

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER
AND WORKER PROTECTIONS

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October 9, 2024
Start: 10:23 a.m.
Recess: 3:32 p.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers - City Hall

B E F O R E: Julie Menin
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Shaun Abreu
Gale A. Brewer
Amanda Farías
Shekar Krishnan
Chi A. Ossé
Julie Won

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

Vilda Vera Mayuga
Department of Consumer and Worker Protection
Commissioner

Melissa Iachan
Department of Consumer and Worker Protection
Deputy General Counsel

Carlos Ortiz
Department of Consumer and Worker Protection
Assistant Commissioner of External Affairs

Brendan Griffith
NYC Central Labor Council

David Weil
Brandeis University Professor

Keisha Sutton James
Deputy Manhattan Borough President

Tariqua Morrison
Queens Borough President General Counsel

Sarah Bratko
American Hotel and Lodging Association

Jagruti Panwala
American Hotel and Lodging Association

Arthur Kramer
Former New York State Assemblyman

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

Triputi Patel

Purvi Panwala
American Hotel and Lodging Association

Marion Kendall
New York State Anti-Trafficking Coalition,
Thrive

Cristian Eduardo

Ruoxi Chen
Garden of Hope

Elizabeth Sawka
Covenant House New York

Hemal Patel
Hotel owner

Bradley Burwell
Colliers Executive Vice President of Hospitality
Investment Sales Group

Preyas Patel
Asian American Hotel Owners Association
Northeast Regional Director

Sandeep Patel
Hotel owner

Michael Paglialonga
Littler Mendelson Workplace Policy Institute

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

Carmen Polanco
Hotel Worker

Paula Amparo
Hotel Worker

Mukesh Patel
New York Minority Hotel Association

Sheetal Patel
Hotel Owner

Jeff Brosi
Rockaway Hotel

Manish Patni

Anudeep Gosal
Besen Partners

Richard Hurd
School of Labor Relations at Cornell

Mark Bellamy
Hotel Worker

Hu Chao Li
Hotel Worker

Tserling Lanza
Hotel Worker

Aretha Wareham

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

Larinda Hooks

Kristina Hinckson
New York State Society of Medical Massage
Therapists

Lucy Palacios
New York State Society of Medical Massage
Therapists

Terence Monahan
Former NYPD Chief of Department

Barbara Bryukhanova

Oscar Lopez

Christy De Los Santos

Hilda Alvarez
Hotel Worker

Jaqueline Figueroa
Hotel Worker

Rosa Saldana
Hotel Worker

Martha Bustillo
Hotel Worker

Treashana Brown
Hotel Worker

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

Tselha Temin
Hotel Worker

Jason Gamel
American Resort Development Association

Rafael Perez
Subcontractor Worker

Juan Charum
HHI Employee

Tatiana Vikulina
HHI Employee

Eugenia Kolesnikova
HHI Employee

Eric Mosher
Lead Economist at Independent Budget Office

Pam Reinerstein
Kew Gardens Civic Association

Sonia Umanzor
Hotel worker

Albania Olivo
Hotel Worker

Biviana Pereira
Hotel Worker

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

Sonia Deldavita
Hotel Worker

Sonia Randolph
Hotel Worker

Raiza Pujol
Hotel Worker

Rolando Rendon Cantero
Hotel Worker

Erik Ocuusu
Hotel Worker

Boris Erlakov
Hotel Worker

Richard Foster
Subcontractor

Domenic DeLeo
Small Business Subcontractor

Michael Angelo Savino
Hotel worker

Sabrina Desamours
Hotel Worker

Elzbieta Gawinoska
Hotel Worker

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

Elizabeth Sanchez
Hotel Worker

Massiel Lugo

Eric Addoquaye
Hotel Worker

Benjamin Liu

Aissata Bocoum

Chandra Singh
Hotel and Gaming Trades Council Member

Vanessa Aronson

Kojo Opoku Burko
Hotel Worker

Charles Safo
Hotel Worker

Tracy Bennett

Damion Lawrence

Drita Cekic
Subcontractor worker

Roany Espinal

Oksana Owdaulbo

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

Catalina Quintella
Hotel Worker

Denise Matthew

Nicole Louis
Hotel Worker

Bernard Gayle
Hotel Worker

Kevin McQueen
Hotel Worker

Luis Penaloza
Hotel Worker

Amalia Garcia

Leonel Sanchez

Barion Opasso

Nicole Vera

Stefany Perez

Justadi Pereda

Carol Hamilton

Judith Semonga

Kazi Hosen

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

Christopher Leon Johnson

Raul Rivera
NYC Drivers Unite

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning and
3 welcome to today's New York City Council hearing for
4 the Committee on Consumer and Worker Protection. At
5 this time, please silence all cell phones and
6 electronic devices to minimize disruptions throughout
7 the hearing. If you have testimony you wish to
8 submit for the record, you may do via email at
9 testimony@council.nyc.gov. Once again, that is
10 testimony@council.nyc.gov. At any time throughout
11 the hearing, do not approach the dais. We thank you
12 for your cooperation. If you have-- if you require
13 translation services, please head to the rotunda and
14 pick up a device.

15 UNIDENTIFIED: [speaking Spanish]

16 UNIDENTIFIED: [speaking other language]

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Chair, we are ready to
18 begin.

19 [gavel]

20 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Good morning
21 everyone. My name is Julie Menin. I'm Chair of the
22 Committee on Consumer and Worker Protection, and I
23 want to welcome you to today's hearing. Before we
24 begin, let me acknowledge my colleagues who are
25 present, Council Member De La Rosa, Council Member

2 Krishnan, Council Member Hudson, Council Member
3 Abreu, and I will acknowledge additional Council
4 Members as they join. So thank you for joining
5 today's hearing on Proposed Intro. 991B in relation
6 to licensing hotels. The bill is sponsored by
7 myself, as well as Intro. 970 in relation to
8 licensing massage therapy businesses, sponsored by
9 Council Member Moya. New York City is a top
10 destination for domestic and international travelers,
11 and the tourism industry is one of the city's primary
12 economic drivers. In 2023, New York City welcome more
13 than 62 million visitors who spent an estimated \$48
14 billion supporting local businesses and generating
15 tax revenue for our great city. Last year, the
16 City's hotel market was the top hotel market in the
17 nation with an occupancy rate of 81.6 percent.
18 Unfortunately, however, hotel-related complaints
19 received by the Department of Consumer and Worker
20 Protection have more than doubled in the past four
21 years, going from 149 in 2019 to 315 in 2023. There
22 have also unfortunately been over 14,000 NYPD
23 criminal complaints originating from hotels and
24 motels over the past five years. This bill would
25 ensure protections not only for public safety, but

2 also for workers. Specifically, the button would
3 allow for panic button for employees. In recent
4 years, a number of states and cities have enacted
5 laws and regulations that require hotels to provide
6 employees, particularly those working alone in guest
7 rooms or other isolated areas with panic buttons.
8 There are quite frankly genuine horror stories of
9 workers who face sexual harassment and assaults. It
10 is unacceptable that there is no way for workers to
11 seek help or to prevent this from happening. These
12 policies help to protect workers from violence and
13 other dangerous work situation by enabling employees
14 to quickly summon assistance in the event of
15 harassment, assault, or other threatening situations.
16 In addition, the legislation would require hotels to
17 inform employees on hazardous chemicals in work
18 areas. This would be available in respective
19 languages spoken by 10 or more employees with limited
20 English proficiency. Workers should know the
21 materials they're working with and not put themselves
22 at risk. In addition hotels can be especially
23 attractive locations for all sorts of human
24 trafficking with traffickers taking advantage of the
25 privacy and anonymity accessible in these very

2 settings. In unacceptable that New York ranks fourth
3 in the nation-- I want to repeat-- fourth in the
4 nation for human trafficking cases according to the
5 National Human Trafficking Resource Center. That is
6 why the legislation requires core employees to
7 undergo human trafficking recognition training and
8 security guards undergo the same training as well.
9 The City has long regulated businesses in the tourism
10 industry to promote the safety and wellbeing of our
11 visitors. Licensing hotels would be an effective and
12 very important tool to regulate this important
13 industry and promote health and safety. This is the
14 first hearing on Propose Intro. 991B, and we've
15 already made substantial amendments to the bill in
16 response to feedback from stakeholders, including
17 discussions from representatives of the Hotel
18 Association and the Hotel Trades Council and many
19 others. The Committee looks forward to hearing
20 additional feedback today from hotel workers about
21 their health and safety concerns from hotel owners
22 about their day-to-day operation from consumers about
23 their experience with hotels and from the hospitality
24 industry about their business relationship with
25 hotels. The Committee also looks forward to hearing

1 COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER AND WORKER PROTECTION 15
2 from DCWP about their position on Proposed Intro.
3 991B. After the hearing, we will of course continue
4 to receive input and work together to finalize the
5 bill language before considering passage. We have
6 received reports that workers have been pressured by
7 their employers to participate against their will in
8 public rallies related to this piece of legislation.
9 I want to note for the public that employer conduct
10 like that is a violation of Section 201D of the New
11 York State Labor Law and can be reported to the
12 Attorney General's Office for investigation. Just as
13 hotels can be used to conceal human trafficking,
14 massage therapy businesses are frequently used as
15 covers for sex trafficking. The National Human
16 Trafficking Hotline found that the illicit massage or
17 spa business locations are the most common places
18 where trafficking victims end up working in New York
19 State. In January of this year, the NYPD executed
20 court orders to temporarily close a dozen Commercial
21 locations in Roosevelt in Queens that were posing as
22 massage parlors, but operating as illicit massage
23 businesses. Intro 970 would establish a license
24 requirement for fixed location massage businesses to
25 provide the City additional enforcement tools to

2 address illicit massage businesses in our
3 communities. Before we get started, I want to
4 emphasize that today's hearing must be conducted in
5 an orderly manner to ensure that the public has a
6 full opportunity to be heard. Do not clap, boo, or
7 shout approval or disagreement from the audience. I
8 now want to invite-- okay, we're going to wait on
9 Council Member Moya. Council Member Moya has joined
10 us on Zoom but we're awaiting quorum before he can
11 make his opening statement. We've also been joined by
12 Council Member Ariola. So, I'm now going to take a
13 moment to call on a couple of my colleagues who asked
14 to make introductory opening statements on the bill.
15 I'm going to start with Council Member Krishnan.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you so
17 much, Chair Menin. Good morning everyone. I'm
18 Council Member Shekar Krishnan, representing Jackson
19 Heights, Elmhurst, and a part of Woodside, Queens.
20 Hotels across our city are the heart of our city's
21 vibrant tourism industry. Many hotels are places
22 where visitors can safely stay before enjoying a
23 Broadway show, going to a Mets game or coming out to
24 Jackson Heights to enjoy the best food in the City,
25 in my unbiased opinion, but there remains a dark

2 underbelly to the hotel industry. Mistreated,
3 exploited workers, human trafficking, dangerous
4 criminal activity can take root and fester in
5 unlicensed, unregulated spaces. That's true in
6 hotels and it's also true for unlicensed massage
7 parlors. It means our guests, hotel workers, and
8 surrounding communities are all less safe than we
9 should be. That is why I am proud to support Council
10 Member Julie Menin's Safe Hotels Act to license
11 hotels in the City and ensure key protections for
12 consumers and workers. Bad actor hotels currently
13 have no incentive to change, and they continue the
14 same practice with little accountability or
15 enforcement. They can mistreat workers, tolerate
16 illegal activity, and create unsafe conditions for
17 guests. I know this happens, and licensing
18 protections and other mechanisms to protect hotel
19 workers in our Safe Hotels Act acknowledges a couple
20 things. First, that all industries from nail salon
21 workers to businesses should be licensed and
22 regulated. It's the best way to ensure protections
23 for workers, for guests, for all of New York City.
24 We also know that our hotel workers are the essential
25 workers of our tourism industry, making sure that it

1 is successful. We owe them an extraordinary debt of
2 gratitude, and we also have to make sure that
3 conditions, working conditions for them are safe and
4 dignified. Most alarming of all, I've seen how
5 unlicensed hotels or even unlicensed massage parlors
6 become venues for sex trafficking. We've seen the
7 news from the charges against Diddy and his
8 prosecution, but also to Jackson Heights and Elmhurst
9 in my district. To see unlicensed hotels turned into
10 destinations for illegal sex trafficking and to see
11 the way in which sex trafficking and criminal
12 activity spills out from those unlicensed hotels onto
13 Roosevelt Avenue, creating unsafe conditions for
14 families, children, and for all my constituents. I
15 hear this from hotel workers in my district
16 representing the district with the largest number of
17 Hotel Trades Council members in all of New York City
18 in Jackson Heights and Elmhurst. I hear it from my
19 constituents who are walking down the streets on
20 Roosevelt Avenue and the immense and grave concerns
21 they have about trafficking on Roosevelt Avenue in
22 unlicensed hotels to unlicensed massage parlors.
23 This bill, the Safe Hotels Act, will put a stop to
24 such practices. It's about public safety. It's
25

2 about protecting workers and protecting our
3 communities, protecting our essential workers,
4 protecting our immigrant communities. I'm proud to
5 stand with my friends in organized labor from the
6 Hotel Trades Council to 32BJ to the Central Labor
7 Council and many others in support of this bill. As
8 I mentioned, since my district has the largest number
9 of hotel workers in our city, it is my duty and
10 responsibility to pass legislation to protect my
11 constituents from abuse and neglect in their jobs.
12 We must ensure basic workplace protections and
13 eliminate any predatory subcontracting systems that
14 exist in our hotels. We are simply setting a
15 standard for safety for workers. I also want to
16 briefly speak on the other piece of legislation being
17 heard today, intro 970 by Council Member Moya.
18 Unlicensed massage parlors are similarly havens of
19 unsafe conditions, illegal activity, and also
20 mistreatment of workers. Licensing these business
21 will give the city a safe, non-carceral method to
22 regulate massage parlors and make our community
23 safer. This isn't just theoretical. I see it and I
24 hear from my constituents because of unlicensed
25 massage parlors on Roosevelt Avenue and what spills

2 out in terms of trafficking onto the streets as well.

3 I want to thank my Chair Julie Menin and colleague

4 for introducing the Safe Hotels Act, this vital

5 legislation, and holding this important hearing this

6 morning. I want to thank my colleagues who have

7 joined in this fight to protect workers and enhance

8 public safety for our communities. I want to thank

9 my friends in organized labor for all they do to

10 protect workers across our great city. And most

11 importantly, I want to thank the hotel workers who

12 are here and across the City who work tirelessly in

13 New York to ensure that guests have clean and safe

14 places to stay when enjoying our city. We appreciate

15 your work. We appreciate your advocacy and hope you

16 know that you always have allies and champions in

17 this New York City Council to fight for the

18 protections that you deserve, and I look forward with

19 my Council colleagues to hearing and passing the Safe

20 Hotels Act. Thank you all so much. Thank you to our

21 hotel workers.

22 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much,

23 Council Member. We're now going to call on Council

24 Member Schulman for an opening statement.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER SCHULMAN: Thank you,
3 Chair Menin. Good morning everyone. I am Council
4 Member Lynn Schulman. I represent District 29 in
5 Queens which includes Forest Hills, Kew Gardens,
6 Richmond Hill, and a small part of Rego Park. What I
7 will tell you is that I only have one hotel in my
8 district, that's the Umbrella Hotel which has been
9 the poster child for this piece of legislation. I am
10 here today to express my support for Intro 991 that
11 would empower the City to license hotels that operate
12 in New York City. I want to give a big thank you to
13 Chair Menin for raising this critical issue, given
14 the history of bad actor hotels in New York City. I
15 want to thank my friends in labor, particularly HTC,
16 32BJ, CLC and many others for coming along and
17 supporting this. My district knows far too well what
18 can go wrong with a bad actor hotel. The umbrella
19 Hotel in Kew Gardens opened in 2017 as a luxury hotel
20 located on Queens Boulevard. Instead, it became a
21 major quality of life issue in the local community.
22 Bottles were thrown from the building on a regular
23 basis. Parties were ongoing day and night. In
24 addition, drug dealers were known to frequent the
25 lobby, and first responders were frequently called

2 for drug overdoses, and the NYPD was called on
3 numerous occasions for criminal activity. Over 100
4 complaints were filed on this hotel alone, from
5 issues including drugs and violence. There were
6 months and months of complaints from the local
7 community asking for something to be done. To make
8 matters worse, shooting took place during the summer
9 of 2020. No one was killed, but it led to the local
10 police precinct to be stationed outside of the hotel
11 for months using critical resources that could have
12 been used for other things in the community.
13 Unfortunately, on January 1st, 2021, the first murder
14 of New York City took place at the Umbrella Hotel. A
15 20-year-old gentleman was killed and two others were
16 injured. Immediately after, then Mayor Bill de
17 Blasio then shut down the hotel, but not for long.
18 Soon after the hotel reopened and months later
19 permanently closed only because of the owners, not
20 the City's, decision, because there was no clear cut
21 license for the hotel. The tragedy on January 1st
22 could have been avoided had community concerns been
23 seriously treated and valued. This cannot happen
24 again. Introduction 991 would finally allow the City
25 the ability to inspect and address the bad actors

1 COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER AND WORKER PROTECTION 23
2 that have been able to act with impunity in our city.
3 That is why I am a proud co-sponsor and supporter of
4 this legislation. I look forward to testimony from
5 the Kew Gardens Civic Association from my district
6 and other constituents that will highlight on-the-
7 ground experiences with the Umbrella Hotel. An
8 important lesson then was listening to the community
9 that deals with constant quality of life issues with
10 hotels, and I hope the same is done today. I want to
11 thank Chair Menin for allowing me to speak. I want
12 to thank my staff for their tremendous efforts in
13 trying to resolve the quality of life issues
14 presented by this hotel which hopefully will finally
15 be put to bed with the passage of Intro 991. Thank
16 you, Chair.

17 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you so much.
18 We've also been joined by Council Member Gale Brewer.
19 I'm now going to read into the record-- we have a
20 number of easels, and so I'm required to read into
21 the record what those images reflect, so bear with
22 me. We have an easel behind, the one in the middle,
23 this is a picture with a towel with blood. This
24 picture shows a worker who had to remove blood from a
25 room without gloves. That worker needed to clean the

2 blood without any gloves, and was told to clean the
3 room regardless of no gloves. The picture all the
4 way on the right is a picture of a hotel with bullet
5 holes. This picture shows the aftermath of a
6 shooting at the Umbrella Hotel on January 1st, 2021.
7 That night was the first reported murder in New York
8 City in 2021. And then lastly, on my right, a
9 statistical graphic. This graphic shows several
10 alarming statistics on hotels in New York City.
11 First, over the past five years there have been over
12 14,000 criminal complaints to the NYPD for hotels and
13 motels. Second, that there have been at least 39
14 murders at hotels, and then finally, the complaints
15 to DCWP have doubled over the past five years. We
16 now have quorum so I'm going to call on my colleague,
17 Council Member Moya, for his opening statement.
18 Council Member Moya, are you there on Zoom?

