with
6 Council Member Marte, would require that certain city
7 owned buildings, of at least 10,000 square feet or
8 more in size, would provide bicycle storage space for
9 employees or visitors. Providing so that our
10 municipal workers and visitors could exercise that
11 ability to have alternate means of transportation.

12 And, at a time when we are encouraging people to
13 get out of the cars and use alternate modes of
14 transportation, the City should be at the forefront
15 of allowing them to do that.

16 Introduction 744 would prohibit government
17 agencies for closing out 311 service requests, solely
18 because they've been identified as duplicates of
19 previous 311 requests.

20 At my office, we often receive calls from several
21 constituents impacted by the same issue, whether it's
22 that same pothole, the parties going in my district,
23 the parties going on, Jerome Avenue, excessive noise.

24 This bill aims to ensure that everyone can feel
25 the confidence that our city agencies are listening

1 to our community members, and 311 complaints should
2 not be deleted because they're multiples. We want to
3 understand that multiple complaints might mean that
4 the issue has wide impact and needs earlier
5 intervention by our agencies.
6

7 And lastly, this is something I think so many New
8 Yorkers have experienced. They've gone to the 311
9 app, they've complained about the pothole, they've
10 complained about excessive noise, they complained
11 about water fountains not working, trash, graffiti -
12 only to look at their phone again, and to see that
13 the complaint was closed. Not solved, not resolved,
14 *closed*. This happens all the time.

15 We get so many complaints about this. So,
16 Introduction 587 would require the 311 customer
17 service center to conduct customer satisfaction
18 surveys after each individual call is deemed closed,
19 and to publish quarterly agency report cards,
20 illustrating the satisfaction and resolution rates of
21 each agency along with the number of cases and the
22 complaint type that each agency handles.

23 We rely on 311. It is the portal through which
24 our constituents get the government services they
25 need, and the quality of life that they deserve. And,

1 they should have the ability to provide feedback to
2 the government agencies and feedback to the Council,
3 so we can provide proper oversight, so we can ensure
4 that our city agencies are doing what they're
5 supposed to do, the 311 service center is working the
6 way it's supposed to.

7
8 And all these combined, will drastically improve
9 the quality of life of our of our constituents, of
10 New Yorkers.

11 I want to, once again, thank Chair Restler, and
12 the members of the Committee, for the opportunity to
13 speak about my bills, and to hear the bills today:
14 Introductions 162, 587, and 744. And for a chance to
15 discuss together an area where we all agree that the
16 creation of a more open and efficient city government
17 for the constituents that we serve is of paramount
18 importance in this city.

19 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you very much, Council
20 Member Dinowitz.

21 Before the panel, I just do want to say we have
22 two important birthdays today that I'd like to a
23 moment on the record to wish our Council Chief of
24 Staff, Jeremy John, a very happy birthday, and Vocal
25 NY is celebrating their 25th anniversary today. So, I

1 want to wish them a very happy birthday or
2 anniversary as well.

3
4 Now, we have what I think would be fair to
5 describe is a star panel of government workers and
6 leaders, uh, so I just want to thank you each for
7 being here today.

8 We have We have Laura Ringelheim, the Executive
9 Deputy Commissioner at DACAS; Ya-Ting Liu, the
10 Inaugural Chief Public Realm Officer; Joe Morrisroe,
11 Deputy Commissioner of NYC311, who has led 311 for 18
12 years; Pauline Toole, the Commissioner of DORIS,
13 who's been in that role for a decade.

14 I really want to thank each of you for being here
15 today, but much more importantly, for the really
16 great work you do on behalf of the people of New York
17 City.

18 At this time, I will call on our Committee
19 Counsel to administer the affirmation please...

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair Restler...

21 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Oh, I didn't get Crystal. I
22 just want to acknowledge Council Member Crystal
23 Hudson is with us as well.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: (NO MIC) (INAUDIBLE)
25 acknowledged.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: You're important, thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair Restler.

Panelists, would you please raise your right hands?

Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, before this committee, and to respond honestly to council member questions?

(PANEL AFFIRMS)

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you.

And, before you begin, I would like to remind the public that if you registered online to testify in person, please make sure to fill out a witness slip with the Sergeant at Arms, thank you.

You may begin.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Whoever would like to go first?

CHIEF PUBLIC REALM OFFICER LIU: Thank you, Chair Restler and members of the Committee.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to be with you today to share some of the work that we've done on public restrooms under this administration.

My name is Ya-Ting Liu, I am the Chief Public Realm Officer for the city of New York. And, I just want to thank Council Member Sandy Nurse and Council

1
2 Member Rita Joseph, in particular, for all of their
3 tireless advocacy on the need and the importance of
4 expanding public restroom access in the City, a
5 policy goal and the value that we are really
6 committed to and deeply share.

7 As Chief Public Realm Officer, my role is to lead
8 and coordinate internally across government agencies,
9 and with external partners to make sure that we have
10 more vibrant public spaces throughout the city's
11 three key areas that define our public space work --
12 I summarize as hardware, software, and orgware.

13 So hardware is expanding the public space
14 footprint that we have across five boroughs,
15 especially in underserved communities with the least
16 access to vibrant public spaces.

17 Software is cutting red tape for partners.
18 Because city government alone can't help maintain,
19 activate, and program these spaces. We really need
20 partners from community groups to bids, but guess
21 what? Government, we don't always make it easy for
22 that partnership. So we've been really focused on
23 cutting that red tape.

24 And, in orgware, which is all of the coordination
25 and planning with agencies to make sure that we are

1
2 delivering these policies and big capital projects on
3 time, on budget.

4 As Council Member Sandy Nurse called out already,
5 Public restrooms are essential part of public health.
6 It's a public health and equity issue. And, access to
7 restrooms is not a new issue to in New York City.
8 Similar to sort of the scaffolding issue,
9 administrations in the past have tried to tackle this
10 seemingly intractable concern for residents and
11 visitors alike.

12 And, thanks again, for the opportunity to share a
13 little bit of what we have done today to expand
14 access and to create a more user friendly experience.

15 As announced in the by the Mayor in June, the
16 City recently launched "Ur in Luck", a new effort to
17 expand access to public restrooms in all five
18 boroughs.

19 As part of this initiative, the City has made
20 significant progress in restroom access. We have
21 announced 82 new and refurbished restrooms in the
22 next five years in the Parks Department pipeline,
23 including 14 potential automated public toilets in
24 the next two years.

1
2 So, this "Loo York City" task force, interagency
3 task force, we're really laser focused on citing
4 these 14 new APTs in our city streets. As well as
5 ensuring that the suite of the public restrooms in
6 the Parks Department portfolio are delivered on time
7 of budget.

8 Parks has also recently completed the expansion
9 of changing tables in all feasible public restrooms -
10 - three years ahead of schedule.

11 We published this Google Map layer that
12 identifies all public restrooms in parks, plazas,
13 train terminals, libraries, privately owned public
14 spaces to help people find a nearest restroom when
15 they have to go, when they're on the go.

16 It already has 5.5 million views, and you can
17 access this map at nyc.gov/restrooms.

18 And, Council Member Nurse, we would love to work
19 with you to maybe go to Google and get them to just
20 put this information automatically on the Google Maps
21 to open it as opposed to this layer, which I
22 recognize is this sort of extra step that sometimes
23 is difficult for people to access easily on their
24 phone.

1
2 And, to help all of these different initiatives
3 and projects stay on track, we lead this interagency
4 task force to track the progress, and to also explore
5 other policy ideas for moving the needle, looking at
6 what other cities have done, particularly in Europe,
7 to expand public restroom access.

8 This is a challenging endeavor. It's going to
9 require the Council's support and partnership. We
10 support, absolutely, the intent of Intro 694, and
11 just would love to have more detailed conversations
12 with the Council Member, with the Committee, with
13 staff on how we bridge the gap between the policy
14 goals we all share. And, just the existing tools,
15 processes, and resources that we currently have in
16 place in in sort of city government side among our
17 agencies for implementation.

18 So, Council Member Nurse, you called out some of
19 those constraints already in your remarks.

20 I will try to go through these really quickly,
21 but the four main constraints faced by city
22 government today are siting.

23 The siting challenges are real. We want more
24 restrooms, but in a city as dense as New York, and
25 the public right of way, there's a lot of demands for

1 that sidewalk space and that plaza space beyond the
2 existing parks footprint. It's really challenging to
3 find the locations and feasible locations.
4

5 We, as an administration, are focused siting on
6 restrooms in high foot traffic areas and in areas
7 that have less access to public restrooms. But, the
8 scoping, the approvals, the underground, DDC
9 (Department of Design & Construction) Commissioner
10 Tom Foley likes to say, the underground spaghetti,
11 western spaghetti soup of utilities, those things all
12 require intensive work.

13 And, we need your help to get through the
14 community board and other types of approval process
15 to site at these new locations.

16 Existing restroom upgrades must be balanced with
17 building new restrooms and maintaining the existing
18 bathroom inventory. The Parks Department is carrying
19 the largest stock of public restrooms in the city.

20 This footprint is no small task to maintain.
21 Parks recently received funding for a second shift
22 cleaning to help maintain parks, including public
23 restrooms. And, if the restroom stock increases in
24 their footprint, policy and legislation should
25

1
2 account for additional resources to require to
3 maintain those additional sites.

4 Three, building public restrooms that are cost
5 and time intensive. Parks restrooms right now cost
6 about \$5 million per restroom. It takes three to four
7 years to build. The automatic public toilets take
8 more than a year to move through a five step approval
9 process.

10 Again, this administration has been really
11 focused on the capital reform effort and trying to
12 make efficiencies in the way city government builds
13 capital projects that we think will help move the
14 needle. But, again, the existing way that we build
15 restrooms and other infrastructure is quite labor and
16 time intensive.

17 Lastly, we feel that city government alone cannot
18 solve the public restroom access issue. Many other
19 cities have found creative incentive programs. Munich
20 and London are paying businesses to open up their
21 restroom facilities to the public, and we just
22 really, really welcome creative ways to collaborate
23 and partner with the private sector as well to figure
24 out how we can make the existing restroom facilities
25

1 of the City, across all types of buildings, more
2 available to the public.
3

4 So in conclusion, we are committed to working
5 with you to identify acceptable sites for public
6 restrooms in your districts, get your help to secure
7 community buy in; get your help in reforming the
8 capital project delivery process. All of these steps
9 together will help us deliver the resources that New
10 York City residents and visitors alike deserve.

11 We thank the Council for the opportunity today to
12 testify in our plans to expand public restroom
13 access, and really looking forward to working with
14 you and figuring out how we operationalize and get
15 the resources we need to really, you know, execute on
16 these goals.

17 I will now pass it to my colleague, Joe Morrisroe
18 from OTI.

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Thank you,
20 Appreciate that.

21 Good morning to you, Chair Restler, and members
22 of the City Council Committee on Governmental
23 Operations, State & Federal Legislation.

24 My name is Joe Morrisroe, and I am the Deputy
25 Commissioner of NYC311 under the Office of Technology

1 and Innovation. Thank you for the opportunity to
2 testify today regarding legislation that would impact
3 NYC311 operations.
4

5 As NYC311's deputy commissioner, I oversee all
6 aspects of 311 from the operation of the most
7 familiar component, the call center, to the creation
8 and implementation of multiple customer facing
9 channels, performance results and quality control
10 measures, interaction with city agencies, and data
11 collection.

12 As you all know, NYC311 delivers fast and easy
13 access to government services and city information to
14 all New Yorkers. NYC311 is available 24 hours a day,
15 7 days a week, 365 days a year through multiple
16 channels including the call center, the online
17 portal, text mobile application, and social media.

18 Originally launched as a call center, NYC311 has
19 evolved into the most comprehensive municipal
20 government service platform in the nation.

21 NYC311 received 37 million customer contacts in
22 2023, and on an annual basis receives more calls than
23 all the U.S. city 311 call centers combined.

24 I'm pleased to share that a recent independent
25 report shows NYC311 call center representatives

1 achieved a customer satisfaction rating of 94
2 percent, placing us in the top 10 percent of similar
3 services, and even outperforming some private sector
4 companies.
5

6 This high level of public satisfaction reflects
7 the dedication of the NYC311 team to serving their
8 fellow New Yorkers every day.

9 It is important to note that 311 serves as the
10 platform to provide information and services to the
11 public.

12 With few exceptions, public interactions with 311
13 services result in one of the following outcomes: an
14 information request, a referral to an external
15 entity, or a service request.

16 We rely on our collaborative relationships with
17 each city agency to build out the service request
18 forms and information pages, which are also known as
19 knowledge articles, that properly reflect the mission
20 and services for each agency or office.

21 If an agency makes a service request available to
22 the public, there is a duty and expectation for the
23 agency to be able to respond to it and provide a
24 resolution within a reasonable service level
25 agreement, or SLA, time frame.

1
2 Once a service request is submitted with NYC311,
3 it becomes that agency's responsibility. Bills before
4 the Committee today all attempt to address issues
5 that NYC311 customers have with agency response.

6 We'd be happy to hear from council members on
7 ways we can work with individual agencies on how
8 responses may be improved through the NYC311 feedback
9 loop, with respect to specific problems that may not
10 necessitate wholesale changes to how service requests
11 are accepted, investigated, and resolved.

12 I will now turn to the bills associated with this
13 hearing.

14 Intro 523 would require 311 to stop referring
15 nonemergency anonymous calls with about harassed
16 properties to agencies for followup. Harassed
17 properties under this bill would be considered those
18 that have been repeated anonymous complaints to 311
19 that cannot be substantiated or that are
20 substantiated but not illegal.

21 As discussed above, 311 is simply the platform
22 that other agencies use to provide information and
23 facilitate service requests. 311 does not make
24 determinations about whether repeat service requests
25 are considered harassment nor should we. If an agency

1
2 accepts a service request type, the act of creating a
3 service request results in a followup action.

4 Repeated complaints against the same property, that
5 do not result in a summons or other enforcement
6 action, does not mean that an individual should be
7 barred from making the complaint.

8 Examples of difficult to enforce service requests
9 include noise complaints or illegal apartment
10 reports. Importantly, this policy shift would be easy
11 to abuse and could have unintended consequences.

12 Next, Intro 587 would require 311 to conduct
13 customer satisfaction surveys after each 311 call
14 intake is closed and to publish agency report cards.

15 We appreciate the City Council's shared interest
16 in this, and we feel that legislation is not needed
17 since we are already working on such a survey. We
18 will certainly keep the Council informed of its
19 progress.

20 And finally, Intro of 744 would prohibit agencies
21 from closing 311 requests for service or complaints
22 solely because they have been identified as
23 duplicates of previous 311 requests for services and
24 complaints.

1
2 Each agency may have a reason for why they may
3 prefer not to have duplicate service requests. So a
4 one size fits all approach is not ideal. We'd like to
5 hear from City Council about what service requests
6 have been closed for being duplicates, and how we may
7 be able to work with the agencies that have this
8 policy.

9 On behalf of the dedicated and hardworking team
10 at 311, I thank you for the opportunity to testify
11 today.

12 I will now pass it on to Commissioner Toole from
13 DORIS for her testimony.

14 COMMISSIONER TOOLE: Thank you very much, Joe.

15 Good morning, my name is Pauline Toole, and I
16 serve as the Commissioner of the Department of
17 Records and Information Services known as DORIS.

18 Thank you to Chair Restler and the members of the
19 Committee for the opportunity to talk today about the
20 proposed Local Law to require elected officials and
21 agencies to notify DORIS of all social media accounts
22 on an annual basis.

23 This administration is committed to ensuring that
24 government is open, accessible, and transparent,
25 which enables meaningful engagement between residents

1 of New York City and city Government. Providing
2 access to government records helps accomplish that
3 goal.
4

5 The proposed Local Law amends the City Charter to
6 require that DORIS maintain a publicly accessible and
7 searchable online database of the official social
8 media posts and websites of government officials.

9 It also amends the Administrative Code to mandate
10 that the City's elected officials in agencies provide
11 DORIS with a list of each official social media
12 account annually.

13 In essence, the proposal codifies our existing
14 practice of harvesting and making available official
15 social media posts and requires additional content.

16 I testified on this legislation in the fall of
17 2023, and we do appreciate the Council's focus on
18 gathering and making available all city government
19 social media posts.

20 It's important to understand that these posts
21 will be useful for future researchers who want to
22 document the zeitgeist of this particular time in our
23 history.

24 Social media posts are government records.
25 Websites are official government records under the

1 definition in the City Charter. They have a permanent
2 retention period. And because they were published
3 online, they become part of the collection at the
4 Municipal Library Division of DORIS.
5

6 Already, we have 31,783,698 records on our social
7 media archive as of September 13th. This includes,
8 though, the comments, mentions, direct messages in
9 addition to the posts made by official agency account
10 holders, which number a little over three million.

11 The vast majority of the posts in the archive are
12 from Twitter with close to two million of the posts,
13 followed by Facebook.

14 Our vendor harvests from nine platforms
15 currently, which are listed in the testimony, but it
16 also has content from platforms that are outmoded or
17 less frequently used, such as Google Plus or Flickr.

18 City agencies currently provide information to
19 DORIS the name of the platform, the account, contact
20 information for the person managing the account.

21 So, when the name of a new account is added, the
22 algorithm at our vendor will pull content from that
23 account, even if it existed for years before we were
24 made aware of its existence.
25

1
2 In order to harvest the social media posts, the
3 vendor requires certain information to make sure the
4 posts aren't being harvested in an inappropriate way.
5 So, obtaining that information, which includes the
6 name of the account, the platform, the contact
7 person, etcetera, is really the most challenging part
8 of having this social media archive.

