

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

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September 8, 2014  
Start: 1:22 P.M.  
Recess: 1:41 P.M.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Room  
16th Floor

B E F O R E: STEPHEN T. LEVIN  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:  
Annabel Palma  
Fernando Cabrera  
Ruben Wills  
Donovan J. Richards  
Vanessa L. Gibson  
Corey D. Johnson  
Carlos Menchaca  
Ritchie J. Torres  
Danny Dromm

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

2 [gavel]

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Good afternoon,  
4 everybody. I am Council Member Steve Levin, Chair of  
5 the Council's Committee on General Welfare. Today,  
6 we are going to be voting on several important piece  
7 of legislation. I want to acknowledge my colleagues  
8 that are here today. From Brooklyn we have Council  
9 Member Carlos Menchaca. From the Bronx Council  
10 Member Ritchie Torres. From Manhattan, Council  
11 Member Corey Johnson. From Queens we have Council  
12 Member Danny Dromm, and from the Bronx we have  
13 Council Member Annabel Palma.

14 First, we'll be voting on three bills,  
15 which require the Administration for Children  
16 Services to prepare annual reports on youth in foster  
17 care. We had a hearing late spring on these  
18 introductions, and it was a very illuminating  
19 hearing. And I would hope we'll produce increased  
20 transparency and greater cooperation with ACS and the  
21 Council, as well as the public and the advocacy  
22 community. So that we can increase the  
23 effectiveness, and the accountability for intercity's  
24 foster care system. Proposed Intro 104-A sponsored  
25 by Public Advocate Letitia James requires ACS to

2 produce annual reports regarding outcomes of youth in  
3 foster care with a focus on youth who age out of  
4 care.

5 Proposed Intro 137-a by Council Member  
6 Danny Dromm requires ACS to collect and report data  
7 on the success of obtaining government issued  
8 identification for foster care youth.

9 And finally, Proposed Intro 187-A  
10 introduced by Council Member Laurie Cumbo requires  
11 ACS to collect and report the high school graduation  
12 rates for youth in foster care.

13 During the first hearing on these bill  
14 the Committee heard testimony on how essential this  
15 type of information is, and additionally how  
16 currently it is unavailable to the public. Although  
17 studies from other parts of the country have shown  
18 that youth in foster care, particularly those who age  
19 out of the system tend to have worse outcomes than  
20 their peers in the critical areas of education,  
21 employment, income security, and housing who do not  
22 have this type of information specific to New York  
23 City, which these bills will begin to provide. These  
24 bills are an essential first step in learning how to

2 best help this population of young people succeed in  
3 their transition to independence.

4           And just another note on testimony that  
5 we received from youth who have gone through the  
6 foster care system, and provided us with very  
7 immediately impactful testimony, very moving  
8 testimony showing these young people who have  
9 overcome great adversity. And they helped us keep in  
10 mind our objectives, and what we are here to do and  
11 so on. And so, I want to thank them for their  
12 testimony earlier this spring.

13           And today, we are also going to be voting  
14 on Proposed Reso 257-A by Council Member Mealy,  
15 Council Member Inez Dickens, and Council Member  
16 Andrew King. This resolution calls on the State  
17 Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign  
18 legislation that would end the Work Experience  
19 Program in New York City. The Work Experience  
20 Program, also know a WEP, is a program being  
21 administered by the Human Resources Administration  
22 designed to replace public assistance recipients in  
23 work experience assignments in order to receive cash  
24 assistance and the State's mandated work engagement  
25 requirement.

2 WEP has been sharply criticized by  
3 advocates for many years. Public assistance  
4 recipients and the elected officials who have seen  
5 great inequity, and unbelievably profound flaws in  
6 the WEP Program. WEP participants are not considered  
7 employees. They do not receive their paycheck, and  
8 they are not eligible for the Earned Income Tax  
9 Credit, and are not able to collect at the bargain,  
10 and cannot qualify for unemployment or Social  
11 Security benefits. Personally, I believe that WEP  
12 has no role and no place in our city, and this  
13 resolution sponsored by Council Members Mealy,  
14 Dickens, and King speak to that affirmatively.

15 WEP workers in New York City work  
16 alongside and are doing the same tasks as municipal  
17 and union employees for below poverty level wages.  
18 This resolution calls on the State to amend the law,  
19 to ban the WEP Program in New York City. Instead of  
20 WEP, we should focus on the type of programs that  
21 connect public assistance recipients to meaningful  
22 opportunities including education, training, and  
23 transitional jobs. We know that we can do this. We  
24 have every ability in New York to do this, and we're  
25 grateful now that we have an administration that is

2 committed to doing this. And is working on new and  
3 progressive job training, and education programs so  
4 we can finally leave WEP where it belongs, which is  
5 in the past. I want to thank the Community Voices  
6 Heard, MFY, and other advocates for your strong  
7 advocacy. Over the years, it's been a long time to  
8 getting to where we are today, but it wouldn't be  
9 here if it wasn't for the advocates. And so, we want  
10 to thank you very much. And I urge my colleagues to  
11 vote yes on these three bills and the resolution.