19 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: thank you, Chair
20 Menin, and good morning to all my colleagues who are
21 here today. I'd like to provide some context on an
22 urgent need for the bill that I've introduced that is
23 being heard here today, Intro 970. Illegal massage
24 businesses have been rapidly spreading across New
25 York City, especially in Queens, and ground zero for

1 this proliferation is Roosevelt Avenue in my
2 district. These businesses are fronts for human
3 trafficking and exploitation, and they are now openly
4 operating in residential neighborhoods during all
5 times of the day. Just take a walk down any
6 commercial street, go to Roosevelt Avenue, Junction
7 Boulevard and many other streets and you'll see the
8 problem: women displayed in storefronts after
9 storefronts all hours of the day and night,
10 aggressively soliciting bypassers to come in. These
11 are unclean, unsafe fronts for human trafficking
12 operating in broad daylight. They have opened
13 without regard for the surrounding areas, which
14 includes being steps away from schools, churches,
15 senior centers, and homes. I think that we can all
16 agree that parents should not have to walk their
17 children past these unacceptable businesses on the
18 way to school every morning. Business owners are
19 pleading for help because the illegal massage parlors
20 are causing them to lose customers. This whole
21 situation is unacceptable. It brings down our
22 neighborhood, allows unconscionable criminal
23 activity, and turns entire areas into red light
24 district. My district is becoming a red light
25

1 district and has even been promoted on social media
2 and YouTube as a place where you can come and solicit
3 this type of service. Even licensed massage
4 therapists are impacted, as some male customers
5 mistakenly expect to be offered illegal services
6 putting them in dangerous situations. Unlike a hair
7 salon, barber shop, or nail salon, there's no
8 business license for a massage therapy business,
9 which means unlike those operations, there's no
10 mechanism to create health code standards, but this
11 bill offers a solution. Intro 970 establishes a city
12 licensing system so massage businesses must obtain
13 proper credentials to operate legally. No more
14 unlicensed, unregulated operations. It also mandates
15 proper record-keeping for staff credentials which
16 will help eliminate unlicensed, unregulated
17 operations in New York City. Through licensing
18 requirements and health standards enforcement by law,
19 we can crack down on those operating illegally,
20 unethically, while allowing legitimate massage
21 therapist to properly serve New York. This bill
22 safeguards public health, combats human trafficking
23 and upholds the ethical standards that we know. I
24 cannot overstate the urgency of this legislation for
25

2 the safety of our neighborhood, the dignity of our
3 communities, and the rights of vulnerable
4 populations. We must act decisively. Even New York
5 State Society of Medical Massage Therapists, a not-
6 for-profit organization dedicated to the education
7 and advancement of massage therapy professions which
8 upholds ethical standards and works to prevent abuse
9 of illegal and unethical practices supports this
10 important piece of legislation. Additionally, A21, a
11 nonprofit organization committed to fighting human
12 trafficking including sexual exploitation across the
13 nation, also backs this critical initiative. So I
14 urge all of you to please support this legislation.
15 It's past time that we put an end to this
16 uncontrolled conditions where we're seeing throughout
17 our city. Thank you, Chair Menin, for giving me the
18 opportunity to speak on this bill today.

19 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much.
20 I also want to mention we've been joined by Majority
21 Leader Fariás. And now I'm going to call on my
22 colleague, Council Member Abreu, for an opening
23 statement.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: Thank you, Chair
25 Menin. I'm here to speak today in support of Intro

2 991, the Hotel Safe Act. I think it's very clear
3 that we can make our hotels a lot safer, safer for
4 patrons and safer for workers. We don't need hourly
5 rentals that can lend itself to exploitation. We
6 don't need dirty rooms or conditions that make
7 housekeepers afraid to come to work. I know that we
8 can have continuous service in the front desk, we can
9 have panic buttons, and we definitely don't need the
10 14,000 criminal complaints and nearly 40 murders that
11 have happened in hotels in these last five years. We
12 can join other cities like in Vegas, like in D.C.,
13 like in Boston to license this industry, to make sure
14 that we're making safety a priority, and that starts
15 with licensing. Congratulations Chair Menin on
16 getting this bill heard today.

17 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you so much.
18 So we're now going to call on representatives of the
19 Administration to testify. We will be specifically
20 hearing testimony from Commissioner of DCWP,
21 Commissioner Vilda Mayuga, from Deputy General
22 Counsel, Melissa Iachan, from Assistant Commissioner
23 of External Affairs, Carlos Ortiz. I will now turn
24 it over to Committee Counsel to administer the
25 affirmation.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Please raise your
3 right hands. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the
4 whole truth and nothing but the truth before this
5 committee and to respond honestly to Council Member
6 questions?

7 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ORTIZ: I do.

8 COMMISSIONER MAYUGA: I do.

9 DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL IACHAN: I do.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You may begin.

11 COMMISSIONER MAYUGA: Good morning Chair
12 Menin and members of the Committee on Consume and
13 Worker Protection. I am Vilda Vera Mayuga,
14 Commissioner of the Department of Consumer and Worker
15 Protection, DCWP. I am joined by Deputy General
16 Counsel Melissa Iachan and our Assistant Commissioner
17 for External Affairs, Carolos Ortiz. Thank you for
18 the opportunity to testify today on Introduction 991
19 relating to the licensing of hotels in New York City.
20 DCWP provides fundamental consumer and worker
21 protections, financial empowerment programming to New
22 Yorkers as well. We strive to ensure that consumers
23 who have been deceived or exploited have recourse,
24 that workers have a passionate defender of their
25 rights, and that all New Yorkers have the support

2 they need to improve their financial health. We
3 remain steadfast in our goal of protecting New
4 Yorkers in the marketplace and in the workplace, and
5 under my tenure, we have helped deliver almost \$1
6 billion to New Yorkers through restitution, financial
7 empowerment, and new protections for essential
8 workers. Now, the hotel industry, as many of you have
9 said, is and always will be incredibly important
10 towards the success of New York City, helping
11 contribute \$74 billion to our local economy, serve
12 millions of consumers and employ tens of thousands of
13 workers. DCWP's role in this space is to enforce key
14 protections for consumers and workers of hotels and
15 to help hotels build a culture of compliance with our
16 laws and rules. Most recently, we collaborated with
17 the Council on various proposals related to the hotel
18 industry, including those that provide job and income
19 security for hotel workers and additional consumer
20 protections for hotel guests. Local Law 99 of 2020
21 was a two-part law that created a private right of
22 action for hotel service workers who are illegally
23 fired after a change in hotel ownership and
24 management and requires hotels to notify guests of
25 service disruptions that would substantially affect

2 their stay. Displacing workers should always be the
3 last resort. This law protects against immediate and
4 unnecessary job loss which can be financially
5 devastating for hotel workers and their families. We
6 also supporting enhancing consumer protections for
7 guests who face disruptions of hotel services.
8 Complaints can be filed with DCWP for issues related
9 to a service disruption or for any of our other
10 consumer protection laws. Our agency takes each
11 complaint seriously, and we work to mediate
12 individual complaints for consumers. Further, we
13 monitor incoming complaints for patterns of non-
14 compliance in all of our categories and initiate
15 investigations when we identify such patterns. Local
16 Law 104 of 2021 was a temporary pandemic era measure
17 that required employers of laid off hotel service
18 works from certain large hotels to pay those workers
19 \$500 in severance pay per week for up to 30 weeks.
20 DCWP supported this legislation to provide an
21 economic lifeline for thousands of hotel workers who
22 lost their jobs during the pandemic. Those efforts
23 not only protected the livelihoods of these hotel
24 works, but also supported the economic recovery of
25 the industry. Moving to today's bill, Intro 991

2 would create a new licensing requirement for hotels
3 across the five boroughs encompassing [sic] consumer
4 and worker protections that align with our mission in
5 addition to other cleanliness, sanitary facilities,
6 and public safety requirements. We commend the
7 Council for its vision to further the protections
8 afforded to those that live, work and visit New York
9 City. We support this licensing effort and have a
10 number of recommendations based on our decades of
11 experience and expertise in consumer and worker
12 protection to create an effective and efficient
13 licensing process for both businesses and for the
14 City. Any new licensing authority needs to achieve
15 three goals to be successful. First, the licensing
16 law's provisions should address the specific conduct
17 in the industry committed by bad actors. Second, the
18 regulator in this case, the Department of Consumer
19 and Worker Protection, should have or be given the
20 appropriate tools to deter that conduct. And third,
21 the law should ensure that compliant businesses are
22 not unnecessarily burdened. Unnecessary red tape
23 could ultimately impact our consumers, workers, and
24 the industry detrimentally which we as a city will
25 want to avoid. Along those lines, we are supportive

2 of restrictions on subcontracting which can be a key
3 protection for workers, as research shows that
4 subcontracting can lead to lower wages, poor working
5 conditions or violations of workers' rights.
6 However, this provision will require further review
7 to ensure that it is appropriately drafted. We also
8 recommend adding protections for consumers against
9 junk fees that are prevalent in this industry.
10 Consumer complaints submitted to DCWP reveal a
11 pattern by hotels of charging undisclosed resort or
12 amenity fees, which are mandatory but not included in
13 the total price given to consumers. Sometimes, these
14 are not even charged until the time of check-in when
15 a consumer has a limited ability to find alternative
16 accommodations. Lastly, we recommend clarifying
17 provisions related to the intended license holder,
18 the interaction of a collective bargaining agreement
19 with a license, the transferability of a license, and
20 the license revocation process to ensure that all
21 stakeholders are clear about the mechanics of this
22 requirement. There are certain provision in the
23 current draft of the bill regarding enforcement of
24 cleanliness, sanitary facilities, and human
25 trafficking issues, all of which are outside the

2 scope and expertise of the Department of Consumer and
3 Worker Protection. So, while we support this
4 legislation overall, we do want to make sure those
5 provisions are suitably addressed. Of course, we
6 welcome discussing this in more detail with the
7 Council throughout the legislative process. As with
8 any new mandate, we will work closely with City Hall,
9 OMB, and the Council on new resources to ensure that
10 the goals of this legislation are achieved. Which
11 such comprehensive legislation aiming to license an
12 entire industry, we do know this will require new
13 resources. We also consider it appropriate to adjust
14 the licensing fee to adequately support the agency's
15 operation to license this industry. Finally, I would
16 like to note that the Law Department is in the
17 process of reviewing this legislation. Now, let me
18 turn briefly to Introduction 970 related to massage
19 parlor licensing. Unfortunately, we have not had
20 time to review this proposal in detail since it was
21 just added to today's hearing agenda yesterday
22 afternoon. Our understanding of the proposal broadly
23 is that the underlying intent is really to address
24 concerns with prostitution. The Administration wants
25 to continue working with the Council on potential

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2 solutions to this issue. With that said, we are not
3 the appropriate agency to address those concerns, and
4 should not be licensing these entities for that
5 reason. The Administration is happy to discuss this
6 in further detail with the Council once we have had
7 time to review this legislation. Thank you again for
8 the opportunity to testify today. My team and I look
9 forward to working with all of you to implement these
10 vital protections for consumers and workers, and I'm
11 happy to address any questions you may have.

12 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you so much.
13 We really appreciate the testimony today. I also
14 want to mention we've been joined by Council Member
15 Chris Banks. So I do have a number of questions.
16 first of all, I'm thrilled that you're testifying in
17 support of the bill, and in particular want to repeat
18 a line in the testimony, "Along these lines, we are
19 supportive of restrictions on subcontracting which
20 can be a key protection for workers. As research
21 shows that subcontracting can lead to lower wages,
22 poor working conditions, or violations of workers'
23 rights." That is exactly the policy reason what we're
24 trying to get to in the bill and with that provision.

25

2 So, I'd love for you to talk a little bit more of
3 that and what you've seen in that area.

4 COMMISSIONER MAYUGA: Thank you, Council
5 Member. Yes, we most definitely support the
6 restrictions on subcontracting. As I said in my
7 testimony, it is our experience and not just ours,
8 but just based on research and we-- I know we make--
9 we indicate that as well, that research in the
10 testimony of how important this is and how we've seen
11 that when there's subcontracting there is a higher
12 likelihood of those workers' rights to be violated,
13 for the subcontractors to take advantage of that and
14 basically try to hide behind that, and not comply
15 with the regulations that are in place across a
16 number of agencies when there is subcontracting and
17 the things that they are required to do. So it is
18 definitely something that we've seen in our
19 experience and also based on research that we put in
20 the testimony,

21 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Great. Do you have a
22 sense of why consumer complaints to the agency have
23 doubled in the past five years to hotels?

24 COMMISSIONER MAYUGA: Yes, thank you,
25 Council Member. So, we believe that a lot of it

2 make-- I don't want to say a lot. Some of it may
3 have to do with the returning to pre-pandemic levels
4 of tourism. We've seen that sort of trend upwards in
5 terms of the complaints over the last five years. So
6 that's part of the reason.

7 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: I do also want to
8 note for the record, as the former Commissioner of
9 this agency, it is my belief that many tourists and
10 guests who come to our great city don't know to
11 complain to DCWP if they have an issue. That is why
12 my office pulled the data to the Better Business
13 Bureau which shows nationwide there are 15,000
14 complaints about hotels, a large majority of which re
15 in New York. So, I actually think there is an under-
16 reporting of data to the agency, because if a guest
17 come to the city, they don't always know to call the
18 local Consumer Protection Agency, but despite that,
19 we still are seeing complaints that have doubled. I'm
20 curious, has your office spoken to other cities that
21 license hotels? Because licensing is a very common
22 and effective tool to bring industries under a
23 regulatory purview. Cities all across the country
24 license hotels. Have you had the opportunity to talk
25 to other cities to learn best practices?

2 COMMISSIONER MAYUGA: Thank you, Council
3 Member. Let me have Assistant Commissioner Carolos
4 Ortiz to respond to that. He's been doing a lot of
5 the interactions, also.

6 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ORTIZ: Thank you,
7 Commissioner. I would say so far-- sorry. Council
8 Member, I would say that so far we've had a lot of
9 opportunities to work closely with industry
10 advocates, and the Hotel Trades Council discuss
11 aspects of the bill. I think we've also been doing a
12 lot of research into other municipalities. I think
13 some were mentioned such as Boston, D.C. I think as
14 this further flushes out, we would want to have
15 conversations with those folks, understand the best
16 mechanisms for implementation. Although, of course,
17 I know we all know that New York City is distinct in
18 its own way in its size, but I always think that
19 understanding best practices from other
20 municipalities is important. So we will definitely
21 engage in that work.

22 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Can you talk a little
23 bit about the worker protection angle of the bill,
24 because I was Commissioner when the Council passed
25 the car wash bill, and that was obviously hallmark

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2 legislation, a true worker protection bill, and here
3 once again, we have a bill that is going to protect
4 workers, whether it be by providing panic buttons,
5 whether it be the hygiene standards I mentioned in
6 the opening statements. There are true worker
7 protection provisions in this bill, and if you could
8 talk a little bit about it and how you envision
9 incorporating this kind of work into the other
10 important worker protection work the agency is doing.

11 COMMISSIONER MAYUGA: Thank you, Council
12 Member. And yes, 100 percent. We're always looking
13 at how we've been able to enforce successfully other
14 worker rights, and we'll be obviously incorporating
15 from those learnings into the implementation of this
16 bill. Specifically, on the provisions for worker
17 protection, I can tell you yes, the panic buttons,
18 for example, we support that, and our understanding
19 is that it's already in place in also a lot of the
20 hotels already in New York City. In terms of the
21 safety components for chemical substances and
22 handling those, we don't have an expertise in
23 chemical handling. We will point out that we think
24 it may be redundant that piece in the legislation
25 considering that that is already covered by the

2 federal agency OSHA, and then in addition in terms of
3 the increase in the number of security guards and
4 front desk staffing at the hotels, we are looking at
5 that and trying to understand it better, that part of
6 the bill. Really looking forward to hearing the
7 testimony from various members of the industry on
8 both sides, right, to get a better sense of how we
9 would address that. I think those are the
10 components, right?

11 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Yeah, yeah. Another
12 question, I mean one of the interesting parts,
13 obviously, of licensing and one of the reasons why I
14 think this bill is so important is the infamous
15 Umbrella Hotel in my colleague Council Member
16 Schulman's district where there were hundreds of
17 neighbors who complained about bad actions, crime
18 happening at that hotel. They constantly were
19 complaining, and finally in 2021 there was a murder
20 on January 1st at the Umbrella Hotel. Then Mayor de
21 Blasio said I'm going to shut the Umbrella Hotel
22 down. Well, it wasn't that easy to shut it down when
23 the City jurisdictionally was not licensing that
24 entity. In terms of licensing hotels and public
25 safety, do you have any comments on-- you know, with

2 this 14,000 NYPD criminal complaints, 39 murders, you
3 know, there are really alarming public safety data
4 that we have here. So, there's obviously the very
5 important public policy reasons which is why the five
6 District Attorneys for the City and our New York
7 Attorney General have all come out in favor of the
8 bill. Is there anything you can add in that vein?

9 COMMISSIONER MAYUGA: Thank you, Chair
10 Menin. I would say that our focus with the
11 legislation has been on the licensing scheme. We do
12 a lot of licenses, right? We license over 45,000
13 businesses across over 40 industries, and so we have
14 a real expertise in that, decades of experience
15 tweaking that process across different industries,
16 and of course each one is going to have its
17 particularities. So, the way we've been looking at
18 this is how do we ensure that licensing scheme makes
19 sense so that we can actually also enforce it, and it
20 will deter the bad behavior and illegalities, right,
21 that we're trying to address. Making sure that we
22 are tackling the goal of the legislation, protecting
23 consumers, protecting workers, right? That is the
24 mission of our agency. In terms of public safety,
25 we're not a criminal law enforcement agency, so I

2 think there probably will be always some components
3 that will be better handled by another agency that's
4 not us. However, we do have some recommendations in
5 terms of how do we make the licensing scheme the most
6 effective. And for example, in terms of revocation
7 of a license, even being able to shut down hotel,
8 right? If we have sealing authority, right,
9 padlocking businesses in some industries, but it's
10 certainly different for a hotel, because we obviously
11 not going to like literally put a lock when there's
12 people inside a hotel. So, we want to be-- you know,
13 we want to keep all of that in mind as we really
14 think through what this ultimately looks like so that
15 we can operationalize it in the best way based on
16 those learnings we've had also from our decades of
17 experience in this space.

18 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ORTIZ: Council
19 Member, if I could also add two other points to this.
20 I think something we also note in the testimony
21 relates to the transferability of the license, and
22 that is something that is not right now something
23 existing in other license categories for us. Mostly,
24 because we want to make sure whoever gets that first
25 license that they're accountable, that we have that

2 information. So, if it's too easy for them to
3 transfer that to another entity. That could be a
4 problem ultimately for enforcement. And going into
5 the human trafficking component, I think it's fair to
6 say that we shouldn't necessarily be the agency that
7 is issuing violations or bringing the violations to
8 an adjudication for human trafficking, but I think we
9 can be very much creative in a way of how we can make
10 sure that if the District Attorney brings us an
11 adjudicated violation, if PD brings us adjudicate
12 violation of human trafficking, that we could make
13 sure that we review that under the licensing scheme
14 as a way to review the license itself for that
15 holder. So I think again, on these pieces, we have a
16 lot of thoughts about how to strengthen and make sure
17 that the actors are accountable for their actions
18 here.

19 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you for bringing
20 up this very important point on the human
21 trafficking. It's unacceptable that New York State
22 ranks fourth in the nation on human trafficking.
23 Right now as we speak, it's estimated there are 3,000
24 largely women and children in human trafficking
25 situation in New York City's hotels. So this is such

2 an important public safety issue. I'm really
3 interested in the portion of your testimony where you
4 recommend adding protection for consumers against
5 junk fees, what you're saying are these resort and
6 amenity fees. Could you speak a little bit more
7 about that, please?