9 So, I think our suggestion with this bill is that
10 requiring only the name of the account will not allow
11 us to harvest the content effectively. So, we are
12 suggesting an amendment to the legislation that would
13 require information about social media accounts,
14 official social media accounts, to be provided
15 annually as the bill requires, on a form designated
16 by DORIS, which would allow us to add other pieces of
17 information as the vendor or new vendors require that
18 in order to harvest things.

19 And, I think we could also stipulate that at a
20 minimum it would include the social media account
21 name and contact person. And, then, as previously
22 confirmed at the November hearing, posting a link to
23 our harvesting vendor site meets the goals of this
24 bill.

1
2 So, we commend the Council for its focus on
3 records retention and preservation, and we'll take
4 questions you may have in a minute, and I will now
5 pass it over to Laura Ringelheim, Executive Deputy
6 Commissioner of Internal Operations at the Department
7 of Citywide Administrative Services.

8 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: Thank
9 you so much.

10 Good morning, Chair Restler, and members of the
11 Committee On Governmental Operations, State and
12 Federal Legislation.

13 My name is Laura Ringelheim, Executive Deputy
14 Commissioner of Internal Operations at the Department
15 of Citywide Administrative Services, commonly known
16 as DCAS.

17 Across our agency, we work strategically to enact
18 plans that support the management, maintenance, and
19 operation of the City's real estate portfolio,
20 including city owned office and court buildings.

21 I'd first like to begin by thanking you all for
22 the opportunity to discuss this package of bills that
23 will have an impact on municipal operations.

24 DCAS remains committed to ensuring that we are
25 increasing equity access and efficiency in all facets

1 of city government. As such, we value the Council's
2 input and welcome discussions related to the proposed
3 legislation being considered today.
4

5 Regarding Introduction 162, this administration
6 has a history of supporting policies that encourage
7 New Yorkers to live healthier lifestyles and promote
8 sustainability.

9 In alignment with that goal, this bill would
10 require that certain city owned buildings of at least
11 10,000 square feet or more in size, provide bicycle
12 storage space for City employees or visitors.

13 It's worth noting that non-court facilities, DCAS
14 has taken an existing bike policy available to any
15 tenant that wishes to explore bikes storage.

16 We appreciate the Council's interest in promoting
17 such policies and recognize that by increasing bike
18 storage, we are making it more practical for New
19 Yorkers visiting city buildings to use bikes. DCAS
20 welcomes a conversation with the Council about the
21 practical means by which this goal can be achieved.

22 Additionally, we would also like to further
23 engage in dialogue about DCAS' authority when it
24 comes to managing city owned properties and some of
25

1
2 the limitations that can potentially impede our
3 ability to enforce compliance.

4 Regarding Introduction 191, as part of our role,
5 DCAS manages the disposition of city owned real
6 estate for private use. We currently provide
7 customary notification to our tenants of a lease's
8 pending expiration in accordance with that
9 agreement's terms.

10 This proposed legislation would require to DCAS
11 to notify tenants of City lease properties via email
12 when their lease or rental agreement is set to expire
13 in two years.

14 At this time, we're seeking additional support
15 from the Law Department to see if this would have any
16 impact on the City's ability is to meet its
17 obligation regarding the use of city properties.

18 Regarding Introduction 267, first and foremost,
19 we know the lack of public restrooms throughout the
20 city is a challenge that many New Yorkers and
21 visitors to the city must constantly navigate.

22 In service of helping to remedy this issue, this
23 bill would require DCAS, in coordination with other
24 city agencies, to allow members of the public to use
25 readily accessible bathrooms in public facing areas

1 of city leased or owned buildings during business
2 hours.
3

4 As drafted, the legislation takes steps to
5 address this reality. But, we believe further
6 discussion with Council is needed to better
7 understand what is meant by public access to
8 bathrooms. Furthermore, as written, the bill puts
9 significant compliance authority on DCAS. While we're
10 charged with managing our 55 buildings, our authority
11 does not extend to all public facing buildings that
12 are city owned or leased. And, that limitation poses
13 considerable challenges to any potential
14 implementation of this measure.

15 Additionally, the provision requiring the 28-day
16 advanced notice to labor unions representing
17 custodial workers prior to opening available
18 bathrooms for public access, poses a unique challenge
19 to implementation as it requires a level of
20 coordination that will prove difficult to achieve
21 within this tight time frame.

22 Similarly, the 30-day reporting timeline is
23 itself a challenging mark to meet.

24 Regarding Introduction 563, this bill that would
25 require water bottle filling stations in city

1 buildings be made available for use by members of the
2 public.
3

4 We recognize that access to clean water is
5 important for the health and wellness of our fellow
6 New Yorkers, and public water fountains help reduce
7 plastic waste, which this proposed measure is
8 designed to achieve.

9 To reiterate, this administration has
10 historically been supportive of policies that
11 encourage healthier lifestyles and promote
12 sustainability.

13 Similar to the prior proposals relating to public
14 access to city spaces, DCAS looks forward to further
15 dialogue with City Council about ensuring that there
16 is consistency in how city spaces are defined and
17 DCAS's role when it comes to managing those assets.

18 Again, we thank Council for its ongoing
19 commitment to increasing public access to city
20 facilities and improving efficiency in their use.

21 As reflected here, we at DCAS are willing to work
22 with Council in its efforts to promote practical
23 changes to advance these goals and enhance our
24 ability to best serve all who use our public
25 buildings.

1
2 And I'm happy to answer any questions you may
3 have. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you so much to each of
5 the panelists for your thoughtful testimony.

6 Before we go to questions, I just want to offer
7 if Council Member Gutiérrez would like to speak to
8 her bill briefly? No pressure. Okay, you can jump in
9 later if you'd like.

10 I know that Ms. Liu has a hard out and 11:30, so
11 just thought we would offer council members who have
12 questions for her an opportunity to go first. And,
13 then, we could offer questions to the other
14 panelists.

15 Do you want to begin Council Member Nurse? Go
16 ahead.

17 And we have been joined by Council Member
18 Paladino, who I know had horrible traffic this
19 morning. Thank you for making it.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: So I just have a handful of
21 questions. I know you have to leave.

22 I guess, first, this is just a general... The
23 June announcement of the Ur In Luck Initiative, the
24 Mayor indicated that all City Halls bathrooms should
25 be open to the public as it's the People's House. And

1 we just wanted to clarify, because we got conflicting
2 reports.

3
4 Are the City Hall restrooms available to the
5 public right now?

6 CHIEF PUBLIC REALM OFFICER LIU: So, the City Hall
7 building is open to people that have business here.
8 Right? You have to have ID. You have to be able to
9 enter for a reason, whether it's a hearing or a
10 meeting. And when you're inside, absolutely, right?
11 The restrooms here are available to anybody who has
12 business here.

13 But for in terms of security and other
14 considerations, it's for people with business inside
15 the building.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay, so, public when
17 you're in here? Got it.

18 CHIEF PUBLIC REALM OFFICER LIU: Public when
19 you're inside the building. Yeah.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay.

21 I wanted to talk about the Loo York City, I love
22 that name, the Working Group, uh, you're coordinating
23 between agencies, advance the existing pipeline of
24 restrooms now in development. You're generating new
25 policies.

1
2 Can you give us a little more detail in terms of
3 who's a part of this working group?

4 CHIEF PUBLIC REALM OFFICER LIU: Yes.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Has it met yet or and how
6 often is it scheduled to meet?

7 CHIEF PUBLIC REALM OFFICER LIU: That's a great
8 question.

9 We've been meeting on a biweekly basis. The core
10 members of this team are deputy mayor for operations;
11 we have DOT (Department of Transportation) and the
12 Parks Department, because right now we're really
13 focused on making sure the Parks pipeline of restroom
14 projects are being moved on the on time, on budget.

15 And, then, also really focused on siting those 14
16 automatic public toilets that's sitting in DOT's
17 portfolio.

18 We welcome other city agencies, so sometimes
19 we'll pull in DCP (Department of City Planning) to
20 look at POPS (Privately Owned Public Space), for
21 example, the publicly owned private spaces, to see
22 what is the status of restrooms in those spaces to
23 make sure that they are readily open to the public.

24 We'll also pull in other agencies like MOCS
25 (Mayor's Office of Contract Services) for example, to

1 look at other tools that may be at city agencies'
2 disposal as a way to figure out how do we get units
3 out faster.
4

5 So for example, MOCS, they are piloting a new
6 tool that is called Challenge Based Procurement. And
7 they really recently gave us a briefing on that. That
8 could be a strategy to help the Parks Department or
9 other agencies think about getting more restrooms out
10 on the street.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: So, given the... I mean,
12 you're kinda getting at my next question, especially
13 around automated public toilets.

14 CHIEF PUBLIC REALM OFFICER LIU: Yeah.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: The amount of people
16 that... amount of entities that have to approve
17 these and sign off teams, just an enormous barrier to
18 just getting it done.

19 So I'm just wondering besides this MOC tool, I
20 mean, what... does the Administration have
21 recommendations on how to cut down all the people
22 that need to be involved in this? I mean, some of
23 what we're trying get out as a long term plan and
24 strategy so that we can kinda streamline some of this
25

1 stuff. And it just seems like there's everybody in
2 the mix.
3

4 So I'm curious just, like, if you have any
5 initial recommendations for approving, specifically
6 automated public toilets, but, then, also your
7 specific role or this this specific position, how is
8 it, you know, how... where is it in the layer of all
9 those entities? Are you the head person in charge of
10 the public toilet planning process? I mean, it's kind
11 of, you know, there's a lot of people in the mix,
12 so...

13 CHIEF PUBLIC REALM OFFICER LIU: Yeah.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: If you could just kind of
15 illustrate for us a little bit more?

16 CHIEF PUBLIC REALM OFFICER LIU: No, that's a
17 great question.

18 I kind of see myself and this role, and my team's
19 role here at City Hall as sort of a quarterback. We
20 are trying to have a thirty thousand foot bird's eye
21 view across government agencies and the City.

22 And so, for example, the DOTs, APTs, (INAUDIBLE)
23 if we showed you the flowchart of the approval
24 process, it is incredibly tedious and intensive.

1
2 And to your question about, is there a way that
3 we can cut those steps down?

4 I would love to come back to you and other
5 members of this committee to brainstorm ideas.

6 Some of the stuff, it's been a steep learning
7 curve for me, just learning, things that are of
8 irrevocable consent, things that are in the Charter,
9 things that are ad code, things that are rule making,
10 and trying to understand and peel back the layers to
11 say, okay, what needs to go through what, and what
12 could we do on our own as administration? We're
13 mapping that out now. (TIMER CHIMES)

14 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay, one final question,
15 uhm, sorry, two final questions, uhm, I'll be very
16 brief. I'll be very brief.

17 In the Local Law 114 Report, it showed that the
18 predesigned phase for bathroom, a bathroom siting
19 process takes about 10 to 16 months.

20 And we're just wondering at what part of this
21 process, what part of this process is the most time
22 consuming before it gets... before we get an actual
23 design for folks?

24 CHIEF PUBLIC REALM OFFICER LIU: There's
25 colleagues from the Park's Department here. So,

1
2 Colleagues, definitely jump in if I'm misrepresenting
3 this in any way.

4 But, my understanding is that, at least in the
5 Parks Department side, there's site work. So, in
6 other words, all of this, uhm, the utilities and
7 sewer and electrical underground is one massive sort
8 of time intensive process.

9 And a lot of times, it's not just as simple as
10 sort of putting in this 20 x 20 sort of box, if you
11 will, onto a site. But it's a site investigation
12 work, drainage, utilities, sloping, grading, all of
13 these other considerations in analysis, take a lot of
14 time before you even get to the box part of the
15 structure.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay, then, my final
17 question, I'm not fully sure exactly see how much the
18 Portland Loo costs. Do you know how much this model
19 costs? I saw a 185K above \$500,000 for operating
20 costs. Do you know off the top of your head what the
21 total is for a project like this?

22 CHIEF PUBLIC REALM OFFICER LIU: Yeah, \$1 million.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: \$1 million.

24 CHIEF PUBLIC REALM OFFICER LIU: Yeah.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Wonderful...

1 CHIEF PUBLIC REALM OFFICER LIU: Exactly...

2 (CROSS-TALK)

3 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: I mean, going from \$3
4 million to \$5 million to know \$1 million.

5 And, then, the construction period is how long...
6 anticipated to be?

7 CHIEF PUBLIC REALM OFFICER LIU: (INAUDIBLE)
8 sorry, bear with me, I just want to make sure I'm
9 telling you the... About one year.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: One year?

11 CHIEF PUBLIC REALM OFFICER LIU: Yeah.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Yeah, so, I mean, I guess I
13 would love to see ,you know, what a target goal for
14 this would be...

15 CHIEF PUBLIC REALM OFFICER LIU: Yeah.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: I know that it's a pilot.

17 CHIEF PUBLIC REALM OFFICER LIU: Right.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE But, I mean, at this point
19 ,you know, given the lack of access, it feels like it
20 should be ,like, phase I, uhm, and given how low that
21 cost is, it seems very achievable to hit this target
22 of ,you know, one toilet for every 2,000, inclusive
23 of what we already of have built, that can just be
24 brought online and operational and maintained more
25

1 effectively, and made more visibly known to New
2 Yorkers that it's public.

3
4 And then... I'm done after this. But, you know,
5 one of the... I'm sorry, I rolled on. I wasn't
6 expecting to go so early.

7 So, what are some of the conversations you all
8 are having about the criminalization of, you know,
9 public urination or things like that.

10 Given that we acknowledge that we don't have a
11 sufficient public infrastructure network for people
12 who need to go, the number of unhoused people on our
13 streets, the number of people who just need to go for
14 a number of medical issues or conditions therein, are
15 you all having these, inclusive of your conversations
16 where you're thinking about the public realm and
17 everything that happens in it, are you all having any
18 conversations with NYPD or the Law Department or any
19 police about how we can decriminalize this thing --
20 given it is the City's fault, mostly, that we don't
21 have enough infrastructure, and that the amount of
22 summons have gone up -- criminal summons -- the
23 amount of people who are incurring fines who
24 literally don't have a dollar to them to pay
25

1 something like this, and they just they have a
2 bladder and they gotta go.

3
4 CHIEF PUBLIC REALM OFFICER LIU: Yeah.

5 You're pointing out an area of work that
6 absolutely our team is happy to sort of start
7 conversations.

8 And you're pointing out, like, an area that is an
9 opportunity for us to take more of a role in and play
10 that coordination role.

11 I know from the Parks Department side, and
12 talking to the Parks team, the PEP officers (Parks
13 Enforcement Patrol) like to lead with education 1st
14 and foremost. But, there is absolutely room and
15 opportunity to engage PD as well, uhm, to sort of
16 figure out how we balance the quality of life and
17 maintaining that quality of life, but also making
18 sure that we're not overly penalizing, to your point,
19 New Yorkers who are lacking this access and amenity.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Thank you. Thank you,
21 Chair.

22 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you, Council Member
23 Nurse.

24 I just have a couple questions for our Chief
25 Public Realm Officer as well. Uh, and I know Council

1
2 Member Brewer does as well, if anyone does, just
3 please let us know.

4 So, I just have to ask, were you responsible for
5 the Loo York Working Group name?

6 CHIEF PUBLIC REALM OFFICER LIU: It depends if you
7 like or not.

8 (LAUGHTER)

9 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Well, can I ask how you're
10 spelling it? Is it ,like, named in your honor, is it
11 Lou, or like, how are you doing it.

12 CHIEF PUBLIC REALM OFFICER LIU: Oh, no, it's L O
13 O.

14 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: L O O? Okay, I got it.

15 CHIEF PUBLIC REALM OFFICER LIU: Like, I guess
16 it's more a British thing. They call it the "loo".

17 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Right, no, I got that. I
18 understood the pun, I just was wondering...

19 CHIEF PUBLIC REALM OFFICER LIU: Oh, okay...

20 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: if you were taking personal
21 credit for it (LAUGHTER) as like a working group
22 named after you as well. But, it doesn't sound like
23 it.

24 So, in your testimony, you imply that Council
25 Member Nurse's legislation that would require

1 restroom for every 2,000 New Yorkers, would require
2 thousands of restrooms, and is perhaps too ambitious.

3
4 What is the correct ratio that we should be
5 looking at of numbers of New Yorkers per bathroom?

6 How many bathrooms do we need?

7 CHIEF PUBLIC REALM OFFICER LIU: That's a great
8 question, Chair.

9 I'll be honest, I don't have the right answer. I
10 don't know. That just the real honest answer.

11 I know that on the City side, we are looking at
12 high areas of foot traffic. So we know where, like,
13 the high demands are and the most intensive places
14 are. And, then, we also know where sort of the
15 underserved areas are. And, so, when we look at sort
16 of our existing resources and the map of need and
17 use, that's how we're prioritizing.

18 I'm not sure that we have sort of the, like, a
19 specific number of mind, like, oh, yeah, like this,
20 this is gonna unlock all the things for all the
21 people.

22 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I hear you. Uhm...

23 CHIEF PUBLIC REALM OFFICER LIU: Yeah.

24

25

1
2 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: But, I think it's the vision
3 of Council Member Nurse's legislation, which I agree
4 with, is we that need that master plan.

5 And, that does require us to hold our... to set
6 numerical goals and then hold ourselves to those
7 goals.

8 So, I do think it's... it would be valuable for
9 the Administration to have a perspective on that.

10 I would also just note, you know, downtown
11 Brooklyn are the most heavily trafficked locations in
12 terms of foot traffic in the borough. We've seen no
13 new bathroom sited in downtown Brooklyn in this
14 Administration, despite the very clear need.

15 It's also an area where people come from across
16 the borough for services, whether in the courts,
17 reentry, mental health, substance use, etcetera. And
18 we're proud that it's kind of hub for those services,
19 but we don't have the bathroom access to go along
20 with it.