12 And now, I welcome comments by any bill  
13 sponsors. And so I'll ask Council Member Danny Dromm  
14 to provide remarks on his Intro, and then I will be  
15 reading a short statement from Council Member Mealy  
16 on the resolution.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Thank you,  
18 Chairman. I just very briefly want to state that I  
19 am very appreciative to the staff from the General  
20 Welfare Committee, Andrea Vasquez, Tommy Cyrus, and  
21 Laura Yaya [sp?]. I hope I said that right. For  
22 their help in drafting this legislation. It wasn't  
23 as easy as we-- as one might think, actually. But  
24 we came to a good place I think and this will ensure  
25 that any child being discharged from foster care will

2 have identification. Which also may not to some  
3 people seem that big of a deal, but it is actually  
4 very important. Because, as you know, anybody in any  
5 place in the city today needs to have identification.  
6 So they need to be prepared for that. And I am  
7 particularly proud that one of the pieces of  
8 identification that they will help them acquire will  
9 be the new Municipal Identification Card, which I was  
10 also the sponsor of that bill. So thank you to  
11 everybody involved, and I look forward to the passage  
12 of this legislation.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much,  
14 Council Member Dromm, and thank you for your  
15 advocacy. Congratulations on this piece of  
16 legislation. I'm going to read a short statement  
17 from Council Member Mealy. She says, quote:

18 "I want to thank Chair Levin for  
19 supporting Resolution 257-A, and bringing it before  
20 the General Welfare Committee for a vote. New York  
21 City should always be at the forefront of legislation  
22 and policies that support and uplift all New Yorkers.  
23 Ending the Work Experience Program in the city is a  
24 necessary step towards creating real opportunities  
25 for everyone. I'm so proud to have been able to be



2 sponsor. Excuse me. I'm so proud to have been able  
3 to sponsor Resolution 257-A, and I urge my colleagues  
4 to vote in favor of this important legislation."

5 Closed quote.

6 And do any of my colleagues have any  
7 comments on any of these pieces of legislation?

8 Okay. I do want to also thank Committee Staff Andrea  
9 Vasquez; Counsel of the Committee Tommy Cyrus; Policy  
10 Analyst Dohini Simpura; Finance Analyst, Laura Yaya  
11 [sp?] Finance Analyst. And with that, I will ask  
12 Andrea Vasquez, Council to the Committee to call the  
13 roll. Would you call the roll?

14 ANDREA VASQUEZ: [off mic]

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, I will call the  
16 roll. William Martin will call the roll. Mr.  
17 Martin.

18 WILLIAM MARTIN: William Martin,  
19 Committee Clerk, roll call vote, Committee on General  
20 Welfare.

21 CLERK: Council Member Levin.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: I vote aye on all.

23 CLERK: Palma?

24 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: Congratulations to  
25 Council Member King-- Dromm, and King and all who

2 sponsored the legislation. It's a great moment to be  
3 able to bring one of these pieces of legislation at  
4 this time. I vote aye.

5 CLERK: Johnson.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: Congratulations  
7 to my colleagues and the advocates. I proudly vote  
8 aye.

9 CLERK: Menchaca.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: Thank you, Chair  
11 Levin, and everyone else. I send my thank you to all  
12 the advocates, and the sponsors for this really,  
13 really vital and important piece of legislation. I  
14 vote aye on all.

15 CLERK: Council Member Torres.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: I proudly vote  
17 aye on all.

18 CLERK: By a vote of 5 in the  
19 affirmative, zero in the negative, and no  
20 abstentions, the items have been adopted. Members  
21 please sign the Committee Reports. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: We are going to keep  
23 the roll open for some time, and I'm going to refer  
24 colleagues on the Committee to cast their votes. So  
25 we will hold the roll open in recess.

2 [Pause]

3 CLERK: Council Member Richards.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Aye.

5 CLERK: The vote now stands at 6 in the  
6 affirmative.

7 [Pause]

8 CLERK: Council Member Wills.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: Aye on all.

10 [Pause]

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay? Here he is  
12 again.

13 CLERK: So the final vote in the  
14 Committee on General Welfare is now 6 in the  
15 affirmative, zero in the negative, and no  
16 abstentions.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And at 1:39 p.m. the  
18 hearing is adjourned.

19 [gavel]

20 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, at 1:40 and 40  
21 seconds, the hearing is re-opened.

22 CLERK: A correction on the final vote in  
23 the Committee. The final vote now stands at 7 in the  
24 affirmative, zero in the negative, and no  
25 abstentions.

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

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2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And at 1:40 and 50  
3 seconds, the hearing is adjourned. [gavel]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date September 9, 2014