8 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you, Chair.
9 Really glad you caught on that and it's certainly
10 something we've been seeing. I'm going to have a
11 Deputy General Counsel Melissa-- try and get into a
12 little bit more detailed there.

13 DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL: Thank you,
14 Commissioner, and good morning, Council Member. That
15 is definitely one of the most frequent complaints
16 that we are hearing from consumers who call in and
17 submit complaints about hotels. Whether it is
18 someone who says I never knew there was a resort
19 free, and they charged it. I wasn't allowed to opt
20 out, even if I didn't use any of the resort
21 amenities, or whether it's somebody who was required
22 to put a deposit down, and then the hotel refused to
23 refund the deposit saying it was keeping it for
24 amenities to use or resort fees. Junk fees are a
25 problem throughout many industries, but especially

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2 the travel and hospitality industry, and hotels have
3 really, really taken advantage of this. We see this,
4 and this really is the number one pattern that we
5 know with consumer complaints. So while we are here
6 discussing this industry and licensing this industry
7 for the first time as a city, we do as the Consumer
8 Protection agency really want to shed light on the
9 possibilities that we can included some additional
10 consumer protections within this licensing regime to
11 add transparency to this issue.

12 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Fantastic. I think
13 that is wonderful. So I'm now going to open it up to
14 my colleagues for questions. Council Member Brewer?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very
16 much. I have a couple of questions. The hotels on
17 the west side are all single-room occupancies, so I'm
18 wondering-- because they all have permanent tenants
19 and a hotel. I think it's unique maybe to the-- my
20 area. I don't know, 15-20 rooms are still permanent
21 tenants under single-room occupancy hotel
22 stabilization. So how would the license impact that
23 if at all?

24 COMMISSIONER MAYUGA: Thank you, Council
25 Member. I know that that is part of the definitions,

2 right, in the bill currently. I know that the Law
3 Department is looking at it make some recommendations
4 as well, so I would just need to wait for those to
5 come.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Well, they may
7 not know that there are permanent tenants in all
8 these hotels. My guess is, they don't.

9 COMMISSIONER MAYUGA: Okay, we're happy--
10 we can definitely pass that and make sure.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yeah, I don't
12 want those tenants to be impacted. They need to keep
13 their rent stabilization. They're actually able to
14 bring in more succession, blah, blah, blah. So I
15 just don't want them to be impacted.

16 COMMISSIONER MAYUGA: Thank you for
17 raising that also, because I know-- obviously some
18 other things that were recommended is also making
19 sure that doesn't impact something else, right? By
20 addressing this issue, we don't want to negatively
21 impact--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: [interposing] And
23 the other thing to be aware of, some of these owners
24 are SROs, illegally convert the hotel and then-- I
25 can't tell you how many people have come to my

2 office. This one-- I won't mention it-- that is
3 notorious for that. I took it off the NYC Tourism
4 List as a hotel. It's terrible. So you got to, you
5 know, be careful on what a hotel is I guess that's
6 what I'm trying to say, at least from my experience.
7 SRO, check. Number two, you know, I'm very
8 supportive, but I know that there are hotels that are
9 not, and actually I never go to the other boroughs.
10 I know there are other boroughs. I never go there.
11 But I know that there are hotels there and they're
12 more challenging and problematic. They're the ones I
13 know. I've never been to those hotels. So my
14 question is-- they are complaining, however, in many
15 cases that they're going to lose their workers, blah,
16 blah, blah. So how do you both-- I mean, I would
17 like to see everybody be unionized because I think
18 that's what keeps workers middle class and it's the
19 right thing to do. But my question is with these
20 subcontracts, how do we make sure that those workers
21 don't lose their jobs? And lovely, if I could make
22 them part of the union. But how are you thinking
23 about that issue of people not losing their jobs as
24 subcontracts. I agree with you. Love to have them be
25 employees of the hotel. You can make sure that they

2 have better benefits. You can make sure that they're
3 not discriminated against, so on and so forth, but in
4 any case, I don't know that's going to happen. The
5 doom day is what is predicted by some of these
6 owners, but how do we make sure that the workers are
7 sent-- front and center of this issue?

8 COMMISSIONER MAYUGA: Thank you. Thank
9 you, Council Member, and obviously for caring so much
10 about the worker. It is a very core part of our
11 mission as an agency. What we're looking to do, you
12 know, throughout the process, the legislative
13 process, and some of the suggestions that was made in
14 my testimony, we also obviously want to hear all of
15 the testimony that will come after ours to make sure
16 that we're very mindful as to how this ultimately
17 looks so that we don't have this unintended
18 consequences. We certainly-- you know, on the
19 licensing piece, right, we talk about our decades of
20 experience to make sure that a business is not
21 burdened by red tape that is just unnecessary. So we
22 are looking at that and making sure that it is very
23 intentional how we go about implementing whatever the
24 final bill looks like and taking into account all of
25 those concerns that are raised by the industry. As

2 to workers, very similar, right? We are not-- there
3 is no way we will try to do something that would
4 negatively impact workers. We are in constant
5 contact with the various stakeholders. I know
6 Assistant Commissioner Carlos Ortiz has had many
7 meetings. Different members of my team have had that
8 as well.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: We're a big fan
10 of him just so you--

11 COMMISSIONER MAYUGA: [interposing] I
12 know. I am too. And the conversation will continue.
13 Even whatever is final, before we get to
14 implementation, we'll always have our education.
15 We're always about hearing back. I'm not going to,
16 like, pretend that I know what it is to either own a
17 hotel, manage a hotel or work at a hotel. So we're
18 going to want to hear from those that are actually
19 doing those things so that we can incorporate that
20 into whatever we're putting out there, and be very
21 mindful of it.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: One other quick
23 question, based on the resort fee or whatever you
24 call it, that fee thing. Is that something that is
25 in-- like, how would you fix that? Would that be

2 legislation? Would it be that the hotels, if they
3 have a license, they can't do x, y and z, etcetera?
4 How would that-- because that's outrageous. I
5 didn't-- I mean, not going to a hotel in New York I
6 wouldn't know it. But how would that be fixed?

7 DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL IACHAN: Thank
8 you, Council Member. Well, I wish it were just
9 limited to New York, but actually this is a common
10 practice around the industry, around the world, but
11 especially in this country and especially in this
12 city. We hope to continue to work with the Council
13 to actually potentially incorporate it into this
14 legislation as a part of the licensing scheme. In
15 many of our licensing schemes, being the consumer
16 protection agency who also is charged with enforcing
17 the consumer protection law of the City, we're very
18 focused on transparency and disclosures to consumers
19 so they know exactly what they're purchasing when
20 they decide to purchase it when they put their first
21 payment down when they give their credit card
22 information. So this would really be just a function
23 of transparency and disclosure requirements.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very
25 much.

2 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ORTIZ: Council
3 Member, if I could just add one other point about
4 kind of our licensing expertise. We do license over
5 40 categories, 40,000 businesses. You know, we want
6 to make sure this works for the businesses, too. I
7 think there's-- sometimes it could be scary to come
8 into-- under further regulation by the City, but I
9 think what has made our agency so successful in that
10 work is that we are a willing partner and want to
11 have open discussions with folks to make sure we get
12 to the right place, because hotels are important for
13 New York City, and we want to make sure that they're
14 successful because that will help our workers be
15 successful and our consumers.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I appreciate
17 that, and the problem is according to, you know,
18 media-- no surprise-- it's expensive to come to New
19 York, and you know, people see that they can-- I hate
20 to say it, but some people are staying in Jersey. I
21 don't like New Jersey, and I don't want them to stay
22 in New Jersey. But I want-- that's the problem
23 because I know a lot of people who are staying in New
24 Jersey and coming into the City, because of the cost

2 of our accommodations. So that's also something to
3 take into consideration. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: thank you very much.
5 I also just want to clarify on the record per a
6 question that Council Member Brewer asked about
7 workers. There is a worker retention law that the
8 Council passed several years ago that requires that
9 the workers keep their jobs. So the workers cannot
10 lose their jobs. So, I just want to let-- I just
11 want to explain for the record that that law is in
12 effect. Council Member Banks, I believe, had
13 questions.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BANKS: Thank you. Good
15 to see you, Commissioner, and to your staff. I just
16 wanted to voice my strong support for this particular
17 legislation. The 42nd Council District is a unique
18 district, in particularly we've been known to have
19 many things. Unfortunately, one of the things that
20 the district has become known for is the use of the
21 hot-sheet hotels and motels, and these particular
22 hotels have been used by sex worker who use these
23 establishments as a base of operations to conduct
24 their trade. Public safety is important. I want to
25 thank Council Member Menin for her unwavering

2 leadership on this issue that will serve to make our
3 communities safer. I support Intro 991, because it
4 will bring an additional level of safety where
5 illegal sex work has been identified by the NYPD in
6 many district, in my dispensaries, and as having been
7 fueled by those who traffic and exploit young women,
8 at times with dangerous consequences including
9 violent incidents which include homicides. This bill
10 will serve as another tool to help combat the illegal
11 trafficking of young women and the violence that this
12 trade brings with it. It will show the families who
13 complain to my staff day in and day out about having
14 to observe the signs of the illicit activities that
15 are taking place at these establishments while taking
16 their children to school in the morning which
17 sometimes is being done to improve the quality of
18 life in their community. I'm proud to strongly
19 support Intro 991 and the safer communities this
20 sensible legislation will create. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much.
22 I'll now call on Majority Leader Farías.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Thank you, Chair.
24 Thank you, Chair and folks from DCWP, Commissioner,
25 for coming today. I have a variety of questions that

2 are spanning from your testimony and from just
3 reading through the bills. So, I'm going to try to
4 work through them within in this time frame. If not
5 ill come back round for a second round. So, in you
6 testimony, you mentioned the \$74 billion to our local
7 economy. Do you folks at DCWP have the breakdown
8 between-- of this \$74 billion-- between the small,
9 medium, large hotels and what that looks like in
10 terms of revenue generated?

11 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ORTIZ: Thank you,
12 Council Member. I think that number we pulled from
13 our colleagues at New York City Tourism, so we can
14 reach out--

15 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: [interposing]
16 That's what I figured. I will definitely ask NYCTC.
17 That's under my committee. I just wanted to make
18 sure. And then in terms of the Local Law 99, do you
19 folks have the stats on that law and the breakdown of
20 some of the complaint type and disruption types from--
21 - different complaints we're receiving through the
22 City?

23 COMMISSIONER MAYUGA: thank you, Council
24 Member. Since Local Law 99 went into effect, we have
25 received approximately 1,100 hotel-related complaints

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2 from consumers in general. Now, of these, only a
3 very small percentage would potentially relate to
4 service disruptions as defined under the law, and in
5 fact only 20 complaints of those that reach mediation
6 related to service disruption.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: So, 20 complaints
8 on service disruptions that needed mediation?

9 COMMISSIONER MAYUGA: Yes.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Okay, thank you
11 for that clarification. And then additionally, in
12 your-- in the same paragraph regarding Local Law 99,
13 you mentioned initiating investigations on patterns.
14 Do we know what types of patterns have come up?

15 DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL IACHAN: I'm happy
16 to take that. And I just want to note that Local Law
17 99 is not specifically incorporated into the current
18 draft of this legislation.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Sure.

20 DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL IACHAN: Of
21 course, it is an important consumer protection, and
22 so--

23 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: [interposing] But
24 there are components within this legislation that are

25

2 impacting, right, directly related to response of
3 some of these--

4 DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL IACHAN:

5 [interposing] Not currently, but we look forward to
6 working with you and hope to be able to--

7 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: [interposing]

8 Okay.

9 DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL IACHAN:

10 incorporate, because these are consumer protections
11 into the law. now, in terms of how we identify
12 patterns, to the extent that we would receive more
13 than one complaint about the same actor or more than
14 of the same type of complaint about actors within a
15 small period of time, that's a sort of pattern that
16 we keep an eye out for. And in those cases, besides
17 just trying to mediate those complaints, meaning we
18 have professional mediators who go back and forth
19 between business and the consumer to try to make the
20 consumer whole. We then open an investigation and
21 begin looking closer at the alleged bad actor to
22 potentially bring a case from our General Counsel
23 Division against that bad actor. We, of course, do
24 that for any entity for business where we see these
25 violations, where they violate the consumer

2 protection law, but especially within our licensed
3 categories. We license over 40 different categories.
4 This will be--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: [interposing]
6 Sure.

7 DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL IACHAN: you know,
8 43, I think. So, once we have the license, there are
9 very specific things we keep an eye for, and we bring
10 those cases either at OATH or in state court.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Okay, and again,
12 just asking in terms of the type of-- is there like a
13 specific thing that you see five percent or 20
14 percent of the small, large, medium-size hotels
15 continuously do. I think that's one of the concerns
16 that members have is I think sometimes we have tunnel
17 vision with the motels and hotels in our districts
18 and what we know is like a pattern that we see
19 continuously. I'm more so interested in like do you
20 see that there is a general pattern across the city
21 that we're trying to mediate?

22 DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL IACHAN: So, the
23 only kind of major consistent complaint type that we
24 have recognized is from consumers who are charged for

2 things that they don't understand. So that is where
3 our--

4 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: [interposing]

5 Okay, so the junk--

6 DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL IACHAN: scrutiny
7 in the resort fees and junk fees has come from. That
8 is really the prevalent sort of category. Aside from
9 that we do get, you know, cleanliness and bed bug
10 complaints, but those aren't within the purview of
11 our agency. So we refer those out, to the extent that
12 those complaints also have an element of somebody
13 seeking a refund, we still try to mediate those. But
14 any sort of pattern that we identify thus far in
15 terms of hotel complaints has really, really been
16 about consumers being very confused about the type of
17 fees they're charged.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: And how do you
19 folks regulate or manage or see as a pattern for the
20 like sex trafficking, for example, that has
21 continuously come up in this conversation? Is that
22 just-- do we wait on the NYPD to have stats?

23 COMMISSIONER MAYUGA: We don't handle
24 those. We don't really--

2 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: [interposing]

3 sure.

4 COMMISSIONER MAYUGA: Those haven't
5 really come to us, so probably NYPD or I don't know
6 if another agency might be able to speak best about
7 those.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Okay. Okay.
9 Thank you, Chair, for the additional time. Okay, I
10 asked my tourism question. Just some questions
11 around licensing. I'm sure you folks are familiar, I
12 created a TLC license fee just last year, and it took
13 us a long time to get to a place that we were happy
14 with that. I heard you during your responses to the
15 Chair on engaging with other municipalizes regarding
16 it. I wanted to know if there was any timeline of
17 what your ideal timeline is in terms of looking at
18 other municipalities that have licensing in this
19 sector, and when you expect to give feedback to the
20 Council?

21 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ORTIZ: I think
22 that questions on me.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Great.

24 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ORTIZ: I think
25 I've just been waiting to get to today, but it's

2 something that I want to engage in as soon as
3 possible, and I'm happy to share any feedback I get.
4 You know, certainly by the end of the month.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Okay. I think
6 that's important for us to know that you folks have
7 not necessarily looked into it too deeply and are
8 hoping to continuously engage on that.

9 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ORTIZ: Yeah, and
10 I think I could also share in the more immediate
11 term, we have done-- without speaking with folks, we
12 have done some research into some of the standards in
13 the bill and other municipalities. So I think we'd
14 share that in the near term as well.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Okay, great.
16 That'd be helpful. And do you folks have any
17 complaints that come in regarding no front desk
18 personnel or difficulty with digital check-in? I'm
19 very fond of digital check-in these days, because I
20 like to take red eyes. So, wondering if we get any
21 complaints of needing that personnel at the front
22 desk.

23 DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL IACHAN: We would
24 have to take a closer look. There certainly aren't
25 enough that they stood out for-- in our review in

2 preparation for this hearing. Like I said, there's
3 not a pattern of those, but we would have to take a
4 look and we could get back to you on that.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Okay, and then in
6 terms of the licensing needing to be enforceable that
7 I know you highlighted, that's like an important
8 component that you folks are looking into which I
9 think concerns all of us. A lot of the laws that we
10 have, it all comes back to us in discussion as
11 members, and it's not enforceable. How do we make
12 sure people feel safe or people feel like local
13 government is working them? With revocation and
14 shutting down hotels, how will that necessarily work
15 for like employees? Or in your experience, for the
16 employees, being able to ensure that if a hotel were
17 to shut down, that they have somewhere to go to work
18 and/or severance, and/or unemployment?

19 COMMISSIONER MAYUGA: Thank you, Majority
20 Leader. Right now, I mean, it is one of the
21 recommendations that we have, right, for amendments
22 to the bill, because it's not clear on the
23 revocation, for example, and I gave that example of
24 sealing or pad-locking a hotel, not just focus on
25 workers but also on any hotel guest. In terms of

2 workers, and what we've done in other situations,
3 other industries, but we do have the authority and
4 have successfully used it to close down a store. We
5 do work with other city agencies to ensure that we're
6 not again impacting negatively an employee. There's
7 a notice fear [sic] that goes in any way. We are
8 going to write-- I mean, once the bill is out there,
9 it's final. We would obviously develop some education
10 to make sure that all involved are aware and prepared
11 for when enforcement starts, and then also once that
12 happens even our [inaudible] authority right now and
13 other places we're going to post a notice that's
14 going to give a period of time for the business to
15 either correct the violations or, you know, do things
16 that they might need to do and that notice will be
17 very clear also for the workers since it is publicly
18 posted.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Okay, and then
20 we-- I see in the bill language is a two-year time
21 span for the license, if there's revocation, what's
22 the timeline for cure. I didn't-- haven't
23 necessarily seen that in the bill yet, and wondering
24 if you folks have a recommendation.

2 DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL IACHAN: I might
3 just say we have concerns with the bill because we
4 want to make very clear what violations are--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: [interposing]
6 Okay.

7 DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL IACHAN: and what
8 would lead to revocation. We, in all our license
9 categories are very, very committed to providing
10 licensees due process, and so as with all of our
11 license categories, we provide due process within our
12 own DCWP processes in terms of notice of intent to
13 revoke, or deny, and of course, there's always the
14 opportunity to appeal with an article 78, but we look
15 forward to clarifying what the actual standards would
16 be that would merit revocation, because once you get
17 there, it's not typically to allow to cure. That's
18 usually-- you know, the due processes you can argue
19 the merits and you have that opportunity, but
20 violations themselves, there are cure opportunities
21 offered [sic].

22 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Okay, that makes
23 a lot more sense. And then just in your testimony
24 you spoke about OMB and the agency believing that
25 this will require new re-- Intro 991 would require

2 new resources. Have you folks had any conversations
3 with OMB about additional funds or resources? Were
4 there any cuts last fiscal year that you were unable
5 to recover and just kind of an idea of what that
6 looks like?

7 COMMISSIONER MAYUGA: Thank you. Thank
8 you for that question. Yes, as I said in my
9 testimony, this is certainly a new mandate and we
10 know there's over 800 hotels, right, in the City, so
11 certainly it's a big-- it's going to be a big lift
12 that we welcome because it is an area that we know
13 how to do, but it will require new resources,
14 significant new resources. And just as importantly,
15 we need to be able to hire without preconditions. As
16 you know, we have just been in a strict hiring freeze
17 for almost a year, and over the time we basically
18 accumulate about 15 percent of our agency's vacancy
19 rates. And so, you know, if this progresses, we want
20 to work closely with City Hall and OMB and the
21 Council, too, make sure that we're properly resourced
22 and allowed to hire new resources.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Okay. So it's
24 mostly the hiring freeze that's impacting some of the
25 additional resources that you general need?