21 You noted in your testimony, and this may be a
22 question for UN for Parks... And I know we have some
23 representatives there that, uh, there's a challenge
24 with Parks staffing these days.

1 My understanding from the Brooklyn Parks

2 Department is that they haven't had this few staff in
3 over 40 years, which is just remarkable.

4 Do we have enough staff today in the Parks
5 Department to maintain our public parks' bathrooms?

6 I heard a "no" from a colleague, but I... we can
7 bring the Parks Department up to answer that more
8 directly if they would like, well, I'll have to swear
9 them in though. Sorry, Matt. Mr. Matt Drury, esteemed
10 assistant commissioner. Get that right? Deputy?

11 Close?

12 CHIEF DRURY: Thank you for the promotion, but,
13 no I'm the Chief of... Uh, my name is Matthew Drury,
14 I'm the Chief of Citywide Legislative Affairs.

15 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: You deserve a promotion.
16 We'll talk to (INAUDIBLE)...

17 CHIEF DRURY: (LAUGHS) Thanks very much.

18 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Uh, sorry.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Do you swear or affirm to tell
20 the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the
21 truth, before this committee, and to respond honestly
22 to council member questions?

23 CHIEF DRURY: I do.
24
25

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: (INAUDIBLE) promoting you
3 may not help.

4 (LAUGHTER)

5 CHIEF DRURY: (LAUGHS) Thank you the question
6 Council Member.

7 And the short answer is, yes. You know, we
8 absolutely utilize our resources, including the staff
9 that were provided with our baseline funding as
10 efficiently and strategically as possible. And we are
11 actually quite proud of our record in keeping our
12 restroom buildings safe, clean, and stocked.

13 Particularly, I'll point out... (CROSS-TALK)

14 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: How many years have you been
15 in the Parks Department?

16 CHIEF DRURY: I'm sorry?

17 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: How many years have you
18 worked for the Parks Department?

19 CHIEF DRURY: Uh, nine years, uh, coming on 10.

20 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: And, is this the lowest
21 headcount that Parks has ever had in your tenure?

22 CHIEF DRURY: I don't believe... No, I believe...
23 You know what? I'd have to... I don't want to speak
24 out of turn, I'd have to take a look. I don't have
25 those figures in front of me.

1
2 I'll just point out two quick things that the
3 most recent Mayor's Management Report, we are quite
4 proud that our... to have a two percentage point
5 increase in the overall condition, and also point out
6 that the... in service metric also saw a two
7 percentage point increase compared to last fiscal
8 year.

9 So in short, where, you know, our employees are
10 dedicated and tireless and, we're very, very proud of
11 those efforts.

12 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you very much. Uhm,
13 Miss Liu, you highlighted the rather complex
14 bureaucrat hurdles that the City encounters in tryin
15 to site new bathrooms.

16 Uh, what has the Adams' administration
17 accomplished to speed up that process so far?

18 CHIEF PUBLIC REALM OFFICER LIU: My colleagues on
19 the DMO team have been spearheading under the
20 leadership of Deputy Mayor Joshi, an entire capital
21 reform delivery sort of overhaul.

22 I know that those initiatives are moving the
23 needle to speed up procurement reform, construction
24 reform, and those items. So, that that is sort of one
25

1
2 workstream, just overall changing the way city
3 government has built public infrastructure.

4 I think the second thing is something that I
5 think Council Member Nurse is calling out rather ,you
6 know, point well made, which is that I think under
7 the leadership of Commissioner Donohue, the Parks
8 Department is really looking at other models like the
9 Portland Loo. Right? These modular things that would
10 be a lot more cost effective... (CROSS-TALK)

11 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Just remind me, when was
12 that announced?

13 CHIEF PUBLIC REALM OFFICER LIU: The Portland Loo?
14 (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

15 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: It was in the first year of
16 the Adam's Administration if I recall correctly? It
17 was 2022? And the pilot, has still not opened in
18 Irving Park? Oh, it has?

19 UNKNOWN: (NO MIC) (INAUDIBLE)

20 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Under construction? So, it's
21 not yet opened, but we're getting there. Okay, so,
22 we're two to three years after... two and a half...
23 two years after it's been announced. Uh, has not yet
24 opened, but we hope that it will soon? Okay. I mean,
25 I mean, I recognize that going from three to five

1 years and \$4 million to one year and \$1 million, if
2 this is successful, is an enormous... enormous
3 progress. But it's you know, I think Commissioner
4 Donahue correctly came in with great fanfare to
5 announce this pilot and say that construction of
6 Park's bathrooms is a major problem. It costs too
7 much, way too slow. It's you know, we're very eager
8 to see it actually up and running. It has taken
9 multiple years to get just to this stage.
10

11 Okay. And, then, the last question I want to ask,
12 and I think Council Member Brewer has a couple of
13 things for our chief public realm officer as well,
14 is just about access to information around bathrooms.

15 You mentioned potentially engaging Google. We've
16 started putting up ads in, like, NYC kiosks in
17 downtown Brooklyn, in our district, about where
18 bathrooms are, so that people know. What else has the
19 Administration done to enhance access to New Yorkers'
20 about where publicly accessible bathrooms are
21 located?

22 CHIEF PUBLIC REALM OFFICER LIU: Yeah, like
23 yourself and Borough President Levine, I think we
24 have made the restroom map layer and the URL. We
25 publicize it on the Link NYC kiosks. We did a run on

1
2 the back of TLC on the taxi TVs. We welcome ways to
3 partner with pretty much anyone, really, including a
4 bathroom influencer, Teddy Siegel, from Got2GoNYC,
5 uh, to help really promote and get that information
6 available.

7 Back to this Google map, I think what I have
8 learned from talking to colleagues and government
9 that have created, you know, different types of maps
10 like, we are drowning in data and information, but at
11 the end of the day, if it doesn't go to where users
12 are actually using it, it's still quite a bit of a
13 gap.

14 And, so, we think that, to be quite honest, the
15 most effective way is if Google could just make it
16 available when they, you know, when anybody is
17 opening up that map, and they could just see it. That
18 would be the North Star.

19 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: And has a formal request
20 been made to Google from the city of New York?

21 CHIEF PUBLIC REALM OFFICER LIU: Yes, I have
22 reached out to them to ask them, uhm, to see if they
23 might be able to help us instead of doing a layer,
24 which is an extra step, to just make it available.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay, thank you. Council
3 Member Brewer did you have a couple questions as
4 well?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yes, for Google, uh,
6 William Floyd (phonetic) gets many questions I'm
7 sure. But, uh, we also want them, thanks to DORIS, to
8 put up the cosigns, so that we know that when
9 somebody's name is up on a sign, in this amazing
10 website that DORIS is building... So, just so you
11 know, there are a lot of requests of William Floyd.

12 Do you know who he is?

13 CHIEF PUBLIC REALM OFFICER LIU: Yes...

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Former intern, me.

15 (LAUGHTER)

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Uhm, a couple of
17 questions, number on the POPS, is it the law that
18 POPS are supposed to have bathrooms, or does it
19 depend on each contract. Do you know?

20 CHIEF PUBLIC REALM OFFICER LIU: I believe it
21 depends on each contract.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So can... we should we
23 change this that every POPS should have a bathroom?

24 CHIEF PUBLIC REALM OFFICER LIU: That is something
25 that we are talking to Department of City Planning

1 about in terms of the way that they set up
2 incentives. As I understand, it, Council Member, the
3 tools at DCP's disposal, is incentives and not
4 mandates, but would love to further sort of explore
5 that if there's a way to put a finer point on that.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I think... I must admit,
7 that would make it a lot easier, because they're
8 very... I don't know where they are, uh, there's a
9 map. I know. In Manhattan, there are many. And there
10 are many people that could take advantage of them.

11 I don't know when you have a POPS where there is
12 a bathroom if there's any insignia or any
13 indications, public space. You know, the ones that I
14 know that are in the 60s, they do have bathrooms,
15 because they have inside space. But, then there are
16 many, of course, that are public parks and they may
17 or may not have.

18 So, that would be worth exploring.

19 Uh, Second, for the Parks Department. So, we just
20 did a big study, a big study of bathrooms. Did you
21 see it? We got a lot of press. And the issue is, you
22 know, they're in bad shape. You need money.

23 How are we gonna address this bathroom problem?
24 Because, you'd have many more bathrooms to deal with
25

1
2 this issue if the Parks Department would upgrade
3 their quality.

4 And, then, the second question I have is, Bryant
5 Park, Bella Abzug Park, they both have the best
6 bathrooms in Manhattan, in the parks, just so you
7 know, happen to know that. Bryant has an attendant,
8 because they have the funding for that.

9 So do you think you need attendants in the
10 bathrooms in order to keep them up to date? In which
11 case you should say that.

12 CHIEF DRURY: So I'll thank you for the questions.
13 I'll take them in in two parts.

14 I think we did see the Council's report. And, you
15 know, I'll point out that the report notably did
16 focus on 50, you know, 51 locations that Park's own
17 inspections found to be, you know, having a series of
18 challenges in terms of maintenance, and it sounds as
19 if the Council's report bore that out.

20 And, so, we are constantly looking at ways of,
21 you know, there are some facilities that are
22 intensely used and a challenge to keep, you know,
23 pristine. And, I... and we're dedicated, obviously,
24 to... our employees work tirelessly and are highly
25 dedicated to keeping those... So, we thank the

1
2 Council for its, you know, advocacy and its support
3 in all these efforts. And, you know, we're hoping to
4 work closely with you moving forward on further
5 efforts.

6 And, as for the idea of attendants, there you
7 know, there are oh, I guess, we were refer to it as
8 fixed post staff. Like, there is... there is sort of
9 a combination of models for our maintenance staff,
10 but there are many locations. I don't know that
11 attendant is quite the right term, because they would
12 have maintenance responsibility throughout the park.

13 But, certainly more steady presence is... that we
14 are quite often able to provide, and we're very proud
15 of it.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, so, are you I mean,
17 I don't want to belabor the point, but one bathroom I
18 need is \$13 million, and the other is \$2.5, just to
19 give you some numbers.

20 So, but, I guess my question is, as part of the
21 Public Realm, or as part of the Parts Department,
22 what kind of focus is there for funding for these
23 bathrooms at parks? Because you need to fix them up.

24

25

1 CHIEF DRURY: For sure. And as I think our Chief
2 Public Realm Officer has pointed out that, you know,
3 the City is in the process of several renovation
4 projects and new... and construction of new restrooms
5 throughout the city, and we're gonna continue to
6 expand that effort even further.
7

8 So, we're... this administration is investing,
9 you know, millions and millions of dollars in these
10 restroom repairs.

11 Having said that, you know, we have over 700
12 public restroom buildings, you know, many of which
13 have been around for, you know, ages. And, you know,
14 and like any other public facility, you know, they're
15 gonna, you know, keeping it in a state of good repair
16 does require that investment. That's something we're
17 dedicated to. We work closely with the Mayor's Office
18 and OMB in making sure that we're investing wisely.

19 And, you know, there's always more to do. We, you
20 know, we work... so that's but that's an ongoing
21 process that we're focused on.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: One of the problems, and
23 I'll let you go is, as you know, if you're white, you
24 can walk into any hotel. I know where every bathroom
25

1 is in every hotel in the borough Manhattan. And you
2 can walk in and use the bathroom.
3

4 If you're Black or brown and particularly young,
5 you feel that somebody's going to stop you. That's
6 reality. I've seen it with my own eyes.

7 So, the public bathrooms are more important than
8 ever, because it is... the bathroom hotel
9 discrimination is real. (TIMER CHIMES)

10 So, I'm just saying, fix the parks, put it a
11 priority, and then maybe POPS or something else...
12 Obviously, public buildings could work. The municipal
13 building, I that is somewhat open. If you know to go
14 there, you go to second floor, I know how to do it
15 right upstairs, but it's, you know, it's not public.
16 There's no sign that says come... that would be an
17 example. You could put that on a sign, because you
18 don't have to go through the scanners to do it.

19 Thank you very much. I can give you every public
20 bathroom that could go in every public building.
21 Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I think we're gonna have to
23 set up a meeting between Gale and Laura after this to
24 go through all of these. But, I could not agree more
25 wholeheartedly with Council Member Brewer's

1 sentiments about the discrimination that exists in
2 hotels, in restaurants, and the differences in how
3 white people and people of color are treated, and the
4 importance of access to public bathrooms for all New
5 Yorkers. And, ,you know, mentioned the map that's on
6 LinkNYC kiosks, but it's only through QR code, so if
7 you don't have a smart phone to take a picture of it
8 to figure out where the bathroom is, it's not going
9 to be all that helpful to you.

11 So, you know, I just think we need to... We have
12 a lot of work to do in this space. I think that's why
13 this package of legislation is so important.

14 We have promised to get you out of here in four
15 minutes. And Council Member Nurse has one final
16 question. And, then, we will move on.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: I'm gonna be very fast.

18 I want to talk about the automated public
19 toilets what's the company named JC? (INAUDIBLE)

20 Just want to double check for how they're
21 accommodating the multiple needs of a public
22 restroom. So, one of the things that that I gripe
23 about is not all the... a lot of stalls in our
24 public bathrooms don't have a sink in them. And as

25

1
2 people are utilizing menstrual cups, for example, if
3 you don't have sink, it's quite it's messy.

4 I won't go into details here, but making sure
5 that someone can change their diaper, making, you
6 know, there's needs of workers. People who are...
7 especially are delivery workers, they need to lock up
8 a bike near it.

9 So, just wondering how these this... this company
10 that's installing this and redesigning it, how
11 they're accommodating all of that, all of those
12 different needs in some of their redesign work?

13 CHIEF PUBLIC REALM OFFICER LIU: Those are
14 absolutely great points. And we can absolutely circle
15 back with you to get more specific.

16 I know that JCDecaux is in the process, right,
17 of updating the units that they are giving to New
18 York City as part of this massive, like, FCRC
19 (Franchise and Concession Review Committee) franchise
20 agreement that has just been re-upped.

21 I know that a lot of the elements have to do with
22 the kind of water and sewer electrical connections in
23 these new units so that they're less underground
24 intensive.

1
2 To the other amenities, the critical amenities
3 that you're talking about, we can circle back with
4 you just to make sure how the new designs are
5 accounting for.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER NURSE: Okay. I can submit the
7 question and followup. And, then, the only other
8 thing I would say is that, somebody had come to us
9 about looking at commercial corridors where they are
10 vacant storefronts, because it sounds like the
11 plumbing issue, and water, and all the underground
12 networks is a big issue. And, you know, I think we
13 should be looking at vacant storefronts where you can
14 be setting up stalls that can be publicly managed and
15 have workers, because that kinda cuts out half of
16 your stuff. Right? You're just doing internal
17 plumbing and filings some paperwork. And I think we
18 should be exploring that kind of model similar to
19 what you mentioned in your testimony... somebody's
20 testimony, about, you know, cities paying businesses
21 or incentivizing it. We could also be, you know,
22 doing RFPs for people to manage these things.

23 And lastly, I do hope that Parks comes next
24 budget season and asks for more money for maintenance
25 workers, because we're three budget cycles in, and

1 everyone says we do the best with what we got, but
2 it's not enough. And every time you guys just tell us
3 to our face that you have what you need and you
4 don't. So just come and tell us what you need. And
5 we'll fight for it.

6 We're already fighting for it, but, you know, we
7 need the workforce to accommodate this, so that
8 the... our bathrooms, you know, don't have smeared
9 feces as people were mentioning outside today. We
10 need it to be clean and safe.

11 Thank you, Chair.

12 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you very much, Council
13 Member Nurse. I just, again, want to echo those
14 sentiments. I think one of the greatest shortcomings
15 in the budget that was adopted this year was the lack
16 of funding for the Parks Department. It is a major
17 problem. We see it manifest in each of our districts
18 and our communities every single day. We do not have
19 the staff in the Parks Department that we need to
20 maintain our parks in appropriate conditions. And, we
21 have fought hard for additional funding, and as
22 anyone who is involved in this budget process would
23 know, OMB rejected it. And The Mayor's Office
24 rejected it. And, we were only able to secure some
25

1 additional resources for Parks, but we needed far
2 more. And, I couldn't agree with Council Member Nurse
3 more, we need that addressed immediately.
4

5 I am going to just take a moment since, uh, we
6 did not receive in person testimony from the
7 Administration on our legislation to repeal the
8 Mayor's form. Uh, we did receive written testimony
9 from Tiffany Raspberry, the Director of
10 Intergovernmental and External Affairs for the Office
11 of the Mayor. She has joined our committee a couple
12 times this year, so maybe she's sick of us.

13 Uhm, but, I do want to respond directly some of
14 the issues we found in her testimony.

15 She noted that the Council had made 450 requests
16 using this form since it was created in April. That
17 means that a council member is submitting one and a
18 half requests per month.

19 I bother city agencies and need information from
20 city agencies one and a half times every 15 minutes.
21 Right? It means that nobody's completing this form,
22 that it's not working.

23 Senator Schumer's office, according to the
24 Freedom Information Act request from a month or so
25 ago, has submitted the form zero times.

1
2 Senator Gillibrand's office has submitted the
3 form zero times.

4 Governor Hochul's office has submitted one form.

5 Congress members of Ocasio-Cortez, Velazquez,
6 Espaillat, have completed the form once.

7 So, what's clear is that some elected officials
8 who are cozy with the Administration don't need to
9 submit the form, and other elected officials are been
10 directed to submit.

11 And plain and simple, the Mayor and City Hall
12 should not be directing city agencies to respond to
13 elected officials based on whether they are a friend
14 or a critic, whether they are a Democrat or a
15 Republican. All of us have been duly elected to serve
16 our communities, to ensure that our streets are
17 clean, that our neighborhoods are safe, and agencies
18 have Charter mandated responsibility to work with
19 bodies of elected officials and council members to do
20 our collective jobs.

