

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE

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May 28, 2019  
Start: 10:47 a.m.  
Recess: 10:56 a.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Room  
16<sup>th</sup> Fl.

B E F O R E: KEITH POWERS  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Alicka Ampry-Samuel  
Robert F. Holden  
Rory I. Lancman  
Mark Levine  
Donovan J. Richards  
Carlina Rivera

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

2 [sound check] [pause] [coughing/pause]  
3 [gavel]

4 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Good morning. I'm  
5 City Council Member Keith Powers, Chair of the  
6 Criminal Justice Committee, and this is a hearing on  
7 the Criminal Justice Committee. Today, we'll be  
8 voting on two important resolutions aimed at  
9 improving the lives of people who are justice  
10 involved. We last heard both these resolutions on  
11 May 1' 2019. Before I speak about Resolution 829,  
12 which I am sponsoring, I want to offer an opportunity  
13 to our colleague Council Member Dromm to speak about  
14 his resolution, Proposed Resolution 143-A in support  
15 of Assembly Bill 2500 and Senate Bill 1623 in the  
16 State Legislature, which has been titled *Humane*  
17 *Alternatives to Long-Term Solitary Confinement Act*.  
18 Before I offer it to him, I also want to note just  
19 who we're joined by here, Committee Member Rory  
20 Lancman, the Committee Members Alicka Ampry-Samuel,  
21 Bob Holden and Carlina Rivera, and with that, I will  
22 offer it to our colleague Council Member Dromm to  
23 speak on his resolution.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Thank you very  
25 much, and that's very kind of you to let me speak

2 first. I do have to run across the street to get-  
3 vote on other issues, but thank you, Chair Powers for  
4 your leadership on Criminal Justice Reform. I also  
5 want to thank the advocates especially the Halt  
6 Solitary Campaign, whose bravery and tenacity has  
7 steadfastly pushed this issue into the public  
8 consciousness. Many members of that movement know  
9 all too well that there was steady impact of long-  
10 term solitary confinement. Neighborhood Restore has  
11 the opportunity to end state sanction torture, and I  
12 am proud of this Council for leading the way with  
13 Resolution 143, which urges our State Legislature to  
14 pass and the Governor to sign Assembly 250 and Senate  
15 1623 also know as the Halt Solitary Confinement Act.  
16 International experts agree that long-term solitary  
17 confinement defined as more than 15 days by the  
18 United Nations causes irreparable psychological harm.  
19 The devastating impact is all around us. Survivors  
20 who were released from incarceration walk our streets  
21 tormented by their experiences in extreme isolation.  
22 Families and communities face their own challenges as  
23 they interact with these individuals. Healthcare and  
24 Social Service providers have the formidable task of  
25 dealing with the mental health repercussions. The

2 Criminal Justice System shoulders its own burden  
3 since many of these individuals without proper  
4 support end up back behind bars. The price is too  
5 high for our society to—to continue its use of  
6 solitary confinement, but now we have the opportunity  
7 to put a halt to this odious practice and align New  
8 York with International Human Rights Standards. I  
9 encourage the members of this committee to vote for  
10 this resolution, which help build momentum of this  
11 critical component of criminal justice reform. Thank  
12 you very much.

13 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thank you, Council  
14 Member Dromm. I also just want to just recognize  
15 that Council Member Dromm has been outspoken about  
16 this topic for quite a long time, and at hearing we  
17 had a few—a few months ago both Council Member Dromm  
18 and Council Member Holden made a—a strong point of  
19 pushing back on the Department of Corrections. They  
20 were not providing even basic library services to  
21 those who were in solitary, and as a result of that,  
22 that specific day, that actual day the Department of  
23 Corrections agreed to start doing that. So, thank  
24 you both for your advocacy around that issue.  
25 Following up with that, I want to speak just quickly

2 as Resolution 829. It's a resolution I introduced,  
3 which calls on the state to pass on a Bill 1343, and  
4 Assembly Bill 5493 known as the Less is More Act, the  
5 Reform from Parole Conditional Release, Revocation  
6 Presumptive Release and Post Release supervision in  
7 New York. This bill would restrict the use of  
8 incarceration for technical violations and afford  
9 people on parole—parole prior—and afford people  
10 hearings in criminal justice before—parole before  
11 they're detained. As we're talking about the closure  
12 of Rikers Island, this is to me one of the important  
13 areas where we can make a difference and we have to  
14 talk about passing the Less is More Act. While we  
15 made great strides in decreasing the jail population  
16 here in New York City, the number of people in jail  
17 on Rikers Island for parole violations has been  
18 increasing according to the Mayor's Office of  
19 Criminal Justice. It's the one area where the  
20 population is going up. Many are incarcerated for  
21 technical parole violations such as staying out past  
22 curfew or missing an appointment. Incarcerating  
23 people for such small violations is not just  
24 unnecessary, it's wrong. By passing this resolution,  
25 we will send a clear message to those in Albany that

2 we just stop locking people up for small violations  
3 and start investing in services and-and other things  
4 to help rehabilitate people. With that being said,  
5 we will go ahead and vote on both resolutions before  
6 the Committee today.

7 CLERK: William Martin, Committee Clerk.

8 Roll call vote Committee on Criminal Justice,  
9 Resolutions 143, and 829. Chair Powers.

10 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: I vote aye on both.

11 CLERK: Ampry-Samuel.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY SAMUEL: I vote aye.

13 CLERK: Lancman.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LANCMAN: Aye.

15 CLERK: Richards.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RICHARDS: Aye.

17 CLERK: Holden.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Aye.

19 CLERK: Rivera.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Aye.

21 CLERK: By a vote of 6 in the  
22 affirmative, 0 in the negative and no abstentions,  
23 both items have been adopted by the committee.

24 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Thanks. We're going  
25 to leave it open just for few minutes. Thanks so

2 much. [pause] [background comments/laughter] May  
3 the record reflect—may the record reflect.  
4 [laughter]. Thank you. We will—you guys ready?

5 CLERK: Continuation roll call vote  
6 Committee on Criminal Justice, Resolution 143 and  
7 829, Council Member Levine.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: I vote aye.

9 CLERK: The final vote on these two items  
10 is now 7 in the affirmative, 0 in the negative and no  
11 abstentions.

12 CHAIRPERSON POWERS: Great. Thank you.  
13 Thanks so much, and thank you for being here, and  
14 hope Albany will pass both these before the end of  
15 session. Thanks so much. [pause]

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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 June 13, 2019