2 COMMISSIONER MAYUGA: We just-- yes.
3 We've been in the hiring freeze, and then of course,
4 if there's new resources, we just want to make sure
5 that we can actually then hire for those new
6 positions that are allocated.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: and then my last
8 couple questions on this bill specifically-- do we
9 have any other license that currently requires direct
10 employment? So, something I've been trying to
11 research myself.

12 COMMISSIONER MAYUGA: Sorry, that requires
13 what?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Direct
15 employment?

16 DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL IACHAN: No, we
17 don't have-- we currently do not have any other
18 license that requires direct employment.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Okay, and then
20 have you folks looked at the outer borough impact for
21 some of these hotels and workers?

22 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ORTIZ: Could you
23 clarify what-- what do you mean by--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: [interposing] Just
25 in terms of who could be directly impacted, whether

2 it's BIPOC workers, immigrant communities, and some
3 of the smaller hotels. Like, I have small hotels,
4 motels, in my district. I don't have any of the
5 large branches. And just trying to gauge have we
6 looked at the economic impact both of the worker
7 that's going to be impacted locally and of the small
8 business.

9 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ORTIZ: Well, I
10 think-- I think that's something that would be
11 important to consider and why we're having the
12 hearing today. It's great to be-- to hear directly
13 from those stakeholders on the issues of those
14 impacts. You know, I think given-- we have been also
15 working to learn as much as we can in the past week
16 since the hearing was noticed. But that said, I think
17 for us I want to make sure that folks understand that
18 we want to be as a resource for them. It's not meant
19 to be punitive. It's meant to create a floor, a
20 standard, in New York City for how hotels should
21 operate. You know, one situation that I frequently
22 encounter, for example, is a business that feels
23 they're following all the rules, doing all the right
24 things by their workers, by their consumers, and just
25 down the street a business that's not, and I think we

2 need to correct that situation, and that's what the
3 intent of this bill is.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Thank you. And
5 then just a question on Introduction 970. You folks
6 do not feel like you're the appropriate agency to
7 address the concerns within this bill? Any chance
8 you have an idea of the agencies that we should look
9 at to consider for this bill's passage?

10 COMMISSIONER MAYUGA: Honestly, because
11 it was added just yesterday afternoon, it's kind of
12 difficult--

13 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: [interposing] Got
14 it.

15 COMMISSIONER MAYUGA: to really review in
16 enough detail to provide any recommendation.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Okay. Thank you
18 so much. Thank you, Chair, for the additional time
19 to go through some of my questions.

20 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Great. Thank you so
21 much, and I really want to thank the Administration
22 for their testimony today. Thank you. Okay, we are
23 now going to open up the hearing for public
24 testimony. I want to remind members of the public
25 that this is a formal government proceeding and that

2 decorum shall be observed at all times. As such,
3 members of the public shall remain silent at all
4 times. The witness table is reserved for people who
5 wish to testify. No video recording or photography
6 is allowed from the witness table. Further, members
7 of the public may not present audio or video
8 recordings as testimony, but they submit transcripts
9 of such recordings to the Sergeant at Arms for
10 inclusion in the hearing record. If you wish to
11 speak at today's hearing, please fill out an
12 appearance card with the Sergeant at Arms and wait to
13 be recognized. When recognized, you will have two
14 minutes to speak on today's hearing topic which is
15 Intro 970 and 991B. If you have a written statement
16 or additional writing testimony you wish to submit
17 for the record, please just provide a copy of that
18 testimony to the Sergeant at Arms. You may also email
19 written testimony to testimony@council.nyc.gov within
20 72 hours of this hearing. Audio and video recordings
21 will not be accepted. So, I will now call the first
22 panel. Vinny Alvarez, David Weil [sp?], Deputy
23 Borough President Keisha Sutton James, and Tariqua
24 Morrison on behalf of Queens Borough President
25 Richards. So, I believe several members are in-

2 person and then on Zoom. Okay, yeah, please come
3 forward. Thank you so much. And I believe Vinnie
4 Alvarez and David Weil are on Zoom. Okay, Vinny
5 Alvarez.

6 BRENDAN GRIFFITH: Good morning Chair
7 Menin and members of the committee. My name is
8 actually Brendan Griffith. I'm the Chief of Staff at
9 the New York City Central Labor Council.
10 Unfortunately, our President Vinny was unable to
11 testify, but ill testify in his place. The CLC
12 represents over one million workers across 300
13 affiliated unions, and we strongly support the Safe
14 Hotels Act. The health of the hotel industry is
15 critical to our city and to the tens of thousands of
16 hotel workers whose livelihoods rely on it. Each of
17 our organizations has an interest in maintaining and
18 expanding New York City's tourism economy and in
19 keeping hotels profitable. For months, hotel workers
20 and allies have been working to advance this bill.
21 After years of deteriorating workplace safety,
22 increased wage and hour violations, and complaints
23 from hotel guests, it's time for action. There's a
24 diverse coalition in support of this bill, including
25 affiliated unions of the CLC like DC37, 32BJ, NYSNA,

2 CWA, and of course the Hotel and Gaming Trades
3 Council. Hotels are among the most dangerous
4 workplaces in the country. Hotel workers are in the
5 top quarter for workplace injuries, likelier than
6 most to be hurt on the job, including being
7 assaulted. This bill would require hotels to equip
8 their workers with panic buttons, technology that's
9 been successfully implemented statewide in Illinois
10 and New Jersey. It is already a feature of unionized
11 hotels in New York City. There is no good reason to
12 deny workers this basic protection. Hotels have also
13 been a battle ground that bosses [sic] ongoing
14 efforts to shed as much legal liability as possible.
15 Today, the core work of a hotel is being shifted to
16 subcontractors so that owners bear no legal
17 responsibility when a subcontracted worker is
18 mistreated, injured or suffers wage theft. Some
19 contractors are notoriously hard to pin down when a
20 worker pushes a legal issue. This bill ensure that
21 workers who are cheated or abused will be able to
22 have their issues addressed. Hotels are already
23 licensed in a number of major U.S. cities. There's
24 no reason to reject these basic regulations in worker
25 protections here in New York City. It's easy to take

1 COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER AND WORKER PROTECTION 71
2 for granted the rights enjoyed by workers today like
3 equal pay for equal work, the eight-hour work day--

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Thank you
5 for your testimony. Your time is expired.

6 BRENDAN GRIFFITH: So, as the legislation
7 advances, we'll have a clear picture of who stood
8 with New York City's workers and who stood against
9 them, and I hope we can all celebrate a safer hotel
10 industry, and that's only safer for workers, but for
11 guests and the broader community, too. I appreciate
12 the opportunity to address this committee today.
13 Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you so much. I
15 do have some questions, but I'm going to wait 'til
16 the full panel goes. So Brendan, if you don't mind
17 holding on. Thank you so much. David Weil? Is David
18 Weil on the Zoom?

19 DAVID WEIL: Thank you, Chair Menin.
20 Good morning. My name is David Weil. I'm a
21 professor of social policy and economics at Brandeis
22 University and visiting professor of public policy at
23 the Harvard Kennedy School. I also served in the
24 Obama Administration as the head of the U.S.
25 Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division.

2 Growing use of subcontracting and its effect on
3 workers, businesses, and the public is something I've
4 studied for almost two decades. I coined the term
5 fissuring to describe the practice of light [sic]
6 subcontracting adopted by businesses that give them
7 the benefits of a workforce while shifting
8 responsibility of employment to other parties. In
9 the hotel industry, fissuring means that hotel chains
10 and owners benefit from a well-known brand, usually
11 the reason that customers select the property, but
12 shed the messy problem in responsibilities of
13 employment to subcontractors. That means when you
14 walk into many U.S. hotels today, the brand you see
15 over the entry and throughout the building, including
16 on uniforms of housekeepers or front desk workers, no
17 longer represents the employer of record. As you
18 will hear today, workers bear the brunt of fissuring.
19 The more business layers there are, the more players
20 need overhead and profit margins. Subcontracted work
21 in hotels is labor intensive and puts downward
22 pressure on wages. Many studies show that workers
23 who have been outsourced are paid significantly less
24 for doing the exact same work as direct employees.
25 For the same reason, fissured workers are more likely

2 to be subjected to wage theft. Subcontract workers
3 are more exposed to health and safety risks, sexual
4 harassment and other violations of basic rights. I
5 have documented this in my own academic studies and I
6 saw it firsthand in running the Department of Labor's
7 Wage and Hour Division. I applaud the proposed bill
8 because it recognizes that certain core functions, in
9 particular front desk and housekeeping are central to
10 running a hotel. With the benefits of controlling
11 those functions comes the responsibility associated
12 with that. By making that responsibility--

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Thank you
14 for your testimony. Your time is expired.

15 DAVID WEIL: [inaudible] the rule can
16 provide the workers they pay they deserve and
17 protections and rights they have under the law.
18 There are many hotels in New York City who continue
19 to directly employ core workers, demonstrating that
20 such practices can be compatible with profitability
21 as well as productivity and service quality. Passing
22 the bill will therefore benefit workers central to
23 the hotel experience, ensure customer safe and
24 quality they expect from hotels and maintain a viable

2 and profitable hospitality sector in New York City.

3 Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you. Thank
5 you. I do have a couple of questions, but we're
6 going to finish the panel. Okay, and now in-person,
7 yes, Deputy Borough President.

8 KEISHA SUTTON JAMES: Good morning, Chair
9 Menin and members of the Committee on Consumer and
10 Worker Protections. Thank you for the opportunity to
11 testify today in support of the proposed legislation
12 to require licensing for hotels in New York City. My
13 name is Keisha Sutton James, and I am Deputy
14 Manhattan Borough President. I will be testifying on
15 behalf of Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine on
16 Intro 991B 2024, a bill that he strongly believes
17 will bring much-needed oversight, accountability and
18 protection-- and consumer protection to an industry
19 that serves millions of New Yorkers and visitors
20 alike. The hotel industry is vital to the economy of
21 New York City, drawing millions of tourists each day
22 and providing thousands of jobs. However, it is also
23 one that requires rigorous standards and oversight to
24 ensure safe, clean and healthy facilities in
25 operation for consumers as well as strong protections

2 for workers. This will bring the hotel industry into
3 alignment with many other sectors already regulated
4 by our city, creating consistency and accountability
5 that is long overdue. Hotel licensure programs have
6 been successful in cities across the country from
7 Boston to Washington, D.C., Chicago, and Las Vegas.
8 Licensing has improved the quality of hotel services
9 and enhanced consumer protections without hindering
10 the industry's growth. If passed, this bill will
11 play an important role in keeping the public safe.
12 Over the past five years, more than 14,000 criminal
13 complaints have been made across-- at hotels across
14 the five boroughs, including a staggering 39 murders.
15 Licensing will help weed out the bad actors and
16 unsafe business practices thereby making serious and
17 important steps to reduce human trafficking and other
18 safety issues. Because of this, Intro 991B has been
19 supported by all five District Attorneys and Attorney
20 general Letitia James, all of whom recognize that
21 licensing will help improve public safety and help
22 root out bad actors in the industry. It is also
23 essential that we take these steps to better protect
24 workers in an industry known for widespread wage
25 theft and unacceptable working conditions. By

2 requiring direct employment in core hotel operations-
3 -

4 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: [interposing] I'm just
5 going to ask you to wrap up, please. Thank you so
6 much.

7 KEISHA SUTTON JAMES: I have two more
8 sentences. In operations this legislation ensures
9 that hotel workers are treated fairly, paid
10 appropriately and protected from exploitation.
11 Licensing will further foster a more responsible and
12 transparency industry where workers and consumers
13 alike can trust in the integrity of the businesses
14 with which they engage. Intro 991b is about
15 improving public safety, protecting consumers, and
16 ensuring fair treatment for workers. I urge the
17 Council to pass this important bill. Thank you for
18 your time and consideration.

19 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you so much.

20 TARIQUA MORRISON: Good morning, Chair
21 Menin and members of the Consumer and Worker
22 Protection Committee. My name Tariqua Morrison and I
23 serve as Deputy General Counsel and Director of
24 intergovernmental Affairs for Queens Borough
25 President Donovan Richards who was not able to be

2 here today, but I'm here to deliver testimony on his
3 behalf. Our city's tourism industry is arguably our
4 most important industry. It puts tens of thousands
5 of our neighbors to work and generates billions of
6 dollars in wages and tax revenue, but what it doesn't
7 do sometimes is have common sense. The fact of the
8 matter is that we have problematic hotels in every
9 borough. Instead of welcoming visitors from all over
10 the world, they are sites of criminal behavior and
11 public safety concerns that make our communities less
12 safe. Just across the street from Queens Borough
13 Hall, for example, there was the Umbrella Hotel. For
14 months we heard dozens of complaints from neighbors
15 about drugs, prostitution and violence happening
16 there, and on New Year's Day in 2021 a shooting at
17 the hotel took the life of a guest names Robert
18 Williams. He was there to celebrate the New Year and
19 his 21st birthday the next day, but he didn't live
20 long enough to see it. Robert should still be alive,
21 and he would have bene alive if we had the power to
22 shut down the Umbrella Hotel once it became clear
23 that it was a threat to public safety. The Safe
24 Hotels Act would allow us to do just that. That's
25 why the Borough President proudly endorses the Safe

2 hotels Act. Not only will it make our community
3 safer, it will improve the quality of our hotels for
4 those who use the. Giving the City the tools to
5 better regulate hotels and set basic health and
6 safety standards is essential to protecting workers,
7 guests and the community, and any reputable hotel
8 should be able to follow them. Cities like Chicago,
9 Boston. Las Vegas have these standards in place, so
10 it's only right that New York is the next city to do
11 so. Borough President Richards is deeply grateful to
12 Council Member Menin for her advocacy and intensity
13 on this bill and he encourages the full Council to
14 pass it. Licensing is one of the most effective
15 tools the City has to enforce the critical safety and
16 sanitary standards at public-facing businesses.
17 That's why the Council should pass the Safe Hotels
18 Act now. Thank you, Chair Menin.

19 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you so much.
20 We greatly appreciate your testimony and the support
21 of both Borough President. So I do want to turn back
22 first to Brendan Griffith for a question and then to
23 Mr. Weil. Brendan, if you are still on the Zoom, you
24 talked a little bit about wage theft and deplorable
25 working conditions. Can you talk a little bit about

2 some of the complaints that the Central Labor Council
3 is receiving from this in terms of subcontracted
4 workers and the importance of this subcontracting
5 ban?

6 BRENDAN GRIFFITH: Yes, thank you very
7 much. I appreciate the question, Chair Menin. I
8 think a lot of what we've been hearing was actually
9 referenced in Mr. Weil's comments as well.
10 Subcontracting allows for employers to-- who have
11 control to remove responsibility. So, those
12 complaints are holistically about things like wage
13 theft, unsafe working conditions, but the biggest
14 issue with it is there's no redress. When you have a
15 subcontracted worker, the hotel operator had the
16 ability to say that this is not our responsibility to
17 solve that problem.

18 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you so much.
19 And Mr. Weil, the work that you have done, the
20 academic research which I have read through, is
21 incredibly compelling and really seminal on this
22 issue. In your opinion when we have the
23 subcontracting-- the ban that we have that is in this
24 bill on housekeeping and front desk staff, how
25 quickly will that result in rising wages for workers?

2 DAVID WEIL: Thank you, Chair Menin. I
3 think the answer to that, it could be very, very
4 quickly wages would respond. I think in general the
5 evidence shows that one of the reasons that wages are
6 pushed downward when you have subcontracting,
7 [inaudible] you have so many people who want to make
8 their overhead in their profit margin between that.
9 Once you remove that, the ability of a hotel to
10 actually compensate workers to labor standards, the
11 higher level of wages therefore increases, and that
12 can benefit the hotel, too. Because higher paid
13 workers tend to turnover much less and be more
14 [inaudible] productive and you have higher quality.
15 So it can benefit ultimately workers in higher wages
16 rather quickly and also benefit the hotel
17 [inaudible].

18 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Great. Thank you
19 very much. Any questions from colleagues? No, okay.
20 Thank you so much to this panel. Okay, we are now
21 going to call the next panel. Sarah Bratko, Jagruti
22 Panwala, Pruvi Panwala, Arthur Kramer, Triputi Patel,
23 if you could please come forward. Thank you. Okay,
24 great. Thank you. If you could just go in the order
25 that I called you. Thank you so much.

2 SARAH BRATKO: Sorry, I think I messed up
3 the seating.

4 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Oh, no, no problem.

5 SARAH BRATKO: My name is Sarah Bratko.
6 I'm with the American Hotel and Lodging Association.
7 AHLA represents all segments of the lodging industry
8 including brands, owners, management companies, and
9 other businesses that provide support to the
10 industry. The hotel industry takes our
11 responsibility to the health and safety of our
12 employees and guests incredibly seriously, and if
13 there are challenges and issues, we want to make sure
14 that we're not only part of that conversation, but
15 part of the solution. We want to thank Councilwoman
16 Menin from meeting with us several times and we want
17 to also acknowledge that version B of this
18 legislation has made significant changes to address
19 the industry concerns. However, this version will
20 still have devastating impacts on the lodging
21 industry and small businesses in New York. While
22 there has been significant dialogue about this bill,
23 the hotel industry has never really opposed any of
24 the actual health and safety measures that are
25 included in this, particularly compliance with

1 COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER AND WORKER PROTECTION 82
2 mandating compliance with the state human trafficking
3 law that we wrote in 2022 and the implementation of
4 panic buttons. If the true intent of the legislation
5 is to standardize health and safety measures, there
6 are several alternative ways to achieve this goal
7 without making it illegal for many New York City
8 businesses to even operate and causing irreparable
9 harm to countless New York City hotels. Why did this
10 legislation arbitrarily ban the total use of
11 subcontractors instead of simply mandating that any
12 subcontractors working in the hotel have to be
13 licensed and follow the same health and safety
14 requirements of hotel? There's really zero evidence
15 that shows that hotels that use subcontractors have
16 lower health and safety standards. All this bill
17 does is make it illegal for small businesses to
18 actually operate. We urge the City Council to scale
19 back this bill and create what you have always said
20 this is about is a simply licensing bill. And we'd
21 be happy to answer any questions and continue to
22 engage with conversations with the sponsor and other
23 members of the council on this bill.

24 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you. Next,
25 please.

2 JAGRUTI PANWALA: Good morning, Council
3 Member. My name is Jagruti Panwala. I'm here as a
4 past Chairwoman of AHLA which is the largest hotel
5 owner association in the world. I'm also here as a
6 first-generation hotelier with 26 year of experience.
7 I've spent my entire adult life in hotel business and
8 I've done every single job there is to do from
9 housekeeping to maintenance, to book-keeping to
10 management. So I know firsthand what it takes to be
11 a small business owner. Currently, we own multiple
12 hotels in the United States, including a 60-room
13 hotel in Bronx. Intro 991 is being called the Safe
14 Hotel act, but actually safety protocols are
15 duplicative of existing laws and industry protocols.
16 Clearly, the title is a smokescreen for other
17 objective. Forcing of small businesses to change
18 their business model and intentionally or
19 unintentionally eliminating us from the New York City
20 marketplace. First, as currently written, the
21 licensing structure outlined in the bill is
22 problematic. In every other city and state,
23 licensing requirements depend on meeting building
24 standards and receiving a certificate of occupancy.
25 These new and arbitrary rules would cause more

2 obstacles for small hoteliers to secure bank funding
3 and secure franchise partners, both of which are
4 already very difficult. Second, I want to address
5 the proposed disallowance of subcontractors.
6 Subcontractors often provide the flexibility and
7 specialized skills to help smaller hotels maintain
8 the operational efficiency while at time never
9 getting labor shortages. When considering a
10 subcontractor, we're not only inquiring about their
11 current training and availability, but we also still
12 provide them with the property-specific training.
13 Exact the same way we do direct-hire employees.
14 We're not alone. Subcontractors are option for many
15 others in this industry, so why remove them entirely
16 for hotel operators. New York City visitors deserves
17 choices from large corporate catering hotels to
18 smaller limited service family-run hotels, and this
19 legislation will destroy that. I strongly urge you
20 to consider the adverse implications outlined here
21 today when you deliberate on potential policy
22 proposals. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Yes. You just have
24 to press the button.