21 And this form has just plain and simple gotten in
22 the way, and these claims for efficiency or
23 disingenuous and bogus.

24 And that is why 37 council members, as of this
25 morning, have coprime sponsored this legislation to

1
2 repeal the form once and for all and clarify the
3 language in the Charter that city agencies are
4 directed to work with council members and other
5 bodies of elected officials.

6 So, I just wanted to say that very plainly.

7 Of course, if anyone from the Administration
8 would like to respond, you're more than welcome, but
9 I'm gonna guess that the answer is no.

10 So I'd like to now turn over to Council Member
11 Gutiérrez, who I know was gonna comment on her
12 legislation and ask some questions.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you, Chair. Good
14 to see everyone.

15 My questions are regarding... (CROSS-TALK)

16 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Can I just say, and I know
17 Ms. Liu, you have to leave. So, we totally
18 understand, thank you for being with us this morning.
19 Sorry...

20 CHIEF PUBLIC REALM OFFICER LIU: Thank you so
21 much...

22 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Council Member Gutiérrez.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Uh, my questions are
24 specifically about Intro 191. So, I am going to
25

1 direct them to Executive Deputy Commissioner for DCAS
2 on that.

3
4 So, just a quick second of context regarding this
5 bill. I'm not too sure how long you've been at DCAS,
6 but there was a beloved privately rented day care in
7 the south side of Williamsburg -- now we're coming up
8 on 10 years next fall -- who had for a long time
9 secured 20 year leases when the City could do 20 year
10 leases to operate this childcare facility.

11 And the staff at the daycare approached me at the
12 time as a staffer, and now Brooklyn Borough President
13 -- previous Council Member Reynoso, saying, "We think
14 our lease is up." Right?

15 And, so, these are... the tenants of the property
16 saying, we have no sense of the lease, but we think
17 that the lease is up. Our landlord, we're in prime
18 real estate in Williamsburg, is bringing people in to
19 look at the building. We have no sense if we're gonna
20 be able to renew our lease. We have over a 180 kids
21 at this particular facility. We have over 45 staff
22 members at this particular facility. This will be a
23 huge loss.

24 Now, what started... and Chair Restler at the
25 time was it part of the Administration and part of

1 the solution there, was started, like, an 18 to 20
2 month process of trying to figure out how to work
3 with this landlord, this private landlord, who had no
4 incentive of renewing a lease, who had very little
5 communication with the City -- my understanding, it
6 was the only ability... it was the only line of
7 access was between DCAS directly and the landlord.
8

9 The tenant traditionally has no say when renewing
10 that lease. And, so this is the really the spirit and
11 inspiration of this bill.

12 Next year, they'll be coming up on their 10 year,
13 and we'll be having this fight all over again. And, I
14 fear that it happens more and more as specifically
15 gentrifying in vulnerable communities where there is
16 little incentive to continue to do business with the
17 City, whether that be for a childcare facility or a
18 senior center.

19 And we're not getting enough notice from the
20 City, from DCAS, in this instance, to really help, to
21 be a part of the process where folks in the community
22 that have relationships with these landlords, and I
23 think it wasn't until we were able to step in that
24 there was a much more favorable outcome of that
25 lease.

1
2 So, the spirit of the bill is to give tenants who
3 have the relationship with those tenants... with the
4 landlords, excuse me, two years notice.

5 Now, from your testimony, I know it says you're
6 reviewing the impact. Uh, you're checking with your
7 Law Department on the City's ability to meet the
8 obligations.

9 What is the... The bill is merely calling for,
10 like, physical mail and an email two years before.

11 What are you anticipating is the impact on the
12 agency's ability to meet that requirement?

13 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: So,
14 thank you for your question. And you raised a lot of
15 issues that I'm gonna try and break down.

16 So, the instance that you are talking about, and
17 I was not at DCAS, I have been there eight years, but
18 was not there during this particular instance.

19 However, 4-203 of the Ad Code deals with City
20 owned property in the way the City leases or licenses
21 that under a short term agreement.

22 The issue that you're talking about is a private
23 landlord that leases to the City, and that's under...
24 this part of the code does not apply.

1
2 So, when we lease what we call "lease in", so we
3 lease from private landlords to support city
4 agencies. Those are negotiations that we do, and we
5 could put in the lease. And, we certainly could put
6 something in the lease to talk about expiration and
7 how much notice the landlord gives.

8 And, I think what you're talking about here is a
9 day care, which would have then been, uhm, sometimes
10 a private entity comes in to run that day care, and
11 it's a city's lease, but we have an organization
12 that's running that. That's generally not the model.
13 Usually, it's the city agency itself. But, there are
14 times when a city agency if knows it's going to...
15 the lease is going expire, the landlord's not going
16 renew.

17 So, we can certainly talk to you about how we can
18 change our language that we put into the lease before
19 entering into that agreement with the landlord to
20 prevent exactly what you're talking about.

21 Currently, there's no... there are no
22 regulations, and this would not address that issue.
23 So, we're absolutely ,you know, this is an issue for
24 even city agencies that end up where a landlord does
25 not want to renew or is not reasonable with the

1 terms. But, generally, it's free market without a lot
2 of controls around those areas.
3

4 So, absolutely, we can talk about what Council
5 thinks that we would like to see in the leases in
6 order to at least know when we're when we start
7 negotiating, which is about 2 years (TIMER CHIMES)
8 before expiration...

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Mm-hmm

10 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: uhm,
11 how we can either know that the landlord's going to
12 permit the City to stay as tenant or its subtenant,
13 not subtenant, but operator, or whether we need to
14 find new space.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Chair, can I just ask a
16 couple more questions, my apologies.

17 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Take as much time as you
18 would like...

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you, perfect.

20 Uh, so you're right, it's... I think these are
21 unique lease agreements that the City goes in to go
22 in with to private landlords for, in this case, and
23 in multiple cases in my districts, so not just a day
24 care center, I'm highlighting (INAUDIBLE, but also I
25

1
2 have multiple senior centers that are in the same
3 scenario.

4 So I get that that is probably the least common,
5 but it happened very recently just in Ridgewood
6 during the summer. So, I'm glad that you're open to
7 the communication, but I just think it's a little
8 concerning that that the Administration has been
9 seeing this happen for multiple years now and that
10 it's not something that is like just one extra step.

11 At this point, in these particular scenarios of
12 privately owned properties, does DCAS have a process
13 to provide tenants with notice that their lease is
14 expiring?

15 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: Are you
16 talking about when it's private property...

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Yes...

18 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: that
19 the city occupies?

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Mm-hmm.

21 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: Are you
22 saying is there a rule that we would notify our
23 tenant, which is usually a city agency, or are you
24 talking only about when there's an operator in that
25 space...

1 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Let's do both so that
2 I'm clear...

3 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: Okay.
4 There is a process where DCAS notifies our tenants.
5 So, say it's Department of Finance... (CROSS-TALK)

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: If it's a city
7 agency....

8 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: city
9 agency...

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Okay...

11 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: and
12 that lease is going to expire in two years. We
13 contact... we monitor when the lease is going to
14 expire, contact the agency, and the agency makes an
15 assessment -- Do we still need to keep that space?
16 And they submit a form to keep that space.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Two years?

18 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: Yes...
19 (CROSS-TALK)

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-
21 TALK)

22 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: Yeah,
23 Our... Uh, it is two, for some it's longer, but it's
24 at least usually two years where we are reaching out
25

1
2 or the agency reaches out to us to do that
3 assessment.

4 So, in the case of an operator, which you're
5 talking... (CROSS-TALK)

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Private...

7 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: about
8 senior centers or day care, those are really the only
9 places where we have operators. Just so you know for
10 day cares, that whole portfolio has been transferred
11 to DOE.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Mm-hmm.

13 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: And day
14 cares were very difficult as our senior centers and
15 very difficult to site.

16 So, it is probably a longer process where we
17 might give three years to the to the tenant who
18 probably would like to stay there.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Something that they...
20 the policy was before being transferred to DOE or
21 moving forward, that's what you're doing now.

22 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: I'm not
23 sure what DOE does with respect to their taking over
24 those leases, but I do know that DCAS would start
25

1 negotiating usually well before for or at that two
2 year period...

3
4 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Right.

5 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: So,
6 yes, the so to answer your question succinctly, the
7 tenant would know that this is when they're expiring.
8 It just might be that we cannot work out a deal with
9 the landlord.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Okay...

11 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: That's
12 the most common... (CROSS-TALK)

13 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: So, in both scenarios,
14 the tenant, whether they're an agency or a nonprofit,
15 in my instance, would know well within two years of
16 the lease expiring that there's... your lease is up,
17 we are attempting to renegotiate?

18 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM:
19 Correct, it's just that we may not be able to get to
20 resolution. And, that's probably where the
21 uncertainty for both the City and the operator come
22 into place.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, well, that didn't
24 happen ten years ago, but we're moving forward.

25 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: Okay.

1 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Can you give me a
2 sense... And just two more questions, I apologize.

3 Do you have a sense of just how many of these
4 properties DCAS has where there in... where there's a
5 private landlord and an operator, a nonprofit, like
6 you said, mainly day cares and senior centers. Do you
7 have a sense of how many of those leases you are all
8 a part of considering, yes, that the DOE now does the
9 day care? And do you have a sense of where they're
10 located or can you share?

11 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: I don't
12 have it, uh, with me today, but I can absolutely get
13 you that information very quickly.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Okay.

15 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: And the
16 request for the day cares, uh, would be properly made
17 to DOE. I can give you the number that we have when
18 we transferred that portfolio... (CROSS-TALK)

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: (INAUDIBLE)

20 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: And I
21 can certainly get you the number of senior centers
22 that are operated, that... where we do the lease and
23 have the senior center operator in place.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Excellent. And, then,
3 my last question, do you... I guess, what do you do
4 in the instances where tenants are not made aware?
5 Uhm, I don't know, maybe they're not checking...
6 There's, unfortunately, specifically with day care,
7 there tends to be a lot of turnover because of
8 terrible wages. And, so, often times, the
9 communication that would go to someone, that person
10 is no longer there.

11 What do you do in those... how many touches do
12 you try to do with the tenant in that instance to
13 ensure that they're aware, their lease is expiring,
14 and that you are in negotiations?

15 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: I would
16 say repeatedly and multiple. Because, it puts DCAS
17 in... the longer we wait to begin those negotiations,
18 the more difficult it is, and certainly in a timely
19 process. You know, another step for both of these is
20 that ULURP is required. So if ULURP is about to
21 expire, then we need to start that process very
22 early, which is usually more than the two years.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Yeah...

24 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: So, I
25 would say often and multiple times.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, thank you. Thank
3 you, Chair.

4 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you so much, Council
5 Member Gutiérrez for this great bill. I always think
6 of it as the Nuestros Niños (phonetic) bill. Save
7 Nuestros Niños legislation, I think that's the new
8 branding.

9 The, uhm, and I'll just say when I worked in the
10 previous administration, it was always one of the
11 things that I tried to monitor closely with DCAS,
12 with ACS, with DFTA (Department for the Aging) of
13 ,like, where we might have leases that are coming up
14 where we're struggling with the landlord. Because,
15 there's nothing more devastating for a community, for
16 a senior center, or a child care center to lose their
17 lease and for us to not have a viable alternative in
18 the heart of Williamsburg where property is just so
19 damn expensive. Right?

20 And, so, if Council Member Gutierrez and the
21 tenants have as much advanced notice as possible, she
22 can help. We can help find ways to identify
23 solutions.

24

25

1
2 So, I know that now it sounds like that it didn't
3 happen ten years ago, but it more often is happening
4 now that notice is being provided.

5 I just wondered from your experience, both in
6 your role at DCAS and previous Law Department, do you
7 think we could pursue kind of boilerplate language in
8 contracts or license agreements that require this
9 notification? Is that a better approach? Is that an
10 alternative approach or a complimentary approach in
11 addition to the bill that could be helpful?

12 What you think? I don't mean to put you on the
13 spot, but I would be interested in your insight.

14 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: I think
15 it depends on what you notice of exactly. If it's the
16 landlord must give the City notice if it intends to
17 renew, uhm ,you know, that would have to go to Law
18 Department to see if that is something that you can
19 legislate and put into requirements for a lease.

20 If it's whether DCAS can have discussions with
21 the tenant or the operator, yes, absolutely. I can
22 guarantee we can do that at any time and have those
23 conversations start.

24 It's really, you know, unfortunately, at this
25 point, if there is no legislation, we can't control

1
2 whether the landlord will agree to renew or agree to
3 reasonable terms.

4 And, a lot of times, they have, you know,
5 everybody knows they want to keep a senior center at
6 daycare there, and the landlord sometimes is
7 unreasonable, and it takes a long time to reach an
8 agreement.

9 So I think that's the bigger issue. Sure, if you
10 could legislate it, it would be great for the City as
11 a tenant.

12 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I think there are landlords
13 that know they have us over a barrel, right, that
14 they're in a gentrifying community or they know how
15 desperate, you know, counts of Council Member
16 Dinowitz is to keep the childcare center in
17 Kingsbridge. And, you know, we're gonna pay what we
18 can pay to keep them there, and it can make those
19 negotiations tough.

20 We don't... we empathize with you and the
21 challenges of your job in securing those lease
22 agreements or license agreements. I think we just
23 want to make sure that we can strengthen the
24 communication and awareness with as much notice as
25 possible, so that great advocates like Council Member

1
2 Gutierrez can be involved in, and Nuestros Ninos have
3 awareness of what's happening so that, you know, we
4 can help as much as possible.

5 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM:

6 Absolutely. I mean, I think we can agree to do that
7 and give council members notice. And that's all of...
8 that's easily, you know, available to you. I don't
9 think this does that, and I'm not sure where you
10 would put it if you wanted to, you know, codify it.

11 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Yeah.

12 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: But, it
13 is not a problem for us to reach out to council
14 members when a senior center or day care is in the
15 district to tell you when that is going to... well,
16 the day care, it would have to be DOE, so I can't
17 agree on their part, but certainly for senior
18 centers, to let you know that that lease is about to
19 expire.

20 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Well, I really appreciate
21 your testimony, and appreciate Council Member
22 Gutierrez for this very thoughtful legislation that I
23 know she has been pushing up the hill for many years.
24 So, thank you

1
2 I think we will hear from Council Member Dinowitz
3 and then Council Member Brewer, if that works?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Yeah, I'll be quick.
5 Although, we did lose a child care center in
6 Kingsbridge. Was that a good guess?

7 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: You know, it was totally,
8 uh, you have... (CROSS-TALK)

9 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: terrible guess, at a
10 terrible thing... (CROSS-TALK)

11 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: three neighborhoods... I was
12 gonna... you have three neighborhoods, I was gonna
13 pick one of three, right? I...

14 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Yeah. We...

15 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: But, I am sorry to hear
16 about the childcare center.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: You got it right. The
18 City got it wrong, but you got it right.

19 Uhm, and I want to just quickly ask about, uhm,
20 Introduction 162, about City bicycle storage.

21 You said your testimony, DCAS currently has an
22 existing bike policy available to any tenant that
23 wishes to explore bike storage.

24 Can you talk a little more about that?
25

EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM:

Absolutely. In in compliance with the Department of Transportation's Bike Plan, DCAS has adopted that plan as its own. If there is a request from a tenant to add internal bike storage, there is a process that is controlled by the Administrative Code Title 28504, or Rules of The City of New York, Title 34 2-19.

And that provides for a tenant who wishes to have bike storage in the building to make that request and go through that process. And generally, the process is not so different from this current legislation. It's really just asking the commissioner of DCAS to do that in the buildings instead of having each tenant do it.

Now to that end, we do have some internal building bike storage, and we mostly have external bike storage where we have, you know, I'm not sure that we've gone through what this legislation is asking for the commissioner to weigh in on all 55 buildings, but certainly, we have done it for buildings that we know that we can do it.

COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Well, I'll tell you very simply, more systemically, to say where feasible, uhm, the City will find bike storage or have in their

1 buildings already existing bike storage, so that
2 employees, students, and visitors can go in, and no
3 prearranged system needs to be in place, because
4 we've done it with this legislation.
5

6 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: Sure,
7 so just to note, uh, that we don't oversee the DOE
8 buildings, though...

9 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Right...

10 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM:
11 schools. We wouldn't have jurisdiction or authority.
12 And, similarly, and I think it's kind of in all of
13 these bills, we oversee our 55 buildings. So, there
14 are obviously a lot more City properties where you
15 would want to this apply. And we can only really
16 speak for our 55 and for what our commissioner ,you
17 know, could do to take this effort on for those
18 buildings. And, then, the rest is ,you know, City
19 owned, so under the City's jurisdiction. But, not
20 DCAS... (CROSS-TALK)

21 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Right, I note that the
22 legislation does say "schools"; although, I recognize
23 that it's not you, but it's...

24 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: Okay...
25

1 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: in the legislation. So,
2 I do want to note that.

3 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: Sure.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: And you said managing
5 City owned properties and some of the limitations
6 that can potentially impede ability to enforce
7 compliance. Can you talk about some of those
8 limitations?
9

10 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: It's
11 really just what I was saying that we have the 55
12 buildings. We don't... our 55 buildings, which are
13 mostly approximately half court houses and half multi
14 tenanted office buildings, but it doesn't include
15 precincts or One Police Plaza or libraries or other
16 City buildings that this might apply to, it really is
17 those 55.

18 So, though, you know, there can... this
19 legislation would apply to all, it's difficult for
20 DCAS to wrangle the, you know, many, many, many
21 hundreds of buildings that this would apply to in
22 order enforce and to do that assessment or make other
23 commissioners do that assessment for their sites.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: I know it would be
25 difficult...

EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: But, that's why we do
this work, because it's something difficult but
important...

EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: Nothing
that we can't happen... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: to expand bike access...
(CROSS-TALK)

EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: yeah...

COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: and ability for people
to use their bicycles in New York City.

EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: It's
just that there might be... and I think we can
discuss this ,you know, going further, and offline,
that the goals can be achieved and DCAS should be
responsible for its own buildings. But, probably a
different entity within the City to kind of make sure
everyone is doing what is required by the bill and
reporting on that.

COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Okay, and would love to
talk further...

EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: Sure...

COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: and for no other reason
than I'm trying to get Council... Chair Restler to

1
2 get a bicycle, his own bicycle, and not just rely on
3 Citi Bike. (LAUGHTER) it's a great thing.

4 And, I just, I quickly want to ask for
5 Introduction 587, Deputy Commissioner, you had
6 test... I know we had discussed this at Chair
7 Gutiérrez's previous hearing about, uh, feedback, uh,
8 each time a case is marked as closed, providing a
9 feedback system, you said in your testimony that
10 you're... I wanted the code right... but, that you're
11 working on a system like that? You're, uh, you
12 appreciate our shared interest, it's not in... and,
13 you're already working on such a survey.

14 Can you talk more about that survey?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Yeah, sure, thank
16 you (TIMER CHIMES) I appreciate your recall from last
17 time.

18 We do have something in flight that is moving
19 along and believe it will meet the intent of what
20 you've identified in the bill.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: So, it's actually good
22 news, it should make it easy for you to ,you know,
23 easy for it to pass. Easier for you to support it,
24 right?

25 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Easy for?

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Easy for you to support
3 the legislation since you're already doing it.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Well, we actually
5 believe that we don't need the legislation, because
6 we are going to be able to produce this without it,
7 and it will meet the needs of what you've identified.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Can you talk more about
9 specifically what you're asking in this survey? Who
10 will receive the survey?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Sure. The design
12 captures customers who have filed a service request,
13 uh, in any way they come through to 311. And, then,
14 canvassing them after the completion of that service
15 request by the agency giving them the opportunity to
16 weigh in on that. And, then, there's the work-work
17 part of collecting that, pulling that together, you
18 know, the apparatus of pulling that together, to then
19 be able to make something that would be able to be
20 put into a report or made available publicly.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Great, well, it sounds
22 like, uhm, you know, you and the City Council are on
23 the same page. So, this should be a no-brainer to
24 actually to pass this to ensure it's codified, and
25 that we are receiving those quarterly reports, uh,

1 and that in any future administrations, they continue
2 to do this important work of feedback and
3 accountability. So, glad to hear we're on the same
4 page, and I look forward to working to try to make
5 this legislation in fact to support... what it sounds
6 like to support the work that you're already doing.
7 I'm so glad to hear that. Thank you, Chair.

9 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you very much, Council
10 Member Dinowitz. Is this is the first time you've
11 ever had three bills heard at one hearing?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: (LAUGHTER) I had a few
13 (INAUDIBLE)

14 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Basically Council Member
15 Gutiérrez and I are just taking care of you.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Well, we'll see how
17 well you take care of me if these bills pass.

18 (LAUGHTER)

19 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: That's up to the Speaker.
20 Council Member Brewer?

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much.

22 I appreciate your testimony, uh, from DCAS
23 regarding maybe working this out. The water, uhm,
24 filling stations, it makes sense to me particularly,
25 as I said earlier, because if you're telling people

1 to be healthy, you've got to have a place for them to
2 do it.

3
4 So, my question is, do any City buildings have
5 accessible fountains, or is this something that you
6 would be willing to work on? Just give me an idea?

7 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: We'd
8 absolutely be able to willing to work on this.

9 I mean, I think know, who doesn't love going to
10 the airport and you have to fill your water bottle?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Right.

12 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: I think
13 part of it is cost. You know, we kinda estimate that
14 the units that can provide, like, the multiple
15 fountain with the water bottle station is, you know,
16 three to \$5,000 just to purchase it and install it.

17 It could go upwards of that, because a lot of
18 times you have to turn the water off in the building,
19 it requires over time for installation.

20 But I think we would definitely work towards
21 that. And I think for you know, as we do ADA
22 modifications to buildings and we need to install
23 better and working water fountains that we will
24 definitely be willing to look into that and put them
25 wherever we can.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. Do you know if any
3 buildings do have such now? I don't know of anything,
4 but maybe I'm not up to date.

5 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: The
6 research that we did on this, uh, just for this, but
7 we know that there are some in really privately
8 tenanted spaces. Or if you come to ,like, the City
9 Training Center on the 24th floor, we have the
10 filling station there. And, that was ,you know, a
11 more recent remodel. But, in most of the spaces, no,
12 it is just a water fountain.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. I mean, I think it
14 would be helpful for the police, and the fire, and
15 everybody who have, uh, the same need that the rest
16 of us do, which is to have... get rid of the plastics
17 and let's use our great water.

18 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: Sure,
19 and the only other cost I did want to mention is that
20 most of those do have a service contract. And, right
21 now when we looked into it, it's about \$30 a month
22 per unit.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So, maybe we could do a
24 public/private sort of effort. Because, it seems to
25 me the whole city is trying to be healthy.

EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: Sure.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: With climate and
everything else.

Okay, well, I look forward to working with you on
this.

Thank you, Commissioner Toole, for everything. I
love DORIS as you know.

So, my question is, again, if there's something,
additional resources are needed or not to implement
this bill? I will be very nice, Mr. Chair, and list
all the people who have not submitted their archives
to DORIS, even though I have the list.

So, uhm, I guess my... No, you're not on the
list, you're okay. You haven't been here long
enough. (LAUGHTER) But, uhm, my question is, I guess
it's mostly cost and other impediments, if any, to
this, uh, bill.

COMMISSIONER TOOLE: Well, first, before I address
the question Council Member, I would like to say that
your records and the archived date before your
council terms, back to the Dinkins' Administration,
and perhaps during your role working with Council
Member Messenger, we've got a lot of stuff from you.

1
2 At the moment, this would not have an impact. The
3 proposed legislation would not have an impact on the
4 cost of harvesting. We have a contract through 2027,
5 uh, March of 2027. So adding additional accounts
6 won't have an impact. The contract provides for
7 \$26,000 increase annually through that point. So
8 adding additional social media posts will not be a
9 problem.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

11 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you very much, Council
12 Member Brewer.

13 I will just do a couple more questions of this
14 panel, and then ya'll have a great afternoon.

15 first, for Deputy Commissioner Ringelheim, could
16 you just clarify, does DCAS currently collect data on
17 which City buildings have... which of the 55 DCAS
18 buildings have bicycle storage? And do you track what
19 non... what City owned buildings have bicycle
20 storage, or is that not something you guys keep tabs
21 on?

22 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: We only
23 currently track the ones that we manage.

24 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay.
25

1 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: So, of
2 the 55.

3 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: So, the 55 you do track?
4 And, what of... Can you tell us which of... How many
5 of those 55 have bicycle storage?
6

7 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: I am
8 going to give you the latest numbers that we had as
9 of this hearing, which I was, I believe, 29 have
10 bicycle storage.

11 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay, and have you evaluated
12 the feasibility of the other 26? Of the 55 that
13 don't?

14 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: So, we
15 have. So, some... My notes... We have 19 buildings
16 that don't have it, and we have... we have various
17 reasons why they wouldn't have it. So, everything
18 from ,you know, just lack of sidewalk space to
19 install bike slots. So, 15 were not eligible to offer
20 bike storage, because it's DOT access planned. So, we
21 can give more information about why... which
22 buildings those are that don't have it, and why, and
23 which ones do have it - and which buildings also have
24 some internal storage.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: And then do you consider
3 bike storage in lease negotiations not in your
4 buildings, but in privately leased space per city
5 facilities? Is that something that comes up in
6 negotiations, or is considered?

7 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: We
8 could absolutely consider it. I'm sure it's something
9 that, uhm, should absolutely be on our checklist if
10 it's not already.

11 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I mean, we've seen the
12 number of people who bike to work double in the
13 previous decades. And, according to statistics that
14 my very, very smart chief of staff provided, 26
15 percent of workers live within 2.5 miles of where
16 they work; 45 percent live within five miles of where
17 they work. These are bikeable distances for lots of
18 New Yorkers -- if they have good bike storage at
19 their place of work. And, so ,you know, I think that
20 ,you know, we're always trying to encourage the
21 private sector to do the right thing. And it's
22 important for the public sector to be a model. And,
23 so, I think it would be helpful to better understand
24 for the City, for the DCAS operated buildings, why we
25 don't have bike storage in those places and what, if

1 anything, we could do to try to modify that. And ,you
2 know, we just appreciate your openness to thinking
3 though how we can improve upon our progress there.
4

5 And, then, wanted to also ask on the water
6 filling, uhm, do you track... I guess I was surprised
7 by could you just say again, is \$300,000 to \$500,000?

8 Was that the right number?

9 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: \$3,000
10 to \$5,000.

11 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: \$3,000 to \$5,000? Oh, geez,
12 I was really freaked out for a second there - \$3,000
13 to \$5,000, okay, great. That's a much more manageable
14 sum.

15 So do we track which city owned and city leased
16 facilities currently have water bottle filling
17 stations? Like, do we keep good data on that?

18 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: So, for
19 our buildings, I'm not sure for other agencies or
20 what they might track anything outside the 55. We do
21 track where we have water fountains, but we don't
22 have in general, with the exception of, like, tenant
23 spaces, we don't have those as water bottle filling
24 stations.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Do you think there's any way
3 if we were to do ,like, if we were to do 10 in a
4 building or a project across multiple buildings, is
5 there a way to make these capitally eligible? Do you
6 think, or would this be too (INAUDIBLE) expense?

7 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RINGELHEIM: I think
8 you would need to have a capitally eligible project,
9 and then this could be part of that project...

10 (CROSS-TALK)

11 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: (INAUDIBLE) yeah. Okay,
12 that's much smarter.

13 Great. Okay. That's very helpful.

14 And I did, Mr. Morrisroe, just want to ask, you
15 know, we get so many frustrated constituents who call
16 about maybe call 311 about issues, often, it's
17 relating to illegal parking that our cases are closed
18 out by the NYPD, and nothing has changed, and nothing
19 has been done.

20 And people will call multiple people call, people
21 call multiple times, and there's just... and they
22 close out the case, often immediately, without any
23 action having been taken. What should I tell my
24 constituents? How do we make this work, or how do we
25 ensure a degree of accountability here when there is

1 some illegal activity, and the city agency is not
2 properly responding to it? What can we do better and
3 differently here? How do we adapt to get a better
4 outcome?
5

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Thank you, Chair,
7 and I appreciate the question. I appreciate the
8 context of the question.

9 For what I focus on is really on what we call the
10 intake and referral process. And our goal then is to
11 make sure that process works. Right?

12 The collection of information, make it easy for
13 the public to access 311 in the first place. You can
14 call, you can go online, you can do a mobile app, you
15 can text, a lot of different ways.

16 So where we put our energy and our focus is
17 making sure it works upfront, and we handle the
18 intake, we handle the referral. So, that's where kind
19 of our talents, our focus, and our experience lie,
20 and that's what I could speak to.

21 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: But I do think 311 tries
22 hard to, through transparency, make sure that
23 agencies are being held accountable to do their jobs.
24 Right? You know, that's my sense coming out of
25 operations that you've always brought that mentality

1 to the work, and it's made a real difference across
2 it terms of efficacy of City services. It's been
3 enormously impactful.
4

5 Anything that you can in instances like this
6 where agencies close out cases that should have
7 been... where there should have been some action,
8 where there could have been some action. Is it just
9 the fact that there is transparent data that we can
10 see that they closed out and they didn't do anything?
11 Is that... I mean, it is kind of maddening, because
12 we don't have... We don't have much recourse. Right?

13 Is there anything else that you could suggest or
14 any ways that we could try to secure more
15 responsiveness from agencies to do their jobs?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Again, appreciate
17 the question. I will fall back on my experience and
18 what we focus on. We aim to really do well with what
19 we can control and our piece of that. And, hopefully
20 that enables everyone else that we partner with,
21 whether it be agencies, the Administration, the
22 Council, that we are getting that front end right.
23 And there is a lot of effort and a lot of focus to
24 make that work, and we are very committed to doing
25 that. And I mentioned in my testimony ,you know, the

1 dedicated team at 311. I think from experience, you
2 know what that team is like going back to our IDNYC
3 days together.
4

5 So, that's really where we put that focus. And,
6 that is our expertise.

7 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Right.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: So, we... We want
9 to...

10 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: But, then is it too easy...

11 (CROSS-TALK)

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: focus in that
13 area on what we know... (CROSS-TALK)

14 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: for agencies to close things
15 out? Right? I mean, like, I appreciate the front end
16 piece, but on the backend, and the agency... Like,
17 agencies are also using your interface and system to
18 close out a case and say that it's fine. Should we be
19 making that harder on them if... making it more...
20 adding additional hoops that they need to jump
21 through to demonstrate that they have actually done
22 their job? Like, is that something that we should be
23 pursuing more legislatively or operationally?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MORRISROE: Again, appreciate
25 the question. I don't have the expertise on what an

1 agency does to go through that process. Generally
2 speaking, I don't believe in making things harder. I
3 believe in making things easier. But, yeah, it would
4 be something that that agency, and each agency,
5 right, because ,you know, they vary in their
6 handling, so I would have to defer to how they would
7 handle that.
8

9 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I appreciate your diplomatic
10 skills. But, you know, I think that... and I
11 certainly appreciate that instinct from a good
12 government standpoint that we're trying to streamline
13 things and make it easier. But, when folks are not
14 complying with the spirit of the system, then I don't
15 know what choice we have, but to make it harder for
16 them to demonstrate that they've done the thing that
17 they claimed they did when they're filling out the...
18 when they're closing out cases without having
19 actually done any work.

20 Because, that undermines public trust and
21 confidence, and the people who they get most... I
22 mean, in addition to the agency involved, they're
23 just as mad at 311. And they say, we're calling 311,
24 we're calling 311, and we're not getting the
25 response.

1 So, they... it undermines the confidence of New
2 Yorkers in government efficacy overall. And you're
3 the front door for millions of New Yorkers every year
4 - and you do a great job. And, you shouldn't be
5 taking the brunt of that, but you do, because there
6 are agencies that are inappropriately, consistently
7 closing out cases, because they don't want to enforce
8 the law, because somebody has a vest in the dashboard
9 or a parking placard or something else.
10

11 And there are many other examples, but that's the
12 one that I hear about the most in my district, in my
13 community, and I do think we need some shift in
14 policy to actually get results.

15 So I appreciate your thoughtful answers.

16 We have been joined by my friend and colleague,
17 Jim Gennaro, Council Member, would you like to ask me
18 questions, because we're about to close this panel
19 out. You're good? Good. Thank you.

20 He survived a marathon hearing yesterday, so it's
21 good to have you back today.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GENNARO: Barely.

23 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Barely. Barely survived.

24 Well, I just want to thank... I don't want...
25 Commissioner Toole, I appreciate your thoughtful

1 feedback on Council Member Brewer's legislation. I
2 think it's a great bill, and I think your edits would
3 make it... your amendments would make it better.
4

5 And I just want to thank the three of you for
6 joining us today, being so generous with your time,
7 and thoughtful in answering questions. We really
8 appreciate it. Thank you so much.

9 PANEL: Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I am now opening the hearing
11 for public testimony.

12 I would like to remind members of the public that
13 this is a formal government proceeding and that
14 decorum shall be observed at all times. As such,
15 members of the public shall remain silent at all
16 times.

17 The witness table is reserved for people who wish
18 to testify. No video recording or photography is
19 allowed from the witness table.

20 Further, members of the public may not present
21 audio or video recordings as testimony, but may
22 submit transcripts of such recordings to the Sergeant
23 at Arms for inclusion in the hearing record.

24 If you wish to speak at today's hearing, please
25 fill out an appearance card with the Sergeant at Arms

1 and wait to be recognized. When recognized, you will
2 have three minutes to speak on today's hearing
3 topics: *Increasing Government Efficiency and Access*
4 *to City Facilities.*

5
6 If you have a written statement, or additional
7 written testimony that you wish to submit for the
8 record, please provide copy of that testimony to the
9 Sergeant at Arms. You may also email written
10 testimony to testimony@council.nyc.gov within 72
11 hours after the close of this hearing.

12 Audio and video recordings will not be accepted.

13 We will start with... We will do two bathroom
14 panels to start. So, I would like to call up Daniel
15 Alam, on behalf of borough president Mark Levine; Jon
16 Caceres from PeePass and Bushwick it looks like,
17 maybe Ridgewood; Alison Wilkey from Coalition for the
18 Homeless; and Theodora Siegel.

19 And if I butcher anybody's names, you have my
20 great apologies. You don't need to be sworn in, so
21 we're just going to have good time. You all can
22 present in whichever order you would like. You each
23 have three minutes to testify, thank you.

24 DANIEL ALAM: Good afternoon, Chair Restler, and
25 members of the Committee on Government Operations,

1 State and Federal Operations. My name is Daniel Alam,
2 and I am a senior policy analyst for Manhattan
3 Borough President Mark Levine, and I will be
4 testifying on his behalf today.
5

6 Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony
7 at today's hearing on *Increasing Government*
8 *Efficiency and Access To City Facilities*.

9 There are many valuable topics this hearing is
10 sure to explore, including ensuring government
11 processes are inclusive of gender identity and
12 language diversity, expanding access to public
13 building resources, ensuring 311 is responsive to
14 public needs, and more.

15 My testimony submission will focus on the
16 legislation. I am proud to sponsor, with Council
17 Member Joseph, Intro 267 a bill that builds on our
18 work to ensure more public bathrooms are built, that
19 more existing bathrooms reopen, and that the public,
20 knows where they can access a bathroom, and that
21 bathrooms remain accessible and function for public
22 needs.