2 ARTHUR KRAMER: Okay, thank you,
3 Chairperson Menin, Council Member Brewer. I
4 appreciate the opportunity to tell you my specific
5 opposition to a portion of this legislation. I
6 served in the New York State Assembly for 23 years,
7 chaired the Ways and Means Committee for 12. I've
8 written and seen thousands of pieces of legislation,
9 including the one-- my sponsorship of the automobile
10 lemon law, but what I find about this legislation is
11 I've never seen a state or local law in existence
12 that says that you have to go to an outside private
13 party to qualify for a city license, and I'm talking
14 about the requirement of a collective bargaining
15 agreement. If there is a collective bargaining
16 agreement, it should be understand that it typically
17 involves discussions about a host of issues that have
18 absolutely noting to do with this bill. The average
19 collective bargaining negotiations take 407 days, and
20 first time negotiations take 465 days. What does the
21 applicant do to stay in business during that period
22 of time in order to qualify? I think the
23 introduction of a collective bargaining agreement has
24 nothing to do with all of the evils that I've heard
25 about today that have been recited by Council

2 Members. From my perspective, this legislation gives
3 preferences to those who already have the agreements,
4 and puts the small business man in a position where
5 that person can barely survive, and then you're
6 selecting them, pushing them into the collective
7 bargaining process. There's other issues, if you
8 will, but the Commissioner who testified earlier
9 today said two things of her three criteria. One of
10 them, that licensing laws must not be unnecessarily
11 burdensome to any industry, and in addition, there
12 should not be unnecessary red tape. I've looked at
13 the laws in Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, Dallas, and
14 other cities. They do not resemble this particular
15 proposal. They do not mandate it. They do not
16 require it, and I think it's an unnecessary burden on
17 an industry that has so many other burdens.

18 TRIPUTI PATEL: Good morning Chairman
19 Menin and members of the Committee. My name is
20 Triputi Patel. My father came here in 1969 to pursue
21 the American dream. He made a tough, but honest
22 living working three jobs seven days a week to
23 provide for our family. We called the Bronx home in
24 those early days, and my father continued to save
25 money in hopes of owning a motel someday. With

2 financial support from family members, we were able
3 to buy our first property when I was just five years
4 old. Ours was a truly family-owned business. We
5 lived in the motel. My father would handle the front
6 desk and my mother would handle room service. Eager
7 to help, I would clean rooms with my mom and help my
8 dad answer phone calls. No one succeeds alone. We
9 hired other people to help, supporting their
10 livelihood and uplifting our communities. Our
11 collective hard work meant we could sustain our
12 growth-- grow our business. Fifty years later, I can
13 tell you our business and lives have been built on
14 blood, sweat, and tears. Big chains can sustain
15 regulations like this, but small businesses cannot,
16 neither can workers. Ninety-nine percent of our
17 employees are minorities and they rely on us to
18 provide for their families. Intro 991 needs
19 important amendments to make sure that family-owned
20 businesses like mine aren't destroyed while big
21 chains continue to thrive. All I ask is to really
22 listen to our concerns and protect our livelihoods.
23 Our employees are like family to us. They've been
24 with us for over 10 years, and we know each other on
25 a name to name basis, and they are more than welcome

2 to call us directly and address their concerns which
3 they have in the past and we do address their
4 concerns and needs. So, please consider just take a
5 good look at this amendment and if there's any
6 amendments that need to be made to this 991.

7 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you.

8 PURVI PANWALA: Hi, good morning, Council
9 Members. My name is Purvi Panwala. I'd like to
10 thank you for allowing me to speak today. I'm here
11 both as a member of AHALA and as a local hotelier to
12 voice my opposition to Int. 991. I am a second-
13 generation hotelier with literally a lifetime of
14 experience. Currently, we own a small boutique hotel
15 in Brooklyn, New York which employees about 15
16 people. Our hotel does its best to take care of its
17 employees, giving competitive wages and flexibility
18 and benefits. Many of our employees have been with
19 us since we've opened, about 15 years ago, and
20 they're still with us today. We have all of our
21 staff obtain human trafficking prevention training
22 which is an industry standard, and they take their
23 fire, life and safety training which is a New York
24 City standard. As much as we do to support our
25 employees, it continues to get difficult to maintain

2 staff in a competitive workforce market. With the
3 challenges we face to maintain day-to-day operations
4 and our guests-- offer our guests the best experience
5 with a clean hotel room and a safe hotel room, we
6 still have to turn to subcontractors for assistance.
7 We have hired a minority-owned vendor or
8 subcontractor for our housekeeping department. in
9 doing so, we can ensure consistency in cleanliness
10 and in training, and the best part is, when my
11 manager comes in the morning, he can depend on that
12 department being fully staffed and fully trained for
13 the day, because if there were any call-outs, that's
14 already been taken care of earlier in that day with
15 the resources that they have. Does this reduce our
16 cost as a hotel? Absolutely not. It's actually a
17 lot more expensive for us to hire these
18 subcontractors. But why do we do it? Because it
19 keeps our hotels clean and safe. Small business are
20 like individuals in the public. We're all suffering
21 from inflation. So any little burden financially is
22 incredibly detrimental to us, just like an
23 individual. If the bill remains, many hotels will be
24 in jeopardy. Please protect small minority-owned

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2 hotels like mine against this bill, and I'm happy to
3 work with you if you need that. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much
5 for your testimony. Want to clarify two things. A
6 point was made about the collective bargaining
7 agreement. I want to be very, very clear. The
8 collective bargaining agreement is not required at
9 all under this bill. The language simply states that
10 if a business has incorporated this law into their
11 CBA, then they can use that CBA as evidence of their
12 procedures to comply with the law. That is what it
13 does. Secondly, I want to make a clarification
14 point. There was a point made on subcontracting.
15 After numerous meetings with many of you all and many
16 other stakeholders, we narrowed the subcontracting
17 bad. We exempted FMB. We exempted security. We
18 exempting engineering. We added 20 additional
19 categories of exemption to the subcontracting ban,
20 and we have grandfathered in the subcontracts. So, I
21 do want to make sure for the record that that is very
22 clear. With that said, I greatly appreciate your
23 testimony today, and thank you so much for being
24 here. And we'll now call the next panel. Marion
25 Kendall, Cristian Eduardo [sp?], Ruoxi Chen [sp?],

2 Elizabeth Sakwa [sp?], if you could please come
3 forward. Thank you. I'm sorry, I think I was--
4 Ruoxi Che [sp?] was the third name. Thank you. Is
5 Ruoxi Che here and Elizabeth Sakwa? Okay. Okay, so
6 you are here. Great, wonderful. Okay, please begin.
7 Thank you.

8 MARION KENDALL: Good afternoon
9 distinguished members of the City Council. My name is
10 Marion Kendall, and I am a Co-chair of the New York
11 State Anti-trafficking coalition and the founder of
12 Thrive, an organization dedicated to providing
13 critical support and services to victims and
14 survivors of sexual exploitation across all districts
15 represented here today. I am here to voice an
16 unwavering support for the Safe Hotels Act, a bill
17 that represents a beacon of hope in the fight against
18 human trafficking, particularly within the
19 hospitality industry. This bill is a vital step
20 towards protecting the vulnerable and ensuring that
21 no individual is exploited in the very places where
22 they should be safe. Human trafficking, specifically
23 sex trafficking is an insidious crime that hides in
24 plain sight, and hotels are often complicit whether
25 through neglect or lack of awareness. For

2 traffickers, hotels provide anonymity and
3 convenience. For victims, hotels become prisons,
4 places where their humanity is stripped away. Today
5 I want to share with you the lived experiences of
6 survivors that I personally know and currently work
7 with that underscores the necessity of this
8 legislation. Names are protected. I will share the
9 story of Maria. Maria's an 19-year-old immigrant
10 from Central America, came to the U.S. with the
11 promises of a legitimate job in the hospitality
12 industry. What she didn't know was that her
13 traffickers had other plans. Instead of the
14 opportunity she was promised, Maria was locked in a
15 hotel room and forced into prostitution. Every day
16 she endured unspeakable physical and sexual violence,
17 unable to escape because her traffickers threatened
18 her family back home. She lived in terror and
19 isolation and feels powerless, trapped in a place
20 where hotel staff never questioned her constant
21 presence. Sarah is a 26-year-old young mother who
22 was coerced into the sex trade by a trafficker who
23 preyed on her financial desperation, manipulated into
24 believing she had no other option. Sarah was taken to

2 high-end hotels where she was forced to meet clients-
3 -

4 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: [interposing] I'm just
5 going to ask you to please wrap up the testimony.
6 Thank you.

7 MARION KENDALL: We, the Anti-trafficking
8 Coalition, Thrive, and many survivors of trafficking
9 in the five boroughs encourage the City Council to
10 pass the Safe Hotels Act.

11 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much.

12 CRISTIAN EDUARDO: My name is Cristian
13 Eduardo. [inaudible] policy on legislation for
14 prevention of human trafficking on local [sic]
15 [inaudible]. I'm testifying in support of the Safe
16 Hotel Act. My journey as an immigrant to New York
17 began with a promise, a promise of a better life,
18 education, and opportunities, but that promise was
19 cruelly twisted into a nightmare. When I was
20 [inaudible] a trafficker who preyed on my hopes and
21 hotels where I was for to stay were supposed to be
22 safe havens, but instead they become the whole [sic]
23 impersonal [sic] spaces where my trafficker take
24 cover. This is not just my story. It's a story of
25 thousands, men, women and children who are lured by

2 same promises only to find themselves caught in the
3 brutal grave of human trafficking. Trafficking does
4 not occur in the dark corners of city hotels, cheap
5 [sic] hotels, it thrives even in some of the city's
6 most prestigious hotels where discretion is sold as a
7 luxury. It is not enough to claim safety when men,
8 women, and children are raped and beaten behind
9 closed doors and their premises. It is not enough
10 when the hotel system intentionally or not turns a
11 blind eye to the signs of exploitation. In response
12 to the Safe Hotel Act, some of the hotel industry
13 have dismissed the connection between hotels and
14 trafficking as absurd, and they have dismissed and
15 they don't want to listen survivors, but if staff and
16 front lien workers don't feel safe and don't have
17 protections, we cannot fight human trafficking.
18 Trafficking continue to flourish in hotels, including
19 in New York City, and this is a reality. I have
20 heard arguments about the cost on implementing this
21 act, but how much is too much when it comes to
22 protect the vulnerable? How much suffering do we
23 need to see? How much lives do we need to sacrifice?
24 By passing the Safe Hotel Act, we can ensure that
25 hotels are no longer places of suffering, but places

2 where workers are protected, feeling safe and we're
3 fighting actively human trafficking. We must listen
4 to survivors, protect workers, and we must pass Safe
5 Hotel Act.

6 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you.

7 RUOXI CHEN: Good morning distinguished
8 members of the New York City Council. My name is
9 Ruoxi Chen and I'm the Program Manager of the Human
10 Trafficking Intervention Program at Garden of Hope.
11 We are a linguistically and culturally competent
12 nonprofit organizations dedicated to serving and
13 empowering survivors affected by domestic violence,
14 sexual assault, human trafficking, hate violence and
15 other forms of violence as well as promoting family
16 wellbeing and community justice. I stand before you
17 today to address the urgent needs to support and pass
18 the Safe Hotels Act. Many of our clients have endured
19 complex trauma, especially those involved in illicit
20 massage businesses operating within hotels. These
21 individuals often rent rooms on a monthly basis with
22 phone operators controlling the flow of clients.
23 They have choice in who they see, receiving customer
24 assignments solely through text or phone calls which
25 leaves them in a constant state of fear and

2 vulnerability. The risk of encountering dangerous
3 customers is ever-present. Our clients have reported
4 multiple incidents of robbery and burglaries
5 throughout their workign experience, along with
6 frequent physical and sexual violence at the hand of
7 buyers. They attribute much of this danger to the
8 hotel setting itself where they confined space
9 provides no means of escape or hiding during an
10 attack. There [inaudible] often hidden in their
11 rooms further compound the risk. Many of my clients
12 have shared that there wasn't a single day they work
13 in hotels without being in constant fear and anxiety.
14 Even after leaving that environment, many continue to
15 suffer from lingering post-traumatic stress symptoms,
16 a haunting reminder of the dangers and trauma they
17 endured. As immigrants with limited English-
18 proficiency and resources, these women feel powerless
19 to seek help. Even in emergencies, fear and
20 isolation prevent them from reaching out for
21 assistance. Based on our client's experiences, the
22 risk of encountering various crimes while working in
23 illicit massage businesses within hotels is
24 significantly higher than those working in
25 traditional massage parlors on the streets. The Safe

2 Hotels Act address the unique vulnerabilities of
3 individuals, particularly human trafficking victims
4 who are exploited within the hotel industry.

5 Supporting this legislation is crucial in providing
6 much needed safety and support, those who are often
7 invisible and voiceless. It will ensure that
8 previously unreported cases are brought to light and
9 properly addresses. Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you.

11 ELIZABETH SAWKA: Good afternoon. My
12 name is Elizabeth Sawka and the Administrator of
13 Anti-Human-Trafficking at Covenant House New York. We
14 serve youth ages 16 to 24 who are experiencing
15 homelessness, many of whom are survivors of human
16 trafficking. I want to thank the Committee on
17 consumer and Worker Protection for the opportunity to
18 submit testimony in support of the Safe Hotels Act
19 and for your ongoing commitment to ensure the safety
20 of all New Yorkers, especially the most vulnerable.
21 CHNY is the largest provider of services to homeless
22 youth in New York City serving over 1,600 young
23 people annually. Beyond providing safe shelter, we
24 offer a comprehensive array of services including
25 medical care, mental health services, education,

2 employment training and critical legal assistance.

3 Many of the young people who come to us have faced

4 unimaginable trauma, including trafficking which is

5 all too common in environments that lack proper

6 oversight and accountability, hotels being one such

7 environment. I'm here today to strongly support the

8 Safe Hotels Act because we know from our work that

9 hotels are often sites where traffickers exploit

10 vulnerable individuals. Many of the young people who

11 come to Covenant House have been trafficked through

12 hotels that lack basic safety measures such as proper

13 surveillance, well-trained staff, or adequate

14 oversight. This bill is crucial because it addresses

15 key gaps in hotel safety by mandating human

16 trafficking recognition training for hotel employees,

17 ensuring that staff can identify and report

18 suspicious activities, requiring panic buttons and

19 surveillance systems to protect both workers and

20 guests from dangerous situations, prohibiting short

21 duration room rentals, which traffickers often

22 exploit to operate in secrecy. By passing the Safe

23 Hotels Act, you'll be making New York City a safer

24 place for everyone. This bill will protect

25 vulnerable individuals from exploitation and hold

2 hotels accountable for maintaining secure,
3 responsible operations. At Covenant House, we see
4 the lasting impact of human trafficking every day,
5 and this legislation will help close a critical
6 avenue used by traffickers. I urge the Council to
7 pass the Safe Hotels Act and help prevent further
8 harm to those most at risk. Thank you for your time
9 and leadership on this important issue.

10 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Great. Thank you very
11 much. Thank you to this panel. I very much
12 appreciate your testimony. Thank you. Okay, we are
13 now going to call the next panel: Hemal Patel,
14 Bradley Burwell, Michael Paglialonga [sp?], Sandeep
15 Patel [sp?], Preyesh Patel [sp?], Kendu Patel [sp?].
16 Okay, yes, please go. Thank you.

17 HEMAL PATEL: Good morning members of
18 City Council. My name is Hamel Patel. My family and
19 I own hotels in New York City metro area. I'm here
20 today to express my strong opposition to Intro 991, a
21 bill that will have a devastating impact on my
22 livelihood and well as livelihoods of my fellow
23 association members. Intro 991 mandates arbitrary
24 staffing levels, limits operators ability to use
25 subcontractors. As a proud minority small business

2 owner in the hospitality sector I'm greatly concerned
3 about the unintended consequences this bill will have
4 in our industry, and specifically small independent
5 minority hotel owners, such as myself, are employees,
6 the majority of whom are-- come from minority
7 communities. By prohibiting the use of
8 subcontractors, you're inevitably putting thousands
9 of New Yorkers out of work, including minorities and
10 immigrants who provide services for the hospitality
11 industry, including housekeeping, security, food and
12 beverage. Without third-party subcontractors small
13 hotel operators will not be able to accommodate
14 influx of visitors during peak times especially
15 during nationwide workforce shortage. Unlike large
16 hotels, due to the cyclical nature of our business,
17 many small independent minority-owned hotels cannot
18 afford to hire, maintain their own full-time staff,
19 and are challenged to find and retain direct-hire
20 part-timers when occupancy is high. The ban of
21 subcontractors also runs counter to one of the bill's
22 stated objectives, to increase safety and security at
23 the hotels. Third-party security guards, including
24 the individual used in our hotels are fully trained,
25 vetted by agencies that hired them. While larger

2 hotels can afford and prefer to hire these positions
3 directly, the broad staffing mandates included in
4 Intro 991 do not account for how operations of small
5 individual hotels may differ and irresponsible,
6 inappropriate, ineffective, unnecessarily costly.
7 This bill will put thousands of jobs at risk, forcing
8 the small independent hotels out of business and
9 cause room rates in the city to skyrocket. Also, in
10 February of this year, a homicide involving an escort
11 occurred in the SoHo 54 hotel. In April, a man was
12 found stabbed in the basement of Public Hotel on
13 Bowery, and the Dominic Hotel in May a teenager was
14 shot outside of the hotel. Obviously, these hotels
15 are union hotels, and it clearly-- crime does not
16 discriminate between CBA versus non-CBA hotels. I
17 urge the Council to reject Intro 911, engage in
18 meaningful, constructive dialogue with stakeholders.
19 Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you.

21 BRADLEY BURWELL: Good afternoon. Thank
22 you for the opportunity to share my expertise. My
23 name is Bradley Burwell. I'm an Executive Vice
24 President and the leader of the Hospital Investment
25 Sales Group at Collier's, the third-largest real

2 estate advisor globally. I've been in the hotel
3 capital markets advisory business in New York City
4 for more than 20 years, and I can say without
5 hesitation that 991B will cause significant
6 disruption and long-term negative consequences for
7 New York City's hospitality real estate sector.
8 Since the bill's introduction, we've already seen a
9 sharp decline in real estate transactions with many
10 investors stating that they will not buy nor finance
11 hotels in New York City if it passes. This is
12 because the direct employment requirement in the bill
13 will likely result in the unionization of many if not
14 most of the city's 40,000 non-union hotel rooms.
15 While the union plays an important role in our
16 industry, unionization reduces hotel's cash flows by
17 30 to 40 percent with an outsized impact on property
18 values. As property values fall, many hotels will be
19 worth less than their outstanding debt leading to a
20 wave of foreclosures. This process can take three to
21 five years during which hotels deteriorate due to the
22 lack of investments and absolute staff productions
23 resulting in a decline in guest experience. Many
24 owners will absolutely convert hotels to alternative
25 uses and terminate their employees to avoid the

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2 decrease in property values. Typically New York City
3 sees \$3 billion to \$4 billion in hotel real estate
4 sales and an equal amount in financings each year.
5 If this bill passes, we expect a \$2 billion drop in
6 sales and a near freeze on financing for three to
7 five years, costing the City and State more than \$100
8 million of loss transfer and mortgage reporting
9 taxes. Non-union hotels also generate about \$400
10 million in property taxes each year. The
11 corresponding decline in their values could result in
12 \$150 million reduction in property taxes. Let me be
13 clear about this. This bill could lead to a loss of
14 over \$250 million in annual tax revenue.

15 PREYAS PATEL: Good afternoon. My name
16 Preyas Patel and I serve as Northeast Regional
17 Director for Asian Hotel Owners Association, AAHOA
18 which [inaudible] in this area of U.S. Our member-
19 owned 1,100+ hotels in state of New York. Although I
20 appreciate all the Council Member who took time to
21 meet with our association and local hotelier. It is
22 upsetting to be here under this circumstance. We are
23 here to oppose this bill. This final version so that
24 only goal is to increase union hotels, union
25 interesting. Addressing our concern, Council Member

2 have created so-called compromise bill that serve
3 union interest but does not have support from most of
4 industry leader. This bill mention and goes into
5 more detail about the staffing and employment type
6 than it does about safety. Many other business use
7 subcontractor worker and companies who are properly
8 licensed and regulated. To my knowledge, this is the
9 first time subcontractor are being banned outright in
10 the city. It is disheartening that so-called-- so
11 many Council Member who claim to care about the small
12 and minority business would be willing to destroy our
13 small minority-owned hotels, because we cannot afford
14 union-- we cannot offer union's demand. Our hotel
15 owner workers from supporting community that is
16 important part of the city tourism and overall
17 economy, not to mention, the vital resource to
18 moderate income tourism and in New York visiting
19 family member. Our group is conducting a study to
20 show, Council Member, hard data on impact of this
21 bill would have on our member and city economy. I
22 wish Council would have allowed time for study to
23 completed, but I am thankful for all the leader and
24 local hotel owner who are still willing to tell their
25 story today. I hope Council Member hear them and

2 think long and hard before taking action on this
3 bill. Thank you.

4 SANDEEP PATEL: Hello, thank you, Council
5 Members. My name is Sandeep Patel. I'm with a group
6 that owns several hotels in multiple boroughs within
7 New York City, and we've been doing this business--
8 in this business for well over 20 years. I'm here to
9 express my strong opposition to the proposed bill,
10 licensing bill Intro 991. While this bill is being
11 presented as a safety measure, many of its provisions
12 have little to do with safety and could adversely
13 impact the hotel industry as a whole in New York
14 City. For years, hotels in New York City have
15 operated under a certificate of occupancy similar to
16 thousands of restaurants and other businesses within
17 New York City. They are already subject to rigorous
18 regulations enforced by DEP, FDNY, DOB, Department of
19 Health amongst others. Additionally, COVID-19 had
20 severely impacted our industry and many hotels have
21 yet to recover. During the recent homeless crisis
22 and migrant crisis, it was the hotels that stepped up
23 to provide shelter for the people in need,
24 demonstrating their commitment to the community. They
25 did not choose to be a sanctuary city or a sanctuary

2 state, but this is the right thing to do and that's
3 where we all stepped up. I wish to highlight a few
4 points that came to our attention, certainly my
5 attention, that I think could use some tweaking some
6 language, that could use some tweaking in that sense.
7 First of all, the mandated collective bargaining
8 agreement language, it's very vague in nature at this
9 time. It requires compliance with the CBA. This
10 certainly infringes on the rights of employees and
11 employers. Historically, government has never
12 mandated such agreements, making this provision
13 potentially unconstitutional. There's no evidence to
14 support that the collective bargaining guarantees
15 adequate procedures or safeguards in any business
16 operations. Additionally, requiring direct
17 employees-- employment of core employees represents
18 an overreach of government authority. The origins of
19 employee-- core employee's employment should not be
20 tied to guest or staff safety and should remain a
21 business decision. In conclusion, potentially, this
22 bill could have dire consequences with higher room
23 rates and essentially tourists not coming to New York
24 or choosing to be in New Jersey. This is will
25 ineffectively [sic] have an effect on the restaurant

2 business and tax payer and tax dollars into New York
3 City. I urge you guys-- I urge everybody on the
4 board here to have open dialogue with people within
5 our industry. Thank you very much.

6 MICHAEL PAGLIALONGA: Good-- that's so
7 much easier when it's on. Good afternoon everyone
8 and thank you so much for allowing the opportunity to
9 testify. My name is Mike Paglialonga. I'm joined
10 here today by my colleague Michael Weber, to speak to
11 you on behalf of Littler Mendelson and the Workplace
12 Policy Institute. For a very quick background,
13 Littler Mendelson is the world's largest labor and
14 employment firm exclusively representing employers
15 and management. We have 1,800 attorneys globally and
16 are, you know, truly second to none with expertise.
17 The Workplace Policy Institute, or WPI, works on
18 behalf of employers to bring light to a number of the
19 issues that are otherwise just left in the dark, and
20 I'm here today to spend a very quick two minutes
21 highlighting some of the legal flaws with this bill.
22 And unfortunately, I can't get into it as much as I
23 would always love to talk about, so please reach out
24 with any questions. but the goal of this testimony
25 is to highlight that this bill as it is drafted

2 cannot go into effect as it is preempted by federal
3 law for multiple different basis, including the
4 National Labor Relations Act which establishes as a
5 core the one set of rules that collective bargaining
6 must go through and sets a balance of power between
7 employers and employees within the United States.
8 This bill tacitly encourages unionization in two
9 ways. It does so by providing effectively an
10 exemption. We're not clear as to what the language of
11 the exemption for the CBA actually means within the
12 current draft. It's frankly rather unclear, but it
13 provide an exemption that CBA's covered employers may
14 just show the provisions of their bargaining
15 agreement. Second, the bill requires direct
16 employment of employees with a cherry-picked group of
17 employees that bear no rational or reasonable basis
18 to any of the wrongs we've heard of today. These
19 bills are strongly-- this bill is strongly supported
20 by the Hotel Trades Council for very good reason. It
21 promotes their interest. I'd love to keep talking to
22 you more about the frankly three other ways and three
23 other areas where this bill crosses the line, but
24 please take a look at our submitted testimony. We'd
25 welcome any questions you have, and just hope to

2 avoid a long period of uncertainty and unnecessary
3 litigation from this.

4 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay, thank you very
5 much. That's it. Okay, thank you. Let me just say
6 a couple comments on this. We met with numerous
7 lenders about this bill. That is why you see
8 significant changes to the bill. One of the comments
9 that we heard from the lending community is that
10 service disruption on the original version of the
11 bill, there was a feeling could constitute grounds to
12 rescind or deny the license as a result of that. We
13 made a very clear edit to remove service disruption
14 as any ground to rescind or deny the license. We
15 also, as you know, have narrowed the subcontracting
16 ban to remove FNB. There was a comment about that.
17 To remove security, to remove engineering, to add 20
18 additional categories to grandfather in the
19 subcontracting. So we are very cognizant and worked
20 very closely with the lending community on those
21 changes as well as obviously the New York Hotel
22 Association. So, greatly appreciate your comments
23 today, and thank you so much for testifying. Okay,
24 we are going to call the next panel which I believe
25 requires an interpreter. So, if the interpreter,

2 Spanish interpreter, could come forward, please.

3 Sonia Umanzor, Paula Rodriguez, Carmen Polanco, Paula

4 Amparo. Thank you. Okay, so there'll be two

5 minutes and then two minutes for the interpretation,

6 great. Please begin. Thank you. Okay, great.

7 Thank you very much.

8 CARMEN POLANCO: Carmen Polanco [speaking

9 Spanish].

10 TRANSLATOR: My name is Carmen Polanco.

11 I'm a hotel worker in New York City, and I'm

12 supporting the new law of secure hotels or safe

13 hotels. I was working for the staffing agency called

14 [inaudible].

15 CARMEN POLANCO: [speaking Spanish]

16 TRANSLATOR: When I was working for the

17 staffing agency Star [sic] Staffing, they overload

18 work. It was very excessive. I remember them in one

19 day they assign me to clean completely even 15 to 17

20 hotels, and these 15-17 rooms include 10 different

21 check-outs [sic].

22 CARMEN POLANCO: [speaking Spanish]

23 TRANSLATOR: Some of these rooms, hotel

24 rooms, they were very difficult to clean. One day, I

25 had to stay until very late in order to finish to

2 clean the hotel rooms, and the staffing agency
3 refused to pay me for those extra hours I was
4 cleaning.

5 CARMEN POLANCO: [speaking Spanish]

6 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: There's an extra mic
7 there if that's easier.

8 TRANSLATOR: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Yes, they both work
10 if that's easier.

11 TRANSLATOR: It's already on, right?

12 Thank you. Sometimes what I was doing, I was
13 introducing the card that they're supposed-- your
14 supposed to sign every time you're working in a hotel
15 to check in and to check out, and [inaudible] I was
16 going back to the same hotel rooms I was cleaning,
17 even though I already had punch [sic] there, but I
18 was very afraid. I didn't want to lose my job. I
19 knew that I needed to do these to maintain my work in
20 the hotel, and I was cleaning those rooms in the
21 hotel.

22 CARMEN POLANCO: [speaking Spanish]

23 TRANSLATOR: I was very afraid that I
24 happen to complain or to talk to the hotel person

2 about this what it will do. They will end my work
3 and they will also fire me later on.

4 CARMEN POLANCO: [speaking Spanish]

5 TRANSLATOR: I feel very insecure when I
6 was working in this employment agency, Star Staffing.
7 As you know, I was cleaning hotel rooms that the
8 covers of the bed were full of blood, completely full
9 of blood, and instead to give me good gloves, they
10 were giving these very cheap gloves in order for me
11 to clean these hotel beds, and I was not protected
12 from any germs or any diseases using this kind of
13 instrument and using this kind of cheap gloves.

14 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Just because the time
15 is up, I'm going to ask you wrap.

16 TRANSLATOR: It's almost finished.

17 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Yeah, perfect okay.

18 TRANSLATOR: It's just like maybe three
19 sentences.

20 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Yes, yes.

21 TRANSLATOR: Sorry about that.

22 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: No, no.

23 TRANSLATOR: She has some problem because
24 of the glasses.

25 CARMEN POLANCO: [speaking Spanish]

2 TRANSLATOR: The hotel management told me
3 that they were going to send the bed covers that were
4 full of blood to a laundromat or to a laundry place
5 in order to be washed, and after that they were going
6 to throw them away. I was very alarmed about this.
7 I was feeling very bad about the hotel guests or the
8 hotel tourists who were coming to the hotel, that
9 they were supposed to sleep in this bed with covers
10 that were full of blood.

11 CARMEN POLANCO: [speaking Spanish]

12 TRANSLATOR: The housekeepers were not
13 well-trained to manage these chemical products. I
14 end up cleaning these bathrooms with Clorox and with
15 very strong chemicals and you will not believe that
16 these chemicals were making me cry when I was using
17 them.

18 CARMEN POLANCO: [speaking Spanish]

19 TRANSLATOR: The chemicals were touching
20 my skin and there were situations when I got burned--

21 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: [interposing] I just
22 have to-- because we have to give everyone the exact
23 same amount of time.

24 TRANSLATOR: Oh, it's the last sentence.

25 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay, thank you.

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2 TRANSLATOR: Sorry, I was reading, that's
3 why.

4 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay, thank you.

5 TRANSLATOR: The chemicals were burning
6 me and making me cry, right? Every time and every
7 day I was praying to God, right, that everything will
8 be okay and I will not end up very badly because of
9 this dangerous job. This is the last sentence.

10 CARMEN POLANCO: [speaking Spanish]

11 TRANSLATOR: Okay, this is last sentence.
12 I was very afraid that I will hurt myself, and when I
13 was doing [inaudible] strange or maybe-- or movement
14 by mistake I was very afraid it would be a very
15 dangerous, you know, injury that will hurt because of
16 this dangerous job. Please, I ask you and I beg you
17 to approve this law for secure and safe hotels for
18 hard workers like I am, and thank you for listening
19 to my story.

20 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you so much for
21 your testimony today.

22 TRANSLATOR: Sorry, me--

23 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: [interposing] No, no,
24 thank you.

25 TRANSLATOR: Spanish mistakes and also--

2 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: [interposing] Thank
3 you so much.

4 TRANSLATOR: [inaudible] make her read it
5 correctly, my apologies.

6 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: No, thank you very
7 much. Okay.

8 PAULA AMPARO: [speaking Spanish]

9 TRANSLATOR: My name is Paula Amparo
10 [inaudible] hotel in the Bronx. The hotel offered
11 rooms by hour. They were very [inaudible] possibly
12 including human trafficking. I never received any
13 training on how to recognize human trafficking, how
14 to report it, or how to keep myself and the guest
15 safe. When a guest ask for many towels or different
16 men visited the same room, I knew something was going
17 on. I reported the suspicious activities to the
18 reception and the management, but they always ignored
19 those problems, and say I'll be on the lookout. The
20 management knew who their customers were and what was
21 going on in the hotel. They did not want any-- they
22 did not want anyone speaking to workers or the police
23 to interfere in the profits. They closed their eyes
24 and pressured all the workers to do so as well. I
25 was afraid not only to the safety of the potential

2 victims of trafficking, but also for my own. I'm a
3 single mom. I wanted to make sure that I came home
4 every night. The hotel care very little about my
5 safety and the guests. We must ensure that every
6 hotel worker is trained in recognizing human
7 trafficking and report suspicious activities without
8 being punished by their employer. Please pass the
9 Safe Hotel Act for the safety of all the workers.
10 Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you.

12 PAULA RODRIGUEZ: [speaking Spanish]

13 TRANSLATOR: My name is Paula Rodriguez,
14 I will probably get fired today for speaking here. I
15 currently work as a housekeeper for the [inaudible]
16 cleaning at mostly Times Square [sic]. I was one of
17 the workers who was bought and paid by there on
18 September 12th to oppose the Safety Hotels Act, but I
19 do not oppose this law. My co-workers and I know
20 that we will be much better off. We work directly
21 for the hotel, not for the agency. Working for the
22 subcontracting agency is horrible. We make very
23 little. We clean 16, 17 rooms per day. They work us
24 like machines and believe they can exploit us because
25 we are immigrants. We have no control over our

2 schedule. On many occasions I have been called and
3 told to stay home without pay when I'm already on the
4 subway on my way to work, and we have no ability to
5 speak up. For example, last week our boss told us,
6 Christian [inaudible], if you have to use your steep
7 [sic] to clean better, do it, and if you are not
8 comfortable with that, the door is wide opened. But
9 I'm fed up. I am willing to take this risk to tell
10 the truth. This is our chance to have a better
11 future. So for them in the green shirts, the
12 workers, and for me, we need the Safe Hotels Act.
13 Please vote yes.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Gracias. Thank
15 you so much. Any questions from members? Thank you
16 so much for your testimony. I will now call the next
17 panel. Jeff Brosi, Andeep Gosal [sp?], Mukesh Patel
18 [sp?], Sheetal Patel [sp?], Manish Patni. Sorry,
19 just need you to be cognizant of who's behind you.
20 We have someone in a wheelchair. Thank you so much.
21 Okay, whoever is ready to begin, we'll let you start
22 and we'll go to your right afterward. She's coming
23 right back in. I'm just temporarily taking over the
24 committee for her to use the restroom, but this is
25 all being recorded and she'll receive all testimony.

2 MUKESH PATEL: Can you hear me? Yeah.

3 Good afternoon members of City Council. My name is
4 Mukesh Patel, a member of the New York Minority Hotel
5 Association as well as member of Asian American Hotel
6 Owners Association.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: sorry, Mr. Patel,
8 can you give me one second. Can we paus the time?
9 We need silence in the chambers. Thank you so much.
10 You can continue.

11 MUKESH PATEL: Good afternoon members of
12 City Council. My name is Mukesh Patel, a member of
13 the New York City Minority Hotel Association as well
14 as member of Asian American Hotel Owners Association.
15 I am the owner of a number of small hotels in outer
16 boroughs. I'm here to oppose this anti-business
17 legislation for a number of reasons. A few months
18 ago this bill was initially introduced as an anti-
19 trafficking bill even though there were some other
20 provision that we thought needed negotiation, we were
21 in total agreement to do so even more from industry
22 to prevent trafficking. We came to this country with
23 big American dream. We have worked very hard to
24 build a life in America. We have ben successful in
25 building small businesses and have been very good

2 citizens of this country. The ban on subcontractors
3 also runs counter to one of the bills stated object
4 use to increase safety and security of hotels. Third
5 party employees who work in our hotels are fully-
6 trained and vetted by the agencies that hired them.
7 The use of trusted agencies ensures consistent and
8 thorough training protocols that prepare staff for a
9 wide range of scenarios. While large hotels can
10 afford and my prefer to hire these positions
11 directly, the broad staffing mandates include in
12 Intro 991 do not account for consequence on
13 operations of small minority-owned hotels.
14 Furthermore, this licensing requirements may hinder
15 the ability of new hotels to enter into our market,
16 as we know that 2021 new special permitting law
17 already have big dent on new hotel developments in
18 New York City's five boroughs. I urge the City
19 Council to consider the broader implications on these
20 proposals for the city's economy. Tourism is a vital
21 industry of New York, generating billions of dollars
22 in revenue in each year and supporting hundreds and
23 thousands of jobs. By imposing additional regulatory
24 burdens and potentially railing operational costs
25 risk making New York City a less attractive

2 destination for travelers which would hurt both
3 businesses and employees. small independent and
4 minority-owned hotels have routinely stepped up to
5 help community providing New Yorker a safe, clean
6 place to sleep when fire or superstorm Sandy
7 destroyed their homes, or when nurses and doctors
8 working long hours to make sure to take care of us
9 during the pandemic time to [inaudible] hospital
10 shifts. Lastly, I request you to elaborate more in
11 details as many of us are confused with collective
12 bargaining agreement. Can you please tell us CBA not
13 required, then what are the requirements going to be
14 to qualify for a license, and also--

15 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: [interposing] Okay,
16 I'm just going to ask you to wrap up, because the
17 time is up, please. Thank you.

18 MUKESH PATEL: One more thing, ma'am.
19 Also, sincerely request you to consider licensing
20 term from two years to five to seven years. Thank
21 you.

22 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much.