23 As of now, there are fewer than 1,200 public
24 bathrooms for 8,600,000 residents. That's roughly one
25 for every 6,000 New Yorkers. Every New Yorker,

1
2 tourist, and resident alike, knows what it is like to
3 be searching for a public bathroom But public
4 bathroom access is also a sign of a more inclusive
5 accessible city.

6 A public bathroom is a place where one can change
7 into a new outfit while during a during a menstrual
8 period, to change diapers, to support a basic human
9 need without any extra cost.

10 A lack of public bathrooms is an equity issue
11 across gender, disability, age, income, and more.
12 Bathroom access should be a basic human.

13 We have made huge strides in recent years
14 expanding access to public bathrooms. Recently, the
15 Mayor announced that in the next 5 years NYC Parks
16 will be building and refurbishing 82 public
17 restrooms, including 28 new public restrooms in
18 Manhattan.

19 The City will also be establishing a joint task
20 force to site and approve 14 new high-tech, self-
21 cleaning, automated public toilets on city streets
22 and plazas.

23 The MTA has reopened dozens of public bathrooms
24 temporarily closed during the pandemic with at least
25

1 62 stations currently offering bathroom access to New
2 Yorkers.
3

4 We applaud these results, and have been glad to
5 partner with local agencies, and Council Member Rita
6 Joseph, who we have partnered with on several cases
7 of legislation on public bathrooms.

8 We still can do so much more. It is not enough to
9 be building new public bathrooms, we also must be
10 working to open up more existing bathrooms to the
11 public. These efforts must start with city buildings,
12 by opening city run facility bathrooms to the city
13 itself.

14 Intro 0267-2024 would require the Department of
15 Citywide Administration Services to work with the
16 heads of all agencies managing or operating city
17 facilities to identify and open every available
18 bathroom to public use during each facility's
19 operating hours, including ADA accessible bathrooms.

20 This bill would also require signage by each
21 bathroom's location, hours, and accessibility for
22 persons with disabilities. With these bathroom's
23 locations would be posted to a City website listing
24 all public bath terms in the city and included in a
25

1
2 city land use (TIMER CHIMES) list maintained by the
3 Department of Citywide Administration Services.

4 This won't solve our public restroom challenges
5 by itself. More must be done to fix the current
6 restroom stock, particularly to ensure that they are
7 well maintained and accessible to all New Yorkers.

8 And we must push the MTA to open public restrooms
9 underground, and to make more digital signage and
10 announcements on trains to ensure New Yorkers know
11 public bathrooms.

12 We must use every tool on our toolkit in this
13 effort.

14 I thank you for your consideration, and look
15 forward to working with the Council, and the
16 Administration, to keep expanding access to public
17 bathrooms and building a more equitable New York City
18 for all of us.

19 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you very much for your
20 testimony. I just want to commend Borough President
21 Levine for his leadership on this issue. And it has
22 been noted and valuable, and we really appreciate it
23 here in the Council, thank you.

24 DANIEL ALAM: Thank you, Chair.
25

1 ALISON WILKEY: My name is Alison Wilkey, and I'm
2 testifying on behalf of both the Coalition for the
3 Homeless and the Legal Aid Society and also as part
4 of the Free to Pee campaign.
5

6 thank you for the opportunity to testify on this
7 really important issue. I want to just make a few
8 quick points here.

9 You know, the Coalition for the Homeless in
10 particular works with a lot of unsheltered people,
11 and the need for public bathrooms is something that
12 we have consistently heard for years.

13 We did a report called A View From the Streets in
14 2021 where we surveyed 200 unsheltered New Yorkers.
15 And the lack of public bathrooms was a challenge that
16 was identified by so many people, and just the
17 lengths that people go to try and find bathrooms
18 throughout their day as they're trying to meet their
19 other survival needs is really incredible and
20 challenging for folks.

21 No one wants to have to do their business in
22 public, and none of us want people to have to do
23 their business in public. But the fact is that that
24 does happen, and the City's response right now is
25 completely wrongheaded.

1 From the Mayor's Management Report that was just
2 released on Monday, it showed that summonses from
3 NYPD for public urination went up 46 percent from the
4 last fiscal year, and those numbers have always
5 been...have already been on the rise over the past
6 couple of years.
7

8 So it's an outrageous response that we're
9 criminalizing people for a basic human need when we
10 don't have the infrastructure that we need.

11 And I don't want to bring us back to the trauma
12 of the early days of the pandemic, but the fact is
13 that there are some lessons that we should have
14 learned from that. When many of the places, the
15 unsheltered people use bathrooms, like public
16 library, or businesses shut down, people did not have
17 a place to go. And our mobile food pantry was still
18 out there giving people food. And every night, we had
19 people begging us for bathrooms and a place to wash
20 their hands as just a matter of basic hygiene. And we
21 pleaded with the City to provide bathrooms at that
22 time, and those calls were not answered.

23 And so from our own funds, the Coalition for the
24 Homeless, paid for some trailers and for attendants
25 to disinfect bathrooms after every use as an

1
2 emergency measure. And that was a short term measure
3 that we did, but it does show that if we take this
4 seriously, we can mobilize and make sure that people
5 have access to public bathrooms.

6 So we really urge the Council to pass Intro 694,
7 267, alongside Intro 272 as a package to really just
8 address the shameful lack of public bathrooms, and we
9 look forward to working with the Council more on
10 this.

11 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you very much.

12 TEDDY SIEGEL: Good afternoon, I'm Teddy Siegel,
13 and I'm the founder of Got To Go, a social media
14 based mission dedicated to sharing accessible
15 bathroom locations.

16 In the middle of Times Square, in July 2021, I
17 sipped the last of my iced coffee and realized I had
18 to go. After several businesses turned me away, I
19 burst into a McDonald's in tears, only to be told the
20 bathroom was for customers only. I paid \$3.00 for a
21 bottle of water, ran up a flight of stairs, and found
22 the door unlocked. I thought to myself, if only I had
23 a resource that showed me where the closest bathroom
24 was, I could have just gone in and used the toilet,
25 saving my time, money, and anxiety. I took a video of

1 the outside of the McDonald's and posted it on a
2 TikTok account I created later that night "Got2Go
3 NYC." I hoped that sharing this information would
4 offer relief to at least one other person.
5

6 As of today, my crowdsourced bathroom map is
7 Google's largest and most frequently used map in the
8 world, having garnered thousands of locations and
9 thousands of editors.

10 My community has also grown. Today, there are
11 over half a million people across all my social media
12 platforms, and my content has reached over a 100
13 million people.

14 While I am proud of my work, I'm not saying these
15 numbers to brag, but to underscore the gravity of
16 this issue. Got2Go was born out of a direct result of
17 the City's failures. It's extremely alarming that
18 sharing videos of accessible bathroom locations on
19 TikTok would resonate with millions of people.

20 I've learned from my Got2Go community that New
21 York City's lack of public restrooms is not only a
22 quality of life and public health issue, but it's an
23 equity crisis. What might be considered an occasional
24 nuisance for all New Yorkers is a pressing issue for
25 many.

1
2 In February of 2022, a man commented on my page
3 "I'm a big Black guy who does deliveries at night. I
4 don't even try at this point." Later that month, I
5 received another comment. "I used your account when I
6 was homeless. Thank you for real."

7 Realizing that this is so much more than just
8 bathrooms, I encouraged my community to submit their
9 own bathroom struggles. A 44-year-old New York City
10 resident with irritable bowel syndrome had to
11 defecate between two parked cars on their morning
12 commute. A homeless couple were denied the bathroom
13 code to a café, despite offering to buy something
14 with their limited funds. A tourist from London
15 witnessed her elderly friend wet herself. A trans man
16 tore his pelvic floor due to holding it in for so
17 long, because the park bathroom stalls were missing
18 doors.

19 As a says, cisgender white woman, I'm aware of
20 the inherent privilege that my appearance in
21 orientation gives me. I can walk into most hotels and
22 use their lobby bathroom without being questioned or
23 told to leave. This is not the case for the majority
24 of people who live in New York City.
25

1 And this is New York City, the greatest city in
2 the world. Why are we ranked 93rd in the nation when
3 it comes to bathrooms per capita? Why was a 27-year-
4 old New York City resident forced to bleed through
5 her pants in a CVS while holding a box of tampon she
6 bought begging to use the restroom? Why did a 22-
7 year-old camp counselor at Prospect Park have no
8 choice but to change children in a bathroom where
9 human feces was smeared on the floors and walls for
10 days on end, despite having reported it to The Parks
11 Department? (TIMER CHIMES) Why was a New York City
12 school teacher left with no choice but to endure a
13 humiliating accident in her car after being turned
14 away from several businesses in search of a bathroom?
15

16 This legislation package has the potential to
17 positively impact the lives of every single person
18 who lives in or travels to New York City. Because no
19 matter who you are, where you're from, or what you
20 believe in, everybody's got to go, and we all deserve
21 the right to do so in peace. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you so much.

23 JON CACERES: Good morning, Chairman Restler, and
24 everyone else. My name is John Caceres, you said my
25 name perfectly, by the way, so thank you for that.

1
2 I'm a software engineer, and I am a co-founder
3 and a CTO of a startup called PeePass. We're new to
4 the game. My team and I just launched a mobile app on
5 the App Store dedicated to helping New Yorkers and
6 visitors locate restrooms across the city.

7 I'm here today to speak in strong support of the
8 two proposed bills, both of which aim to address the
9 critical issue of public restroom accessibility in
10 New York.

11 I'm going to sound like a broken record here, so
12 bear with me. In my capacity as a cofounder, my team
13 and I have conducted hundreds of interviews with a
14 wide range of people across the City, residents,
15 tourists, city workers, and those who simply enjoy
16 spending time outdoors. Their stories mirror my own
17 frustrations, as well as everyone else's
18 frustrations, but they also provide a deeper insight
19 into how these issues affect different communities in
20 unique ways.

21 We've all heard these stories before, and these
22 stories and experiences led to the conception of
23 PeePass.

24 We're doing things differently, trying to do
25 things differently, we're an app that contains over

1 400 locations, crowdsourced, just like Got2Go, and
2 managed by users of the platform. But it's not a
3 Google Maps layer. It's not a Google Maps list of
4 outdated information. It contains live data along
5 with hours. Users can add reviews and ratings as well
6 as submit possible issues with restrooms. They can
7 also add new restrooms along with photos to help
8 users of the app locate them.
9

10 And I think that if four people can build
11 something like this in less than six months than so
12 can in the City. The fact that residents have had to
13 step in to create these tools highlight the severity
14 of the problem.

15 We're not a comprehensive and complete solution.
16 This is not a problem that private apps or
17 individuals can solve. It is fundamentally the City
18 government's responsibility and obligation to provide
19 adequate restroom access for its residents and
20 visitors.

21 I urge the City Council to pass both these bills.
22 Bathrooms are not a luxury. They are a necessity. And
23 they allow people to move freely through the City, to
24 enjoy its public spaces, and to maintain their
25 dignity and health.

1
2 It is my hope that through these bills, New York
3 can finally become a place where access to restrooms
4 is no longer a source of stress or anxiety, but a
5 basic service that everyone can rely on, promoting
6 the well-being of all of our residents and visitors,
7 thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you each for your
9 testimony. And, thank you for the work that you're
10 doing and the advocacy that you are providing to help
11 ensure that all New Yorkers have access to bathrooms.
12 It's deeply, deeply appreciated. Your voices really
13 matter, and hopefully will help move this package of
14 legislation forward. So, thank you for being here
15 today.

16 The next panel that we have up includes Willie
17 Woods of the Open Hearts Initiative, Marni Sommer of
18 Columbia University, Andrew Maroko, Rachel Simpson
19 from Brooklyn, and Clifton Smith from the Bronx.

20 Great, feel free to testify in whichever order
21 you'd like, you each have three minutes.

22 CLIFTON SMITH: Good afternoon, my name is Clifton
23 Smith, and I'm I live in the BX. So, the reason why I
24 came here, it was an important day is that I always
25 go it's, like, I'll use a host of bathrooms. Like

1 so, I do live in a group home, and so, I do, like,
2 the reason why is because I have I have one of my
3 housemates pee on themselves yesterday on our way to
4 an appointment, and he couldn't hold it. When was
5 getting on the bend and getting on a highway, on our
6 way to (INAUDIBLE) he couldn't hold it. So they had
7 to go back to the house, change at the house, change
8 of clothes, got out of his wet clothes, that they pee
9 on the self, which was just not too good.
10

11 So the reason why I always wet myself, so I have
12 to go back and change the clothes and take a shower,
13 and wash clothes that I pee on. Because the thing is,
14 I will be riding on a subway from home, just to
15 Brooklyn, like, all the to Coney Island, because of
16 the thing is that because of the bathroom is closed
17 at this time of night, and because always, because I
18 get home because I'll be I be getting home at 10:30 -
19 11 o'clock at night. So, when there's no... so if I
20 couldn't hold it, I'm gonna have to hold until when I
21 get home. And we do have public restrooms, but at
22 the corner park and on 242nd Street. And we do, and
23 we have one open then in Coney Island, and in the in
24 the summertime, that bathroom opens until 7:30 -
25 eight o'clock, so I have opportunities to use it.

1
2 And then even though it doesn't (INAUDIBLE)
3 then... my last point is that (INAUDIBLE) asked me
4 to then not to have coffee. (TIMER CHIMES) Because of
5 that coffee and soda use make me use the bathroom.

6 And thank you guys for the time, and I my time is
7 out.

8 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Well, I just want to thank
9 you, Mr. Smith, that was really terrific testimony.
10 And, sharing your personal experience with friends,
11 the challenges of not being able to access a
12 bathroom, the harm that it causes when people don't
13 have access to a bathroom is very powerful.

14 CLIFTON SMITH: (INAUDIBLE)

15 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: And you were able to tell a
16 story that stretched from Coney Island to Van
17 Cortlandt Park Cortland Park in Riverdale. You'd told
18 the story of all in New York City, because all of us
19 live somewhere between those two places.

20 And your council member, Mr. Dinowitz, was here
21 earlier. He left a little bit ago, but I know that
22 he's a big supporter of these efforts, and I'll let
23 him know that his constituent was here, and that you
24 testified so eloquently. And I really appreciate you
25 being here today.

1 CLIFTON SMITH: Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you.

3 CLIFTON SMITH: And they need to increase the
4 hours to 12:00 a.m. on the subway.

5 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Yes.

6 CLIFTON SMITH: (INAUDIBLE)

7 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: That's a very good point.
8 The MTA unfortunately is not... We don't get to
9 control what the MTA does, but we can advocate, and
10 we will, and I promise that we will follow up with
11 officials at the MTA to try and increase the hours
12 for our subway bathrooms. So, thank you very much.

13 CLIFTON SMITH: You're very welcome.

14 PROFESSOR MARNI SOMMER: I hate to try and follow
15 that, that was so good.

16 Thank you to the Council for the opportunity to
17 bring an academic program of research, uh, to bare an
18 oppressing social issue.

19 The pending legislation has begun the effort
20 towards ensuring improved toilet access for all New
21 Yorkers. And within that, the possibility of
22 menstrual equity within the public space in New York
23 city. However, we have much further to go. More
24

1
2 importantly, New York has the opportunity to lead the
3 country and much of the world on this issue.

4 I'll speak to a significant gap that warrants
5 immediate attention, requires minimal resources, and
6 has the potential to transform New York City to a
7 more gender equitable urban context.

8 First, the proposed two pieces of legislation,
9 694 and 267, are admirable for the expansion of
10 public toilet accessibility that they will create
11 both immediately and over the long term -- and for
12 the acknowledgment of gender aspects of relevance.

13 However, the legislation ignores the urgent need
14 for menstrual friendly public toilet facilities for
15 New York residents, tourists, and commuters.

16 My team at Columbia University conducted a six
17 city global study in Barcelona, Kampala, Manila, New
18 York City, Osaka, and Rio de Janeiro. In each city,
19 we conducted systematic audits of menstrual friendly
20 public toilets in business, tourist, and residential
21 districts, including parks and transit depots.

22 By menstrual friendly, we mean a public toilet
23 that is safe, clean, and accessible, but that also
24 offers free or low cost menstrual products and
25 provides means for discreet disposal.

1
2 And we have some design pictures we can leave
3 with you, so in case you want to incorporate them.

4 There should be appropriate signage as the new
5 legislation mandates, so a girl, woman, or anyone
6 else who menstruates doesn't have to panic-search
7 when it's time to change a pad or tampon.

8 Our analysis, as you'll hear from my colleague
9 next, has New York City falling well behind many of
10 the other cities, including those in poorer
11 countries, with respect to supply and quality of
12 public toilets.

13 We could lead the country on this issue if we put
14 our minds to it, becoming a city that extends open
15 arms to all who live, work, or visit here.

16 Second, we are understandably hesitant to add to
17 the already hefty burden of unmet public toilet need
18 in New York. We get it, but there's a backstory here;
19 it's called gender.

20 As longtime New Yorker, Gloria Steinem asked in
21 the 1970s. "If men could menstruate, what would our
22 world look like?" or to update her query for today's
23 hearing, if men were expected to manage their monthly
24 blood flow while answering the urban call of
25 commerce, education, public service, unpredictable

1 work, or simple social assembly, we wouldn't be here
2 today.

3
4 Public toilets would not only be more accessible,
5 cleaner, and safe, but they would also have menstrual
6 products alongside the toilet paper, means for
7 discrete disposal of used products, and mirrors to
8 check for leaks and stains.

9 There's a metric that we in public health (TIMER
10 CHIMES) have come increasingly to rely on as a vital
11 index of full social participation. It's from the
12 late 18th century, but its force is clear "The
13 ability to appear in public without shame".