23 SHEETAL PATEL: Good afternoon, Council
24 Members. Hello, my name is Sheetal Patel. I'm here
25 to speak on behalf of the New York City licensing

1 bill. As a female immigrant, I came to this country
2 seeking prosperity and opportunities, and New York
3 City seemed like the perfect fit. However, over the
4 years, I have found that business in New York City
5 has become increasingly stringent and difficult. The
6 numerous regulations we must navigate are time
7 consuming and challenging. As a small business owner,
8 my primary concerns are ensuring our mortgage and
9 substantial taxes are paid while managing safe
10 operational procedures and also operational costs.
11 If this bill is passed, it could be detrimental to
12 our operations. Disrupting the livelihoods of our
13 current employees who rely on their jobs would have
14 significant impact on us. Finding labor is already
15 difficult and mandating certain departments will hurt
16 us rather than help us. Decisions regarding our core
17 employees should be based on business considerations,
18 not imposed by regulation. Mandating collective
19 bargaining could cripple small business owners and
20 potentially drive some of us out of business, as they
21 would be unaffordable. I urge you to reconsider this
22 bill as it could spell disaster for the hotel
23 industry in New York City. Thank you for your
24 consideration.
25

2 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Just turn the button
3 on, please. Thank you.

4 : Hello.

5 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: We can hear you.
6 Thank you.

7 JEFF BROSI: Hi, how are you? My name is
8 Jeff Brosi. I'm here from the Rockaway Hotel in
9 Rockaway, Queens. We're a small boutique hotel with
10 53 rooms and we literally are residents of Queens,
11 born and raised, put our livelihoods on building this
12 boutique hotel. We're a community-based hotel that
13 employ locals and we oppose this bill for many
14 reasons. The biggest reason is the third-party
15 contractors that are not allowed to be included into
16 this bill, and the reason is, we just do not have the
17 staff to get out there. Rockaway is literally desert
18 for transportation, people to get to and from. We've
19 tried multiple different ways from-- simply, we
20 developed our own hospitality program to educate
21 people on what hospitality is and getting into the
22 hotel business and working, and we literally
23 developed a program that was seven, eight, nine weeks
24 long that we invested our own money to find staff and
25 train them, and we still did not find enough. The

2 other option-- concern that we have is that we're a
3 seasonal hotel. So the expanding and contracting of
4 business is extremely important to us, and for us to
5 be able to survive this turn of business from
6 seasonality and not having the staffing to be able to
7 expand and contract would be detrimental for us to
8 survive. I beg you and I please-- take out any of
9 these third-party contracts out of this bill.

10 MANISH PATNI: Good afternoon Chair Menin
11 and other members of the Council Committee. Thank you
12 for allowing me this opportunity to speak today on
13 behalf of not only my organization, but also their
14 investors as well as the employees that work for our
15 hotels. We're a proud small business company that
16 has been a significant part of the New York City
17 hotel landscape for the past 25 years. Our group has
18 developed over 40 hotels in New York City, so we
19 certainly know what we're doing and understand the
20 needs of New York City. We operate across four
21 boroughs currently and ensure our employees thrive in
22 a safe working environment that values their
23 contributions and wellbeing. Our hotels have a mix of
24 direct hotel staff as well as subcontractors. Under
25 the Safe Hotel Act, our business model would be

2 significantly altered with the elimination of our
3 valued contract service partners who employ local
4 residents and support their communities. These are
5 legal and well-trained working-class families that
6 are supported by the hotels that we have developed in
7 these various neighborhoods. A collective bargaining
8 agreement significantly reduces opportunities for
9 individuals that are seeking a company with more
10 robust benefits and an access to be heard from the
11 highest levels of our company. In this environment
12 an employee becomes a person of importance and a
13 strategic part of our overall success. We understand
14 the need to maintain safety standards. We adopt a
15 head of any potential risk and do not wait for
16 incidents to occur. I'm happy to say that in over 25
17 years of being in business, I have zero claims of any
18 violent crimes, including deaths. We have zero
19 activity of human trafficking, and we certainly curb
20 and control anything on prostitution and drug use in
21 our hotels. With the amount of social media that's
22 out there, with the transparency in our business, we
23 simply could not operate this way, otherwise we would
24 just never have any future business. I understand
25 that there are bad apples amongst all businesses, but

2 we are certainly not one of them, and I can tell you
3 that many of us who are here today represent the good
4 of the industry and not the bad of the industry. It
5 is unfortunate that the City continues to deal with
6 violent crime. However, it is important to note that
7 hotels typically offer much safer-- are safer, much
8 safer relative to other businesses. The Safe Hotel
9 Act presents challenges that will have far-reaching
10 consequences on small businesses like ours. Many
11 third-party vendors that serve our hotels--

12 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: [interposing] I'm just
13 going to ask you to wrap up, please, thank you.

14 MANISH PATNI: such as laundry, security
15 and engineering will be negatively affected by this
16 new bill. By subcontracting we ensure these local
17 businesses can thrive alongside ours, contributing to
18 the overall city economy. I have more to say, but I
19 guess I'm out of time.

20 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: I do just want to
21 clarify one thing. You mentioned engineering. That
22 is no longer subject to the subcontracting ban. I
23 just want to make sure--

24 MANISH PATNI: [interposing] I understand,
25 but--

2 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: that is very clear.

3 Okay.

4 MANISH PATNI: I'm referring to
5 housekeeping.

6 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you.

7 ANUDEEP GOSAL: Thank you, Council
8 Members, for allowing me to speak today. My name is
9 Anudeep Gosal. I'm the Director of the Hotel Advisory
10 Group at Besen Partners, a local real estate firm in
11 New York City since 1980. I'm here today to express
12 my opposition to this bill. As a hospital advisor,
13 it is my professional opinion that this bill will
14 have effects similar to the special permitting
15 legislation introduced in 2021 with severely
16 restricted new hotel development. These restrictions
17 have led to a shortage of hotel rooms, driving up the
18 average daily rate and occupancy rates making the
19 city increasingly unaffordable for travelers and
20 creating an affordability crisis within tourism. As
21 of 2023, New York City has approximately 125,000
22 rooms which is not enough to meet the growing demand.
23 The bottleneck in new hotel developments is a direct
24 result of restrictive legislation, rising costs in
25 ADR [sic], foreign occupancy rates. In 2023, the

2 average ADR was \$201. It has now surged to \$255 in
3 2024. That's an increase of over 25 percent in one
4 year alone. A similar situation is occurring with
5 the occupancy rates. However, higher occupancies in
6 this context does not reflect a healthy market. It
7 is driven by a shortage of rooms due to restrictive
8 legislations rather than organic growth and demand.
9 Normal City in 2023 had 62 million visitors, but
10 rising hotel prices threaten to deter future tourism.
11 The city currently has one of the lowest supply
12 growth rates in the country at less than one percent,
13 fueling the shortage. Budget-conscious travelers
14 and middle income families are being priced out as
15 fewer affordable hotels are options-- fewer
16 affordable hotel options are available. Many tourists
17 are choosing more affordable destinations as even
18 mid-scale and economy hotels in New York City are now
19 approaching the \$200 mark, making them increasingly
20 unaffordable. If this trend continues, my fear is
21 New York City's tourism economy is at risk, and it
22 will be only be accessible to wealthy travelers.

23 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much
24 for your testimony. I want to mention we've been
25 joined by Council Member Powers, and before I turn it

2 over to my colleague, Council Member Brewer, who I
3 believe has some questions, I want to address a
4 question that was raised by the panel about the
5 collective bargaining agreement. As I said earlier,
6 the collective bargaining agreement is not required
7 under this bill. The language simply states that if
8 a business has incorporated this law into their CBA,
9 then they can use that CBA as evidence of their
10 procedures to comply with the law. So I wanted to
11 clarify that for the record, and now let me turn it
12 over to Council Member Brewer.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very
14 much. We've heard from several owners, and I respect
15 a lot the work that you do, we all do, but my
16 question is, given the many restrictions in terms of
17 what this new bill version B states that there are
18 very limited numbers that have to be full-time. And
19 I really want to hear from you-- not all of you, just
20 a couple of you because of time constraints. It
21 sounds to me that in some cases you already doing
22 that. You already have direct workers in your
23 hotels. So I'm just curious to say-- I know there's
24 a lot of doomsday. This is going to kill the
25 industry, but it seems to me there's very limited

2 numbers who are in fact going to have to be permanent
3 employees. If somebody could comment. Do you
4 already have some permanent employees and would this
5 be as doomsday as it sounds?

6 MANISH PATNI: Well, as I mentioned, some
7 of our hotels, it depends upon the ratio and the
8 market, similar to the gentleman next to me.
9 Sometimes subcontracting is just an essential part of
10 our business. We need that mix and that source of
11 employees.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: We're talking
13 about mixing here. That's what the Chair said. It's
14 going to be a mix.

15 MANISH PATNI: Correct, but it's not
16 always the hotel or the ownership group that dictates
17 that mix. It's often the market and the location.
18 So, you know, it's not a one-size-fits-all. For
19 example, I operate hotels across the four boroughs.
20 There are some locations that it's very easy to get
21 hotel staff employees. There are some locations that
22 no matter how much I pay I can't get them. The
23 subcontracting part of that helps us to source
24 employees, and these are people-- whether it is
25 subcontracting or hotel direct employees who have

2 been with our hotels for five, 10, 15 years, our
3 industry typically has the highest turnover rate
4 nationally. And so those that are really focused
5 here and who understand the business know how to
6 operate their hotels, and again, to have retained
7 employees is a benefit to us, because it's a
8 tremendous cost factor in turnover.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Alright, thank
10 you.

11 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay, thank you very
12 much for your testimony today. Thank you very much.
13 Thank you. I'm now going to call the next panel.
14 Tsing Zama [sp?], Mark Bellamy, Hu Chao Yi [sp?], and
15 Richard Hurd on Zoom. Okay, we're going to have Zoom
16 start first. Richard Hurd, please. Thank you.

17 RICHARD HURD: Good afternoon. My name
18 is Richard Hurd. I'm a Professor Emeritus in the
19 School of Labor Relations at Cornell University. The
20 proposed legislation requires that hotels directly
21 employ their core employees. This legislation is
22 needed because the structure of the hotel industry
23 has changed. Typically hotel brands do not own
24 hotels, rather they franchise hotels, and even the
25 franchisees and the owners of specific properties do

2 not directly employ most hotel workers. The reason,
3 the owners are looking to maximize the return on
4 investment by minimizing labor costs. In other words,
5 it's a pure profit motive. The most common practice
6 is to subcontract. The subcontractor such as
7 cleaning services compete fiercely with one another,
8 and the result is a decline in wages, eroding
9 benefits, inadequate health and safety protections,
10 and strong incentives to skirt or ignore federal,
11 state and local labor regulations. Research of David
12 Weil which he summarized earlier this hearing, as
13 well as Richard Freeman from Harvard and other
14 academics, has clearly indicated that this is the
15 case. This June in a joint conference of three
16 professional associations that focus on labor
17 markets, labor relations and dispute resolution was
18 held here in New York City. There were over a dozen
19 sessions that addressed the impact of subcontracting
20 on workers. For example, one session addressed the
21 deteriorating conditions for hotel workers globally
22 and was titled "Inhospitable work." The consensus of
23 the participants in this conference, academic, legal,
24 labor, management was very clear. There's a trend to

2 increase subcontracting, and this creates the need to
3 increase attention to enforce--

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Thank you
5 for your testimony. Your time is expired.

6 RICHARD HURD: by federal, state, and
7 local government. It is this-- it is appropriate
8 that New York City continue to be at the forefront of
9 protecting worker's rights, and this legislation
10 demonstrates and reinforces that role. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much.
12 And then Mark Bellamy, Ha Chai Yu [sp?], and Tserling
13 Lanza [sp?]. Yes, thank you.

14 MARK BELLAMY: Good afternoon. My name
15 is Mark Bellamy. I currently work as a house person
16 at the Margaritaville Resort in Times Square. Many
17 hotels and their lobbyists have been telling
18 subcontract workers that they will lose their jobs if
19 the Safe Hotels Act is passed. This is a lie. I know
20 because I lived through this. I used to work for a
21 subcontractor agency at the Margaritaville, but today
22 I work directly for the hotel. When I was a
23 subcontractor worker I was paid just \$17 per hour.
24 The work was hard and we often had to stay late
25 unpaid to finish it. When the subcontractors left our

2 hotel, we did not lose our jobs, because the city
3 workers retention law kicked in. Let me repeat that
4 for the folks in the back. When the subcontractors
5 left our hotel, we did not lose our jobs. In fact,
6 the hotel started paying us more, \$23 per hour.
7 That's a big increase. It was a great day when the
8 subcontracting agency left our hotel. The
9 subcontractor was a middle man. They took a cut of
10 the money that the hotel could have been paying us,
11 and they squeezed every ounce of labor out of us to
12 profit as much as possible. Please pass the Safe
13 Hotels Act.

14 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you.

15 HU CHAO LI: Good afternoon. My name is
16 Hu Chao Li [sp?]. I work in the hotel for 30--
17 almost 34 years, yeah, but I really need to tell the
18 worker the hotel is [inaudible]. Every day that I go
19 to work, right, I just work in the room by myself,
20 and sometime I pray for myself be careful, because
21 sometime the room-- the guest in the room. One day I
22 knocked the door, that they stand outside the door
23 completely naked. And I very, very scared for that.
24 and then the other day, I went to the door-- the room
25 and cleaned the room, and one guest in the room, he

2 sit down on the bed, he completely naked, and then he
3 touching himself, the private, and that's why I very
4 scared for that. That's why I press the [inaudible]
5 button for panic button for call the security to
6 help. That's why I hope you can pass the law to help
7 the worker at the hotel to have the panic button. I
8 hope [inaudible].

9 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you.

10 TSERLING LANZA: Good afternoon Council
11 Members. I'm Tserling Lanza [sp?] and I support the
12 Safe Hotel Act. I'm here to tell the public what
13 happen when subcontracting [inaudible] in New York
14 City. That is what happened to me and changed my
15 life for better. I used to work for the
16 subcontracting agency at the Margaritaville Resort in
17 Times Square. I make just \$17 per hour. It was not
18 easy to support my family on this work, but I had to
19 do it to survive. To me, [inaudible] subcontracting
20 agency means feeling unsafe at work. Low pay or
21 heavy workload, and [inaudible] when the
22 subcontracting agency left our hotel, I keep my job
23 because of the [inaudible] Retention Law. Today, I
24 am working privately for the Margaritaville. I work
25 at the same hotel where everything is different. My

2 work [inaudible] every night by the [inaudible] as
3 soon as the subcontractor left. I can pay rent more
4 easily and I feel safe at work. Please pass the Safe
5 Hotel Act to the [inaudible] work like for me. Thank
6 you.

7 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much
8 for this panel. We appreciate your testimony. I am
9 now going to call a panel on the other bill that is
10 being heard today, 970. So this panel is Christian
11 Hickson [sp?], Lucy Palacios, on Zoom Aretha Wareham,
12 Tamika Melton [sp?], Larinda Hooks [sp?]. Okay,
13 we're going to start on Zoom with Aretha Wareham.

14 ARETHA WAREHAM: Hello?

15 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Yes, we can hear you.
16 Thank you.

17 ARETHA WAREHAM: Oh, okay. Thank you.
18 Yes, my name is Aretha Wareham. I am a resident in
19 Queens in the community of East Elmhurst, Corona. I
20 serve on the East Elmhurst, Corona Civic Association,
21 and personally, I will tell you that I support this
22 bill. In this community we have had several smaller
23 business come up. Most of them are under disguise of
24 massage parlors, and that work under disguise of
25 massage parlors, and they're really human

2 trafficking. We have several areas in our community
3 now that has been dealing with issue for several
4 years, and it's only becoming worse, so I would say
5 that yes, I would support this bill for a safer
6 community and better help for our community. Thank
7 you for allowing me to testify today.

8 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Tamika Melton [sp?],
9 Larinda Hooks?

10 LARINDA HOOKS: Hello. Hello everyone.
11 Hello Council Members. Queens has the highest human
12 trafficking in New York City. For the safety and
13 future of Queens's residents, we need Intro 970. As
14 a resident of District 21, I believe Intro 970 will
15 safeguard public health, combat human trafficking and
16 uphold ethical standards. There is a reason for
17 regulations. Regulations are put in place so that
18 entities won't run amuck in our community. This
19 legislation addresses the illegal practices occurring
20 now and puts a stop to them. Thank you, Council
21 Member Moya, for trying to make real change to help
22 the community. Please pass Intro 970. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay, now we're going
24 in-person, please. Thank you.

2 KRISTINA HINCKSON: Can you hear me?

3 Okay, thank you. Thank you. I'm Kristina Hinckson,
4 President of the New York State Society of Medical
5 Massage Therapists established in 1927, and we
6 support this bill with amendments. NYSSMMT
7 represents the over 15,000 massage therapists in New
8 York State. Our recent accomplishments has been
9 changing the NAICS code of the word "massage parlor"
10 to "massage wellness centers." And recently, to help
11 reopen the economy in New York City, we had work with
12 New York City Planning Commission to remove the
13 antiquated adult physical culture permit. With that,
14 that had allowed the economy to reopen with small
15 businesses such as ours, yoga studios, etcetera.
16 This has also allowed massage therapy practices to be
17 recategorized as ambulatory care in the commercial
18 space. Massage therapy is one of the oldest forms of
19 medicine as an ancient healing art rooted in
20 traditional Chinese medicine. In the U.S., New York
21 City is the birthplace of massage therapy coming from
22 East and Europe. We own that. On the national scope
23 of the industry, New York State has the highest
24 educational training and practice standards, thus,
25 making the New York license the most coveted license

2 to attain. Massage therapy as a healing modality is
3 flexible, portable, manageable, versatile,
4 complementary, scalable, and non-pharmacological.
5 The versatility of the massage therapy profession
6 makes it an easily misunderstood profession, thus
7 making it vulnerable to exploitation. We support
8 this bill with amendments. One of the most important
9 aspects of this bill is safety and health for the
10 massage profession. The biggest aspect we would like
11 to see in this bill is that the safety standards are
12 upheld by having a director of safety position so all
13 the safety practices can be upheld versus just having
14 a license to open and that's it. That's the most
15 important aspect and we will be submitting written
16 testimony. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you.

18 LUCY PALACIOS: Good afternoon Chairman--
19 Chairperson. My name is Lucy Palacios and I've been a
20 proud resident of Jackson Heights for at least 30
21 years. I've also been-- I am a licensed massage
22 therapist since 2020 and a member of NYSSMMT, running
23 my own practice in Jackson Heights. Unfortunately
24 every week I receive inappropriate inquiries such as
25 request for happy endings, questions about the

2 nationality of the women I employ, and even the color
3 nail polish that I'm wearing on my toes. For my
4 safety, I do not allow walk-ins and carefully screen
5 all potential clients. Unlicensed massage businesses
6 often affront for human trafficking have become all
7 too common. Disturbingly, many are located across
8 from elementary schools. These places are raided,
9 shut down and reopen within days with no
10 consequences. One such example is Harmony Spa
11 operating openly at 4006 82nd Street at the foot of
12 the 86th Street train station. Visibly 24 hours,
13 seven days a week with police officers passing by
14 without intervention of the women, seven or eight of
15 them just hanging out in front of the location. It's
16 a stark reminder of the serious human trafficking
17 issues that we're facing right in our community, and
18 it's something we can no longer ignore. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much.
20 Thank you for your testimony today. I will now call
21 the next panel, Terence Monahan, Veraja Barbara
22 Brukanar [sp?], Oscar Lopez, Christie de la Santos,
23 Audrey Walker, Roanny Espinal. Please come forward.
24 Thank you. Okay, please begin.