14 My global team has premised its work in menstrual
15 friendly toilets on this principle as a bid for
16 gender equity. It's one I think that the City Council
17 might well consider as it pursues this pressing
18 issue. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you very much, and
20 could you just state your name for the record?

21 PROFESSOR MARNI SOMMER: Marni Sommer.

22 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you.

23 PROFESSOR ANDREW MAROKO: I'm Andrew Marocco, I'm
24 an associate professor at the Institute for Health
25 Equity Research at the Icahn School of Medicine at

1 Mount Sinai. Thanks so much for letting me talk a
2 little bit. I'm gonna say a little more about what
3 Marni was talking about with menstrual-friendly
4 public toilets.
5

6 First, there's broad agreement, I think everyone
7 here agrees that properly designed and provisioned
8 public toilets enable populations, including those
9 who menstruate, the ability to move through public
10 spaces and fully participate in public life. Bills
11 267 and 694 go a long way and beginning to address
12 these unmet needs.

13 And as Dr. Sommer said, menstrual-friendly public
14 toilets are accessible, safe, and clean, and fully
15 serve the needs for those who met straight.

16 So in our global study, we looked at different
17 neighborhood types in the six cities that Dr. Sommer
18 mentioned, focusing on characteristics that would
19 make these facilities menstrual friendly.

20 They include accessibility, privacy and safety,
21 physical structure, cleanliness, availability of
22 general resources, and availability of natural health
23 specific resources.

24 And I want to emphasize that these criteria are
25 not just important for those who menstruate, but for

1
2 everybody on the go in the city, working, raising
3 kids, recreating, protesting, or pestering their city
4 council representatives.

5 Well maintained public toilets are crucial
6 staging elements in civic life. So, after auditing
7 around 200 public toilet facilities, we found that
8 overall residential areas tended to be more severely
9 under resourced in terms of number of facilities than
10 other neighborhood types. Supporting 697, which among
11 other thing includes goals of ensuring a fair
12 distribution of facilities.

13 We think that's laudable; although, it's always
14 important to consider how you measure the geographic
15 distribution guarantee that all the populations in
16 all neighborhoods properly served.

17 In our study, there were no neighborhood types,
18 business, transit, tourist, or residential that
19 showed acceptable levels of menstrual friendliness.

20 Alarmingly, we also found that New York City
21 scored lower than other high income cities like
22 Barcelona and Osaka, in our study, meeting only
23 around 70 percent of the basic menstrual friendly
24 criteria, barely a passing grade.

1
2 And we didn't score that much higher than cities
3 in low and middle income countries in Brazil,
4 Philippines, and Uganda, which are far fewer
5 resources to work with.

6 Gender equity is a fundamental gauge when
7 designing, upgrading, siting, and constructing public
8 restrooms. Accommodating the needs of such a large
9 portion of our population shouldn't be ignored or an
10 afterthought, but should be incorporated from the
11 very beginning of the process.

12 We have the opportunity to not just lead the
13 country, but also the world in providing a basic
14 service in a truly equitable manner, thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you very much for your
16 testimony. And, thank you, both, for providing an
17 academic perspective on this issue. It is greatly
18 appreciated.

19 WILL WOODS: Thank you, Chair Restler, for
20 convening this hearing, and thank you for still being
21 here to hear from us.

22 My name is Willie Woods, and I'm organizing
23 intern for Open Hearts Initiative. I was homeless for
24 over three years. I've been diagnosed with severe
25 Crohn's disease over the last 10.

1
2 I've been a member of the Free to Pee campaign
3 since 2018 on one level or another. It's a local
4 cause that's near and dear to my heart.

5 When I lived in congregate shelter at the time,
6 we still had major requirements, you had to leave
7 your dorm during the day, which meant that you had to
8 find a place to be, which meant that I didn't have
9 access to a bathroom unless I stayed nearby the
10 facility.

11 I wasn't always working at the time, so I didn't
12 have cash, and an EBT card wasn't necessarily the
13 right item for a transaction that would get me into
14 some place to use a bathroom. It was just, you know,
15 very anxiety inducing. You know, what am I gonna do?
16 How am I gonna do it? And what are people thinking
17 about me while it's happening?

18 I think we've all also seen at least if we have
19 access to a TV commercials for folks with Crohn's
20 disease the through line is that all sufferers
21 usually have urgent need for a bathroom.

22 I'm here to state that that urgency can be
23 overwhelming to the point where your body takes over,
24 and you don't have a choice, you have to go to a
25 bathroom. You have to have access to a bathroom.

1 In fact, when I have a Crohn's flare, I really
2 can't plan my travel from destination to destination,
3 I have to plan my travel from bathroom to bathroom.
4 You know? And, unfortunately, when we're not able to
5 You know, I've had my body betray me more than once.
6 I've had to relieve myself on the street and risk a
7 summons. I've had to make my way through a discount
8 store trying to discreetly purchase new clothing
9 while smelling of human waste. I've been stuck on a
10 train, bargaining with God to let me get one more
11 stop. You know, not to mention, you know, the
12 heartbreak of actually finding a bathroom, but then
13 it's inadequately supply, or it's closed, or, you
14 know, I'm in by Bryant Park, and the line is going
15 around the block.
16

17 It's just one of those things. It's an incredible
18 level of embarrassment trying to explain to your
19 supervisor via text why you're going to be late, or
20 you need to miss a shift because you're having
21 another wardrobe malfunction.

22 It's just frankly, in 2024, no one should have to
23 experience that kind of indignity. And it's time to
24 hopefully be able to pass, you know, pass these bills
25 as a package. Thank you.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Mr. Williams, I just have to
3 say, I feel like your testimony succinctly captured
4 why this package is so urgently important. And I
5 could not imagine it being better said, and I deeply
6 appreciate you coming here to share your experience.

7 It is... it's right. People have medical
8 conditions. People may have not... don't have other
9 options of places to go. And it is, as you said,
10 anxiety producing, embarrassing. It is, for the
11 individual, and is shameful for us as a society to
12 not provide universal, free bathroom access in a
13 convenient way to every single New Yorker. And I just
14 want to say how much I, like, personally, deeply,
15 appreciate you coming today to share your words and
16 your perspective, it was incredibly powerful.

17 And Thank you for your work with Open Hearts
18 Initiative. It's a special place.

19 Have a great day to all of you. Thank you for
20 joining this panel. We really, really appreciate it.

21 And I'm assuming that Rachel Simpson has left us
22 even though she lives very close to the 33rd council
23 district, but just outside of it.

24 We are now going to switch gears to Roosevelt
25 Island. I would like to invite Paul Krikler, Margie

1 Smith, and Joyce Short to each come up to the panel
2 to testify.
3

4 And I would like to let the folks who are on Zoom
5 know, whom are patiently waiting, that once we make
6 it through our in person witnesses, we will shift to
7 a Zoom panel, thank you.

8 PAUL KRIKLER: Thank you, Chair Restler. My name
9 is Paul Krikler, I live on Roosevelt Island. I'm
10 asking the Committee, for you, to support Resolution
11 0132 from Council Member Menin.

12 I'm here representing 1,100 people who signed a
13 petition that we started about a year ago, and the
14 significance of that is we have 12,000 people who
15 live on Roosevelt Island. It's a significant can
16 proportion of the island who got involved with this.
17 People care about this deeply and broadly on the
18 island.

19 What this petition calls for is democracy on the
20 Island, direct election of the board members of the
21 Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation.

22 We want two things that come from that, better
23 oversight, and better involvement in how the place is
24 run.
25

1
2 I will let Margie and Joyce talk about the
3 decades of experience, they've had more than I have.
4 But, to put it briefly, over the decades, there have
5 been many long periods, but there's been a terrible
6 relationship between RIOC (Roosevelt Island Operating
7 Corporation), the people who run the island, and the
8 residents.

9 In those circumstances, what you would hope for
10 is the board will provide oversight and some way of
11 healing that, and it hasn't happened. We've had
12 terrible relations and no real oversight by the
13 board. So we're calling for direct election by the
14 residents, unusual concept I know, democracy of
15 Roosevelt Island.

16 So I'm gonna leave it there. We've got a huge
17 amount of support from the island. Let me turn it
18 over to Margie first.

19 MARGIE SMITH: Thank you very much for having us.

20 My name is Margie Smith, I've lived on Rosefield
21 Island since 1977. I was a member of the RIOC Board
22 of Directors. My four-year term went for eight years,
23 and I said, you know, it's not the Supreme Court, I
24 shouldn't still be here.

1
2 I was a mayoral appointee, so when I got called
3 by the Mayor's Office to sit on the board, I said
4 I've been fighting for democracy for 12 years, I
5 can't just accept a position that's handed to me.

6 So we held a mock election, and New York State
7 wouldn't even and let us call it an election, we had
8 to call it a plebiscite. But anyway, ran, won,
9 everything was fine.

10 But, I can't believe I'm here today in the United
11 States of America, making the case that we should be
12 able to vote for our immediate level of governance.
13 Everybody tells us, "Well, you already have that. You
14 can vote for your city council member, you can vote
15 for your mayor, so you do."

16 But we do, we do vote for them. The difference
17 is, when everybody else in New York goes in and pulls
18 that lever, they're voting for somebody who is
19 answerable to them. If you agree with what they're
20 doing, you vote for them again next year. If you
21 don't, you vote them out.

22 These are the same people that decide how your
23 tax dollars are spent. They make your land use
24 decisions. They describe... they decide on the issues
25

1 that dramatically affect your quality of life, but
2 not on Roosevelt Island.
3

4 We vote for all of you guys, but you don't make
5 decisions on what happens to Roosevelt Island. The
6 RIOC Board of Directors is our city council, yet we
7 cannot vote for them. They decide on these issues,
8 and they're all appointed.

9 Just the issue today about public restrooms. You
10 guys will go away. You'll vote on it. You'll agree we
11 should have them. You've got no authority on
12 Roosevelt Island to do anything.

13 We feel like we've had that level of government
14 taken away. And, when they do put these people in,
15 not only can't I vote them out, some of them have
16 been on 10 years, 15... there is one guy on for 30
17 years who calls in. We don't even know where he's
18 living anymore. And these are the people who are
19 spending our money. And, to in add insult to injury,
20 we pay ground rent, because we don't own the land.
21 And on top of that, we pay taxes for land that we
22 don't own, and then we don't get to decide how it's
23 spent.

24 Our money, we have to repair our own roads. We
25 repair the tram. We repair the seawall, the land, but

1 we get no City funding. We get no State funding, yet
2 we have no authority on how any of this money is
3 spent, or what we want the people on the island to
4 do.
5

6 So I'm asking you to support this bill, and I
7 want to thank Julie Menin for bringing it up.

8 But I know you don't have the authority to do
9 anything. You can recommend, suggest, urge, great.
10 That's what we're trying to get rid of. We want the
11 authority to tell our government what we want them to
12 do. I'll turn it over to Joyce with that.

13 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you.

14 JOYCE SHORT: Thank you, Margie, well said.

15 And thank you, Chair Restler and members of the
16 Committee. I'm Joyce Short, I'm a 49-year resident of
17 Roosevelt Island, and I've served on just about every
18 resident board that's elected by our population.
19 Because I've refused to serve on the RIOC Board
20 because it's not elected.

21 I'll start with the obvious. Roosevelt Island is
22 a land mass in New York City, but it's leased by the
23 City to the state of New York until 2068. So, the
24 state is New York City's tenant.
25

1
2 When a building owner has a problem with the
3 tenant, they step in to fix it. And that's what
4 Roosevelt Islanders are asking you to do today. As
5 the landlord for Roosevelt Island, the community is
6 asking you to stop the state, your tenant, from
7 committing a serious crime against us.

8 Article 4, section 4 of the Constitution of the
9 United States ensures government as a republic
10 throughout our nation. To simplify James Madison's
11 concept of a republic, it's one in where government
12 is elected, and people serve for specific terms.

13 Can you imagine if you served in your capacity in
14 city council with no concern as to whether you'd be
15 voted out of office in the next election? You would
16 have no reason to consider the interest of your
17 constituents. Being able to vote you into office is
18 only representative government if your constituents
19 can also vote you out of office.

20 Now imagine if you were appointed to the office
21 instead of elected to office, and that's exactly how
22 Roosevelt Island is governed.

23 One of the many roles in the community that I've
24 held has been to run their referendums, also called
25 plebiscites, to identify who the community wants as

1 RIOC directors. Our votes only serve as a request,
2 which the governor can implement or ignore. In the
3 five referendums that our community conducted, only
4 the first, under Governor Patterson's administration,
5 led to actual appointments. In fact, the last
6 referendum included not only new faces who vied, do I
7 not have a... I don't have a light?

8
9 In the five referendum that our community
10 conducted, only the first in Governor David
11 Patterson's administration led to actual
12 appointments. In fact, the last referendum included
13 not only new faces who vied for the community's
14 approval, but also the directors who were serving on
15 the RIOC board at the time. The community voted their
16 preference. No one who the community supported was
17 appointed. (TIMER CHIMES) Sorry... At the time, the
18 Governor had not even seen fit to fill several vacant
19 seats, and the two current directors hardly received
20 a vote, yet they still serve on the board today.

21 Because RIOC is largely a real estate management
22 business, their particularly consumed by making
23 Roosevelt Island appear to be crime free. Because
24 crime stats impact real estate, and crime does not
25 get treated appropriately on Roosevelt Island.

1
2 We are... Roosevelt Island stands as a blatant
3 example of why our forefathers insisted on a
4 republican form of government for our nation
5 including Roosevelt Island.

6 As the landlord for Roosevelt Island, please
7 address the oppressive form of government that
8 regulates the lives of the 12,000 people who live
9 there. We need your help. Thank you very much.

10 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you very much, Ms.
11 Short, and Ms. Smith, and Mr. Krikler for your
12 impassioned testimony.

13 I do want to recognize my good friend and
14 colleague, Council Member Schulman, for joining us
15 today.

16 And I want to thank Council Member Menin for
17 submitting this resolution.

18 So, I just was a little confused, forgive my
19 ignorance, in, I believe Ms. Smith's testimony, you
20 mentioned five board members. The RIOC website
21 indicates that are nine?

22 MARGIE SMITH: Nine.

23 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Nine, nine, sorry.
24
25

1
2 MARGIE SMITH: Nine. All appointed by the
3 governor, two by virtue of their position in New York
4 State, Director of the Budget, and the head of HCR.

5 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Got it.

6 MARGIE SMITH: And, then, two recommendations of
7 the Mayor.

8 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Two by, uh, nature of their
9 position, in charge of DOB, and HCR, two at the
10 recommendation of the mayor, and then, five other
11 appointments?

12 MARGIE SMITH: by the governor...

13 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Of the current nine, do any
14 live on Roosevelt Island?

15 MARGIE SMITH: Yes...

16 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: And is there any requirement
17 that a certain number of them...

18 MARGIE SMITH: Yes, there. There is a requirement
19 that the majority live on Roosevelt Island. Five...

20 (CROSS-TALK)

21 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Majority of five...

22 MARGIE SMITH: have to live on Roosevelt Island.

23 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: And... And, the
24 (INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

25 MARGIE SMITH: But, they're not elected...

1 JOYCE SHORT: They're not elected...

2
3 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Of course, they're not
4 elected. But, I... And, I certainly appreciate the
5 spirit of this resolution and support it. I think you
6 all should have a say on who is a part of the
7 governing body of the place that you live. There's no
8 question about it.

9 But, just for my edification, five of the nine
10 people are residents, and is there any mechanism for
11 them to kind of get feedback from their neighbors, or
12 do you work with them collaboratively to help ensure
13 that they are good stewards of the island?

14 JOYCE SHORT: No, they don't work with us.

15 MARGIE SMITH: We try. Some of them... The one
16 that's been there for 30 years, they want to stay on
17 board for some reason. They are afraid of getting
18 Albany mad. So, you get these big speeches about,
19 we're considering this, that, or the other thing, and
20 we understand it's not good for the island, blah,
21 blah, blah, blah, but how do you vote? Whatever way
22 the governor says, because I don't want to get thrown
23 off the board. And they know there is nothing we can
24 do about it

25 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Well...

1
2 MARGIE SMITH: They don't all work like that, but
3 I'm saying it doesn't take long to get the majority
4 to vote the way the governor wants...

5 JOYCE SHORT: And the ones that don't go along,
6 uh, get outvoted by the ones that do. In other words,
7 if there's only three votes that are positive for
8 the community... (CROSS-TALK)

9 MARGIE SMITH: (INAUDIBLE)

10 JOYCE SHORT: Or they will be six votes that are
11 consistent with the... what they perceive to be the
12 State's position.

13 MARGIE SMITH: Just one more quickie, too, they
14 don't pay very much attention to the term limits.
15 However, if they governor doesn't like the way
16 somebody is voting, that person will get thanked off
17 the board, while other members who have been there 10
18 times longer, will remain on the board.

19 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Right.

20 MARGIE SMITH: And the answer will be, well, this
21 term was up.

22 JOYCE SHORT: I'd like to add one concept if you
23 don't mind.

24 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Sure.

1
2 JOYCE SHORT: And, that is that neither the state
3 of New York, nor the city of New York, provides any
4 funding to a \$30 million budget that operates
5 Roosevelt Island. All of that money comes from the
6 residents of Roosevelt Island. It is basically like
7 taxation without representation. We need
8 representation. And we are hoping that you'll
9 exercise your muscle to give us that representation.

10 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Well, I just want to thank
11 you all for joining us today. Thank you for your
12 thoughtful testimony. We are happy to hear this
13 resolution.

14 As you noted, resolutions are kind of the spirit
15 of the body in the Council, and I hope that Council
16 Member Menin will be able to help shepherd this
17 resolution through the Council. You certainly have my
18 support. And hopefully our colleagues in Albany will
19 heed the recommendations of this Council.

20 So, thank you for making the time today. Thank
21 you for your smart and thoughtful testimony. We
22 really appreciate it. Thank you.

23 MARGIE SMITH: Come visit us sometime.

24 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I've been before. I would
25 be... There is... I think that the Four Freedoms Park

1 is one of the most spectacular locations in the city
2 of New York.
3

4 MARGIE SMITH: And (INAUDIBLE) is at the other
5 end, nobody ever goes to the other end (INAUDIBLE)
6 (CROSS-TALK)

7 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Next time I'll go to the
8 other end, thank you both.

9 Okay, we are going to do one more in person
10 panel, Mr. Darrly (sp?) Holmes, from the Bronx;
11 Penina Gold...

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: (INAUDIBLE)

13 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Oh, great, thank you.

14 Christopher Leon Johnson, and, then, I don't know
15 if they're actually here, but they registered in
16 advance, Mercedes Hesselroth, and Rebecca Toma, and
17 will just apologize again for any names which I have
18 mangled. Thank you for joining us. Please feel free
19 to start.

20 PENINA GOLD: Good afternoon. Good afternoon,
21 Council members and community members. My name is
22 Penina Gold, I was born in New York, and I've been
23 living in New York City for the past 17 years, four
24 of which on Roosevelt Island.
25

1
2 I want to concur with everything my neighbors
3 said, uh, who just spoke before me, Paul, Margie, and
4 Joyce.

5 Many of us have heard the phrase : no taxation
6 without representation" or "taxation without
7 representation" but we usually hear it in the context
8 of the Revolutionary War or (INAUDIBLE) Washington,
9 this is slogan. But not about New York City in the
10 21st century.

11 In New York City, we tend to take it for granted
12 that we have a local government that is accountable
13 to its constituents at least in theory. However,
14 those of us who are lucky enough to call Roosevelt
15 Island home do not have that luxury.

16 We are approximately 12,000 New York City
17 residents who, if we're eligible, get to vote for the
18 mayor, New York, our council representatives,
19 Manhattan borough president, DA, judges, as well as
20 representatives for state and federal government just
21 like any other Manhattanite. However, we do not have
22 a vote on who runs and maintains the beautiful island
23 we call home.

24 Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation, shortly
25 known as RIOC, is responsible for most aspects of our

1 shared lives and shared resources. But that agency is
2 not accountable to us, its residents, whom it impacts
3 the most. The president of RIOC, which we currently
4 don't even have one - that's a different conversation
5 - is appointed by the governor, and he's barely
6 accountable to her or him, especially if the
7 appointment was done by a former governor.

9 RIOC's president is accountable to the RIOC Board
10 of Directors, which you heard earlier. They're
11 appointed by the governor or the mayor. And only
12 thanks to the efforts of residents over the years,
13 were we able to get a tiny concession that some of
14 the RIOC board directors be residents of island as
15 you heard earlier. So at least we can count on some
16 of them that they that it'll be part of the
17 community, but again, like you heard from Ms. Short,
18 they have other... they're not accountable to us.
19 Therefore, you know, you can hopefully understand
20 that the that the few residents can understand the
21 action or inaction where they make decisions. But at
22 the end of the day, they are not accountable to us.

23 Ideally, Roosevelt Island residents should get to
24 vote for both the RIOC president and for the whole
25 RIOC board of directors. That would be the democratic

1 way to do things. I understand that we do not live in
2 an ideal world, so voting for the board of directors
3 would be a good start.
4

5 And I applaud our Council Member, Julie Menin,
6 for bringing this resolution to the table. It is
7 important to remember; however, that this is not even
8 a binding resolution. It's a resolution that calls
9 upon the State Legislature and Governor sign a law
10 for us to have some accountability to our very local
11 government agency.

12 For the sake of democracy and accountability, I
13 urge all council members to vote for Resolution 0132-
14 2024. And by extension, I urge all members of the New
15 York State Assembly, New York State Senate, and the
16 Governor to pass and sign this law to let Roosevelt
17 Islanders have a say on the one government agency
18 that runs our public life.

19 To summarize it in four words, let my people
20 vote. Thank you.

21 (LAUGHTER)

22 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Beautiful, thank you.

23 PENINA GOLD: Thank you.

24 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Good afternoon, Chair
25 Restler. My name is Christopher Leon Johnson on the

1 record, but so I know this is the Roosevelt Island
2 part, I just came late.
3

4 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: So, just to clarify, this
5 hearing is not relate to (INAUDIBLE)

6 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: All right, cool, so
7 well, I agree with this guy with Roosevelt Island.
8 Why are the people in Roosevelt Island not able to
9 vote for their own board? If they lived there, which
10 is one of most expensive districts, in the borough,
11 in Manhattan, I think it should be in Queens. Queens
12 get the money. They should be able to vote for the
13 board. I think every neighborhood should vote for
14 their board. Especially Roosevelt Island.

15 So I want to get this clear about this first
16 thing about the bike storage. This is the thing.
17 Right? We need this everywhere, but the problem is
18 that we need more transparency of how this is gonna
19 be installed. And, because you could put it there all
20 you want, but if you only let who's gonna be for the
21 employees or the public, this is the question. If you
22 don't have this here, then it's no point.

23 Now the second thing about the bathrooms, I know
24 this is the big topic about the bathroom - Since I
25 have two minutes left, I'm gonna talk this. Right?

1
2 Now there are certain places in the city, right
3 here, there's a City facility that we could actually
4 use the bathroom. But the big problem is that I think
5 you, Chair Restler, I don't know if DCAS was here,
6 Mr. Molina, you should ask... have another hearing
7 about this and ask him, like, why does he allow the
8 DCAS police to decide of who gets to use like, can he
9 lock the bathrooms and stuff like that?

10 And that's the problem is that you can have it
11 all you want, but if you allow the DCAS police to
12 lock the bathrooms, it just.. it's just ridiculous.
13 And the problem is that nobody's gonna fight a cop.
14 They still... they still peace officers, but it's
15 just the thing is, like, they allowed this to happen.

16 So like I said, you have to have another hearing
17 with Mr. Molino, why he wasn't here? Why he wasn't
18 here today? I don't know why he wasn't here. Mr.
19 Molina wasn't here.

20 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: His Deputy Executive
21 Commissioner was here, who oversees real estate
22 and... (CROSS-TALK)

23 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Yeah, but they need...
24 They need...

1
2 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: She was the right person to
3 testify to the issues. We're... (CROSS-TALK)

4 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Yeah...

5 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: We were pleased with her
6 testimony.

7 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Yeah, I understand, but
8 it is this one thing that, like, that need to start
9 happening more as, like, who gets to decide who gets
10 to lock the bathroom until the public.

11 Anytime you go on a public restroom, like, in the
12 City, and they say, like, oh, it's not open. Like,
13 what you mean it's not open? Like, you have a you
14 have a staff who pay good money to fix these
15 bathrooms, why it's not open? I think it's because
16 they don't want... they don't want people going in
17 and use it all the time. So it's one thing we gotta
18 fix in this city. We gotta fix this like this
19 bureaucracy crap that they do with the bathrooms.

20 And one more thing, the (INAUDIBLE), but the with
21 the letter x, I stand by trans community. I don't
22 know... This is 2024, I don't know why that the last
23 city council didn't think of this before putting the
24 x on applications. If you want to identify yourself
25 as transgender, then feel free. You should be able to

1 identify yourself as transgender. I mean, there's
2 more than one gender now. So let me make that let me
3 get off here... five seconds left...

4
5 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I want to commend you for
6 commenting on so many bills in just three minutes...

7 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Yeah (TIMER CHIMES)...

8 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: It's very impressive, and I
9 appreciate the thoughtful testimony. And I really
10 want to echo your sentiments around the DCAS police.
11 That ,you know, we need to make sure that our public
12 buildings are accessible to the public. And I agree,
13 we have seen some... I have seen arbitrary actions by
14 DCAS police in the past of who can get in where and
15 why. And I think that the legislation that Council
16 Member Joseph sponsored today, would really help
17 address it. So, thank you for your testimony. We
18 appreciate you both being here. I hope you both have
19 a wonderful afternoon.

20 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: All right, thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you very much.

22 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Enjoy your day.

23 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: You too.

24

25

1
2 And, then, our final panel of the day, on Zoom,
3 we are going to hear from Ms. Amanda Brown, Miss
4 Cathy Kross, Mbacke Thiam, and James Starace.

5 Apologies in advance for any names that I may
6 have mangled.

7 You each have three minutes. Since we are on
8 Zoom, I will just call them out, why don't we start
9 with Ms. Brown.

10 AMANDA BROWN: Good afternoon...

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin...

12 AMANDA BROWN: I will take much less than three
13 minutes of your time, but thank you for being here
14 today, and thank you to Julian Menin for your support
15 of Resolution 0132.

16 I've lived on Roosevelt Island for eight years,
17 and I support this resolution. Roosevelt Island is a
18 wonderful place to live and raise a family. I have
19 two young children in our excellent public school,
20 P.S./I.S. 217. I'm the co-president of the PTA, and I
21 serve on my co-op board.

22 I'm highly involved in the island, and I work
23 hard to make it the best it can be. Watching RIOC and
24 the residents constantly disagree over priorities for
25

1 the island, and feeling powerless to sway the board's
2 interest and focus is incredibly frustrating.

3
4 Direct elections would allow residents to have
5 input to prioritize the issues that affect us the
6 most, and to voice our opinions with our vote.

7 We live in a representative democracy, as many of
8 us have said, and we vote for all those who hold sway
9 over our communities, with the exception of the RIOC
10 Board of Directors.

11 I hope the time has come for change, and
12 appreciate your support of Revelation 0132, so we can
13 continue to have this wonderful island, be an idyllic
14 place for families, for senior citizens, for all the
15 many people that call at home, and so we can
16 influence what goes on here. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you very much for that
18 succinct and compelling testimony. We appreciate you
19 being with us.

20 Next up, Cathy Kross.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

22 CATHY KROSS: Hello?

23 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Ms. Kross, you have three
24 minutes.

1
2 CATHY KROSS: Thank you. I really wanted to let
3 you know that we've lived here, myself and my family,
4 and my extended family have lived here for 36 years.

5 It's a wonderful place to live, but during those
6 36 years, we had been ignored by the people who run
7 the island, and, sadly, people get hurt, because that
8 is happening.

9 So it's important to me that everyone on the
10 island have to say, all of the 12,000 people who live
11 here, have an opportunity to vote and express how
12 they feel about various issues that are quality of
13 life and very important.

14 I'm gonna sit and keep this short. I just want
15 you to know that I think I represent a lot of the,
16 I'm obviously a senior citizen, and I represent a lot
17 of the people who, after many years of being ignored,
18 feel it's time to have a say. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you, Ms. Kross, for
20 your eloquent and thoughtful testimony. You don't
21 compare to... You have a ways to go to catch up with
22 some of the earlier witnesses we have, uh, Ms.
23 Smith, and Ms. Short, each had, I think over 40 years
24 on Roosevelt Island, so you've got a... But, you'll
25 get there soon enough.

1
2 CATHY KROSS: Hopefully I'll get there, yes. Thank
3 you...

4 (LAUGHTER)

5 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: But, certainly a longtime
6 resident, and we appreciate your perspective.

7 Why don't we do one more on Roosevelt Island, and
8 then we will, uh, Mr. James Starace. You have three
9 minutes... (CROSS-TALK)

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

11 JAMES STARACE: Thank you very much for hearing us
12 on this issue. I absolutely concur with what Amanda
13 Brown had stated earlier.

14 And, you know, as a person my family, we're
15 raising children on the island now we've been here
16 for 14 years. We do love living here. It's a
17 wonderful and unique neighborhood.

18 The only real drawback with having board members
19 from the island, uh, not a drawback, it's wonderful.
20 It's just the drawback that we can't elect them
21 ourselves, and they get appointed by the head of RIOC
22 and by the governor.

23 So, if we were given the opportunity to have
24 those members elected, we ourselves would know which
25 members of the community are up to date and really

1 locked and keyed in with the issues that we are being
2 affected by. And they could run the gamut from issues
3 on sports field, issues on clean streets, on tram
4 issues, you know, could be like any other community
5 issues.
6

7 I think it's very frustrating that the
8 neighborhood has repeatedly asked and wishes for the
9 right to elect those members to the board, based on
10 what the community members themselves who live here
11 would like to run on and represent, our neighborhood
12 and community, uh, those policies and those issues
13 they wish to bring to the RIOC board.

14 And I think it's very simple, and I will also be
15 very short with my testimony.

16 But, I think it's clear, and I think it would
17 benefit the whole community and actually make working
18 together much easier and much more pleasant. Thank
19 you.

20 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you very much, Mr.
21 Starace.

22 And, as the final witness of the day, Mbacke
23 Thiam from CIDNY.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

25 MBACKE THIAM: (INAUDIBLE) Can you hear me?

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Yes. Yes we can. And

(INAUDIBLE)... (CROSS-TALK)

MBACKE THIAM: (INAUDIBLE) Mbacke Thiam, I'm the Housing and House Committee Organizer at Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York. We advocate for people with disabilities in the five boroughs of New York City. It's a pleasure for me today to join Council Member Lincoln Restler, and a Council Member Gale Brewer, and everyone at the table in order to implement change regarding City legislation.

And I wanted to show our support here at CIDNY's for legislation for Intro 162 in relation to bicycle storage in city buildings, also public bathroom availability, which is Intro 267.

CIDNY supports the introduction of bike racks in the City buildings as well both to promote sustainable transportation at reduce traffic congestion. However, it is critical that in implementing the storage solution, we ensure there is adequate sidewalk clearance for people with disabilities who use mobility devices such as a wheelchair or a walker. Sidewalks must remain accessible and navigable for all New Yorkers.

1
2 We cannot allow bicycle (INAUDIBLE) to compromise
3 the safety and accessibility of the street for people
4 with disabilities.

5 And, Intro 267, public bathroom availability, the
6 lack of public restroom across NYC is a pressing
7 issue, especially for people with disabilities.

8 CIDNY fully supports making certain that
9 bathrooms in City facilities are available for public
10 use.

11 This measure will obviously increase access to
12 much needed restrooms, but will also help keep subway
13 elevators clean, since many subway elevators are
14 being misused as bathroom and (INAUDIBLE) unusable
15 for people with disabilities.

16 Providing more public restrooms will improve
17 public health, cleanliness, and accessibility in our
18 transit system.

19 I just want to mention that this testimony was
20 written along with my colleague, (INAUDIBLE) in order
21 to let be us be heard and let people with
22 disabilities be heard.

23 Also, we support Intro for 478, relation to
24 requiring agencies to translate and distribute to
25

1 community-based organizations emergency information
2 in the designated citywide languages.
3

4 People with disabilities often face this
5 disproportionate barriers during emergency situation,
6 because many of things most impacted by emergency,
7 example, access to transportation, healthcare, food,
8 clean air, shelter, etcetera, already often requires
9 additional preparation and accommodation for them to
10 access them equitably. Language access should not be
11 an additional barriers.

12 CIDNY; therefore, supports the passage of this
13 bill as it will help ensure that people with
14 disabilities have more access to the information and
15 resources they need as they navigate (TIMER CHIMES)
16 these situations.

17 (INAUDIBLE) support 587, 311 customer
18 satisfaction surveys after and (INAUDIBLE) report
19 cards. New Yorkers deserve to know what actions are
20 being taken when they submit complaints through the 3
21 11 system.

22 Too often people feel that their concerns are
23 ignored after making their reports. This proposed
24 initiative of conducting customer satisfaction
25 surveys and publishing agency report cards will hold

1 city agencies accountable, and ensure that residents,
2 including those with disabilities receive timely and
3 effective responses to their complaints. This
4 transparency is essential to restoring trust between
5 the public and the city.

6 We also support 694, in relation to a long-term
7 citywide bathroom strategy.

8 CIDNY strongly supports the development of a
9 long term citywide bathroom strategy, including
10 maintaining public restrooms and providing a map to
11 help residents and visitors locate at them.

12 This would be a significant step forward for
13 accessibility, making it easier for people with
14 disabilities to find a restrooms when they need one.

15 We also support Intro 191, requiring to give two
16 years notice of lease expiration.

17 So we are strongly support requiring the
18 Department Of Citywide Administrative Services to
19 give two years notice of lease expiration to tenants
20 of city-leased properties.

21 We also support Intro 744, which is duplicate 311
22 requests for service and complaints. Addressing
23 duplicate 311 requests is important for improving the
24 efficiency of the City's services. However, it is
25

1
2 equally important that each issue is addressed on a
3 on an individual basis to ensure no one feels
4 ignored. Multiple issues at a single location should
5 be treated with a same urgency and (INAUDIBLE) as
6 separate complaints.

7 Thank you so much for giving us the opportunity
8 to testify. It was a pleasure to... I will submit
9 written testimony after the call...

10 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: We really appreciate your
11 thoughtful testimony and always, the Center for
12 Independence of the Disabled's, uh, really great
13 advocacy on behalf of New Yorkers of all abilities.
14 And, I think your perspective on the bathroom bills
15 was really meaningful, and we appreciate you taking
16 the time, and your patience, uh, as the final witness
17 in our hearing today.

18 So, I just want to thank you for being here. I
19 want to thank the community from Roosevelt Island for
20 taking the time, and for your cogent and compelling
21 advocacy for more democracy on Roosevelt Island. And
22 I just want to thank everybody for taking the time to
23 be here today.

1
2 And, just once again, uh, our team from central
3 staff and from my office for your hard work in making
4 all this happen.

5 So, with that, we're going to close out the
6 hearing. Thank you so much, and have a great day.

7 (GAVEL SOUND) (GAVELING OUT)

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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 September 27, 2024