2 TERENCE MONAHAN: Good afternoon. My
3 name is Terence Monahan. For 39 years I served the
4 NYPD, retiring in 2021 as Chief of Department. I
5 then spent nine months serving on New York City's
6 COVID Recovery Taskforce focused on public safety
7 issues faced by business including hotels. I
8 dedicated my life to developing and implementing
9 strategies to make New York the safest big city in
10 America. One thing I learned in my decades of
11 service, facts matter. I'm here today because Intro
12 991B which is promoted as a tool to address rampant
13 crime in hotels is not based on facts. I have been
14 retained by some hotel owners to review the facts and
15 refute false claims that have made. The first
16 concerns human trafficking and forced labor.
17 Supporters of Intro 991 have stated that there are
18 3,000 people being trafficked in New York City hotels
19 right now. This is a gross misstatement of fact.
20 While the Polaris [sic] report did identify 3,596
21 cases of trafficked survivors tied to hotels, that
22 statistics is outdated, a nationwide number from 2007
23 to 2017, not one based on New York City data. The
24 Polaris report also raised concerns about the concept
25 of forced labor but included no data to indicate New

2 York City hotels or their subcontractors were
3 engaging in the practice. It is important to stress
4 that there is no evidence whatsoever that
5 subcontracted workers present a public safety issue
6 in hotels. Next, Intro 991 supporters have cited 39
7 homicides in hotels in recent years. A review of the
8 facts reveal that these homicides actually date back
9 to 2009 with 27 of the 39 homicides occurring prior
10 to 2017 when the city crime rate was considerably
11 higher than it is today. Since 2017 there have been
12 12 homicides reported at hotels, with six occurring
13 during the height of the COVID pandemic when many
14 hotels housed hundreds of homeless people and others
15 in dire circumstances. In the three years prior to
16 COVID 2017, there were four homicides, three of
17 those--

18 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: [interposing] I'm just
19 going to ask you to please wrap up your testimony.
20 Then you can obviously submit the written testimony
21 for the record.

22 TERENCE MONAHAN: in conclusion, I
23 believe that the vast majority of hotels are
24 extremely safe and responsive. In extremely rare case
25 of mismanagement, a business license could provide

2 one more tool for law enforcement officers to do
3 their job. I acknowledge that the license proposed in
4 the bill includes some provision that could make for
5 a safe industry even safer, such as eliminating short
6 stays and requiring front desk coverage. However,
7 eliminating subcontracted employees in my opinion
8 does nothing to enhance public safety.

9 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you. Next.

10 BARBARA BRYUKHANOVA: Good afternoon.
11 Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My
12 name is Barbara and I worked for an outsourcing
13 company for five years, and I'm incredibly grateful
14 for that opportunity. Being an immigrant in a new
15 country adapting to a different culture and
16 environment, this role became much more than just a
17 job. It was a life-changing experience for me and
18 many others that I worked with. Outsourcing
19 companies often foster a family-like environment.
20 It's not just about being another name on the
21 payroll. We worked as a team, genuinely caring about
22 one another and the work we do. People enjoyed
23 coming to work, supporting each other and growing
24 together. The sense of community is something that
25 is often missing in large corporations. Small and

2 medium sized businesses like outsourcing companies
3 have always been the backbone of this country's
4 success. I hope that future policies continue to
5 support the growth and sustainability of these
6 businesses so more people can have the same
7 opportunities I had. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Please. Thank you.

9 UNIDENTIFIED: Good afternoon Council
10 Members. Thank you for the opportunity for me to
11 speak today. I don't have a written statement because
12 I'm saying this truthfully on my experience. When I
13 first came to this country in 2014 by my partner, I
14 was assured that I will be taken care of with my two
15 kids. Six months after, that did not happen. So,
16 now, I have to go in search of a job with no skills.
17 I was sent to an outsource company who take me in,
18 train me, and I've been with this company for 10
19 years, and now I'm promoted to a supervisor position.
20 And sitting here today listening to most of these--
21 my colleague's statements and their experience, it
22 all comes down to one thing, the outsource company,
23 because all of them were trained by the outsource
24 company. They did not go to the hotel with
25 experience-- without experience because the hotel is

2 not going to take you without experience. The first
3 question, do you have experience? And if you don't
4 have experience, they're not going to employ you. So
5 it all boil down to the outsource company who not
6 only trained us, but paid us to be trained. I've
7 been with this company for 10 year, NOR [sic]. I am
8 so happy with this company. They have brought out
9 things in me that I didn't know I have. I'm doing
10 schedules which I didn't think I have the ability to
11 do. Now, I'm doing it with such grace and poise and
12 I'm so grateful for them, and I just thankful to come
13 and speak on behalf of my company, of my outsource
14 company. We trained hundreds of people who-- and
15 send them out there in the world so now they could be
16 out there talking about oh, the company this and also
17 it's company that, but then they're not remembering
18 the good things that the outsource company has done
19 for them which give them a skill. Thank you very
20 much.

21 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you.

22 OSCAR LOPEZ: Good afternoon everyone.
23 Thank you for the opportunity of letting me speak.
24 My name is Oscar Lopez, and I would like to start
25 speaking a little bit of my experience. I came to

2 this city seven years ago, as many people looking for
3 one opportunity. That opportunity was given to me by
4 a group of people that [inaudible] on my talents. It
5 helped me to develop my careers. Now, I become a
6 manager of operations, and I'm able to help others to
7 develop their skills as well. I'm able to work every
8 day to prepare myself and able to train others, teach
9 them their responsibilities and their rights,
10 promoting always equality. For instance, a few weeks
11 ago I was able to train all my staff members about
12 human trafficking and sexual harassment which is a
13 requirement by the Department of Labor. The use of
14 human resources is a power for me, but my education
15 and my values reminds me every day that I have to do
16 things right. I want to express my opposition in
17 this bill proposal as I believe that we can make New
18 York stronger in this industry. For me, passing this
19 bill will affect my life, my passion, the respect I
20 have to this industry. It will destroy my entire
21 life, as I want to continue helping others to build
22 their careers. Thank you, and have a nice day.

23 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you.

24 CHRISTY DE LOS SANTOS: Good afternoon.
25 My name is Christy. I've always dreamed of working

2 in the hospitality industry since I was a little
3 girl. I worked in the industry for 20 years, started
4 at the front desk, worked my way to housekeeping.
5 Discovered my love and talent for training,
6 specifically in the housekeeping Department.
7 However, I always felt something was missing and I
8 was not using my skills to my full potential, no
9 matter the hotel I worked for. My decision to move
10 to work with subcontractors has helped me reach more
11 people with my training skills. I provide training
12 such as safety, customer service, human resource, and
13 standards training. I complete all of these for
14 every single one of our employees. It's also very
15 rewarding to be able to give people the opportunity
16 to enter this industry, these employees who are not
17 currently given the chance to work due to their lack
18 of experience. We are giving them that opportunity.
19 We are teaching them training and developing them
20 into becoming great staff members. I love and enjoy
21 what I do thoroughly. I would like to set an example
22 to my three children, that hard work pays off and you
23 can reach your goals no matter where you came from.
24 Please take into account our point of view and
25 reconsider the passing of this bill.

2 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much.

3 I want to thank the panel, and I want to note for the
4 record on the public safety points that were raised
5 earlier, that we have the support of the five
6 District Attorneys as well as the PBA and the New
7 York Attorney General on public safety grants. I'm
8 now going to call the next panel. So thank you to
9 tis panel. The next panel is Jacqueline Figueroa,
10 Treashana Brown, Martha Bustillo, Hilda Alvarez, Rosa
11 Saldana, and Tselha Temin. If you could please come
12 forward. Thank you. Yes, please begin. Thank you.

13 HILDA ALVAREZ: My name is Hilda Alvarez.
14 I have worked in the hotel industry for over 40 years
15 and have been a proud residents of Queens for 42
16 years. One of the things that I love about New York
17 City is that we stand up for what's right. Thousands
18 of your constituents, including me, work in New York
19 City hotels. We need this law. Do the right thing.
20 New York needs the Safe Hotels Act. Please vote yes.

21 JACQUELINE FIGUEROA: Hello. My name is
22 Jacqueline Figueroa and I'm a New York worker. I was
23 born and raised in the Bronx. Workers like me
24 deserve safety on the job. We deserve the Safe

2 Hotels Act. Please vote yes. Thank you for the
3 opportunity.

4 ROSA SALDANA: [speaking Spanish]

5 TRANSLATOR: My name is Rosa Saldana.
6 I'm a hotel worker in New York City. I'm originally
7 from Dominican Republic. When I first come to New
8 York, I came to build a better life for me and my
9 family. To me, New York was a place where I could
10 work hard, but also where I will be treated fairly or
11 safely and give my children a better future. Those
12 are the New York values. That's the American dream.
13 We stand to protect the workers who [inaudible] the
14 tourist industry including thousands of immigrants
15 like me. New York needs the Safe Hotel Act. Please
16 vote yes.

17 MARTHA BUSTILLO: Hi, good afternoon. My
18 name is Martha Bustillo and I am a room attendant at
19 the Lexington Hotel. The Safe Hotel Act is very
20 important to me as a woman, because cleaning room in
21 a big New York City hotel is not always safe. Workers
22 like me deserve to have panic button in case of
23 emergency. Please vote yes for the Safe Hotel Act.
24 Thank you.

2 TREASHANA BROWN: Hello. Good afternoon.

3 My name Treashana Brown. I am a New York City hotel

4 worker, and I support the Safe Hotel Act. When I

5 worked with the subcontractor agency, Star Staffing,

6 I was paid through a prepaid card that had no name on

7 it. I asked the agency how much was on the card.

8 They said it was over \$300. I asked the agency for a

9 pay stub to see how many hours I was paid for and the

10 taxes I had paid. They wouldn't give me anything,

11 and-- I asked the agency multiple times, but they did

12 not respond. Why wouldn't they give me such basic

13 information, I asked myself. Why were they so

14 unreachable? It all made me very stressed. I work

15 for another subtract agency called Tropical Stars

16 [sic] for five years. During those five years I was

17 typically scheduled to work for five days a week.

18 After five years at the agency, I got pregnant.

19 Almost immediately they started cutting my days from-

20 - suddenly from five to four to three until

21 eventually it was no more. That was not through.

22 They need me, because they constantly-- tried to hire

23 housekeeping. I believe that it was my pregnancy that

24 they didn't want to deal with. One time I was

25 cleaning a room and I got stabbed by a drug needle.

2 My manager to me to go to the hospital and I had to
3 transport myself. I spent days in the ER as I got
4 treated for my injuries. I had to miss days of work.
5 In the end, I had a huge hospital bill when I came
6 back to work, and I have the agency. They refused to
7 pay. I had to fight for months and risk my job to
8 cover my expensive hospital bill. Please pass the
9 Safe Hotels Act to protect workers like me. Thank
10 you.

11 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you.

12 TSELHA TEMIN: Hello. Good afternoon
13 everyone. My name is Tselha Temin. I'm a hotel
14 worker in New York City. I have been a proud resident
15 of Woodside for eight years. One of the things that
16 I love about our city is that we stand up for what's
17 right. Thousands of your constituents including me
18 work in the New York City hotels. We need this law.
19 Quite frankly, I'm disgusted that some members of
20 this City Council care more about the profits of a
21 few wealthy hotel owners than our safety. Please do
22 the right thing. New York needs the Safe Hotels Act.
23 Please vote yes. I love work in a safer work place,
24 and I'm sure the workers in the green shirt also
25 would love to work in a safer workplace. Thank you

2 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much
3 to this panel. Okay, I'm now going to call the next
4 panel. So, on Zoom we have Jason Gamel, and in-
5 person Drita Cererk [sp?], Eugenia Kolesnikova,
6 Tatiana Vikulina, Juan Charum, and Rafael Perez. If
7 you could come forward please. And we will start on
8 Zoom, while you're coming up, with Jason Gamel.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

10 JASON GAMEL: thank you very much,
11 Chairwoman Menin and other members in the City
12 Council. My name is Jason Gamel and I represent the
13 American Resort Development Association with a trade
14 association that represents the time-share industry,
15 and our membership comprises of over 350 companies,
16 both privately held firms and publicly traded
17 corporations. ARD is active and engage members that
18 have extensive experience in shared ownership
19 interest in leisure real estate. We do not believe
20 the New York City Council necessarily intended for
21 the hotel license legislation to apply to time
22 shares, but if it does, which I believe it will, we
23 believe it will negatively impact our industry. Just
24 to begin, there are many hotels in New York City.
25 There are less than 12 time share properties that are

1 currently in the city limits. It's obviously a very
2 small percentage of accommodations overall. The time
3 share properties are already highly regulated by the
4 New York Attorney General's Office before they can
5 operate, open or market or sell any type of time
6 share interest. There has to be an approval from a
7 file that has-- of a plan that has filed with the
8 AG's office. the submission and the review of a time
9 share offering plan is highly complex, it usually
10 take several months to complete, and tens of
11 thousands of dollars in both the legal costs and fees
12 in order to be able to submit. In additional there
13 are always zoning and apartment building approvals
14 that are required for any time share that's developed
15 in city limits, and if a time share developer
16 violates any of those regulations, they're subject to
17 penalties and enforcement actions by the AG's Office.
18 once a property is sold out, it might be managed by a
19 hospitality brand, but it is always overseen by an
20 owner's association which is responsible for all the
21 common expenses, including services such as
22 housekeeping and front desk operations which are all
23 essentially paid for by the time share owners instead
24 of a situation where a hotel, where those costs in
25

2 expenses are all generally baked into the average
3 daily rate. And under this legislation, one thing
4 that we're very concerned about is that there will be
5 a conflict between, essential conflict between the
6 jurisdiction of approval of a time sharing plan by
7 the New York Attorney General's Office, and the
8 jurisdictional requirement that come with--

9 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: [interposing] Okay,
10 I'm going to ask you to please wrap your testimony
11 up.

12 JASON GAMEL: Absolutely. We would-- in
13 this case, we would gladly, respectfully request that
14 time shares be exempt from this legislation as we
15 don't believe that it's the same business model of
16 the hotels and we'd apply that same way. Happy to
17 answer any questions and thank you for your time.

18 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay, thank you, and
19 now we'll go to the in-person panel, please.

20 RAFAEL PEREZ: Hi, thank you and good
21 afternoon for hearing my testimony. My name is
22 Rafael. I work for a subcontracting company. I'm the
23 Human Resource Director for this company, and I have
24 over 400 employees that I help support on a daily
25 basis. One of the proudest moments I have working in

2 my career in hospitality which spans almost 20 years
3 is being able to see my associates be happy,
4 productive and work in an environment that's
5 supportive and healthy and safe. I started my career
6 working at a front desk, and I grew, you know,
7 working for various different companies and direct
8 employment management companies, and now with the
9 subcontracting company, and in my experience this
10 bill would just ruin all the opportunities that
11 subcontracting companies currently offer to my
12 employees. we offer a recruitment process that's not
13 intimidating and thorough and safe for newly-
14 immigrated people to find their opportunity and their
15 American dream here with us, and we partner with many
16 hotels throughout New York, mostly in Manhattan, and
17 we conduct the trainings for OSHA, for human
18 trafficking. It's pretty standard, and companies
19 that we have brand requirements, and in those brand
20 requirements, those trainings for OSHA are required
21 and also for human trafficking, and this bill will
22 just destroy those opportunities that we have with
23 our employees. So I urge to please reconsider this.
24 Thank you.

2 JUAN CHARUM: Good morning members of the
3 City Council. My name is Juan Charum, and I stand
4 before you today as a proud member of the LGBT
5 community and as an immigrant from Columbia. I have
6 been fortunate enough to find a second home and a
7 career here in New York City. Back in Columbia I
8 faced numerous challenges and adversity simply for
9 being who I am. Discrimination and prejudice were a
10 part of my everyday life, and it seemed almost
11 impossible to envision a future where I could live
12 free and secure. Despite all of this, I came and I
13 left my home country just to find and fight for that
14 dream. Determination to have a better life was my
15 motive to come to this country. I initially came
16 here to study and pursue a path to becoming a priest.
17 Soon I realized that it was not my calling. I
18 switched my focus and started applying to numerous
19 job, but it was finally HHI company who saw my
20 potential and gave me an opportunity to work and
21 start building those dreams. I was promoted-- I
22 started as a food and beverage supervisor and through
23 hard work and dedication I was promoted to manager.
24 I have been-- I found HHI as a place of employment
25 for me that has bring me all the opportunities that I

2 need and represented an open and inclusive community
3 where I along with other employees can feel valued
4 and respected. This company has been instrumental in
5 my economic and security and personal growth. The
6 proposed bill we are discussing today, it poses a
7 significant threat to that security and jeopardizes
8 not only my livelihood but also the stability and
9 wellbeing of many individuals like me. In conclusion,
10 I respectfully ask you to reject this proposed bill.
11 Let us continue to support and protect the diverse
12 and vibrant community that makes New York City the
13 strong united place it is. Thank you so much.

14 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you.

15 TATIANA VIKULINA: Good afternoon. My
16 name is Tatiana Vikulina. I'm an immigrant and an
17 employee of HHI company, hotel housekeeping company.
18 I want to express my immense gratitude for the
19 opportunities the company has provided me. I moved to
20 the United States two years ago because I was in
21 danger in Russia and LGBT person. I applied for
22 asylum, received work authorization and social
23 security number and began looking for a job.
24 However, no one wanted to hire me due to my lack of
25 experience and education in the United States. Back

2 in Russia I held a university degree in hospitality
3 and had worked as a hotel manager for 12 years, but
4 in New York I couldn't even find a position as a room
5 attendant. I spent all my savings and was desperate
6 when finally HHI offered me a job and the opportunity
7 to join their team as a room attendant. Very soon I
8 was promoted to supervisor, and after a year, I was
9 made a manager, and now I can help other employees to
10 learn and to grow. HHI has given me confidence,
11 security and a sense of belonging in this new
12 society. However, if I lose this job, I'm uncertain
13 about my future. I worked incredibly hard to achieve
14 what I have. I can't imagine going through this
15 struggle again. I'm afraid I won't have enough money
16 to pay my rent, and without a job I would probably--
17 I would have to return to Russia where being an LGBT
18 person is against the law. I'm truly scared of this
19 situation. I'm pleading with you not to threaten
20 [sic] my opportunity to continue working at HHI
21 company. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you. Next.

23 EUGENIA KOLESNIKOVA: Good afternoon. My
24 name is Eugenia. Like many others, I came to this
25 country for a better life and found it in the HHI

2 company working as a subcontractor for two years. I
3 had no money, no knowledge of English. It was scary,
4 but I was lucky. The company took me into its team,
5 provided me a permanent job and decent wages. Now
6 I'm doing well. I'm working in a wonderful friendly
7 team and I'm learning English. I'm not afraid of
8 tomorrow, and I'm sure that I have place to live and
9 can pay rent, because I can afford financially. But
10 I heard the news that a law is planned to be passed,
11 and if these companies lose the ability to stay in
12 the market and provide [inaudible] for this job. It
13 has again became frightened and uncertain for me.
14 Will I face the search for a job again?
15 Homelessness, anxiety, depression [inaudible]
16 psychotherapy sessions to regain my mental health.
17 Will I have to start all over again? I'm afraid I
18 won't have the strength to do and go through all this
19 again. At the same time, I cannot return to my
20 country, because as an LGBTQ+ representative it
21 presents a danger to me. Today, such people are
22 viewed as terrorist and extremists for which I can be
23 convinced [sic] and imprisoned according to local
24 laws. So, I have no choice for a normal life. There
25 are two paths, searching for work, homelessness,

2 anxiety, depression or ending up in prison. Please
3 save our jobs.

4 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay, thank you very
5 much. I want to make very clear, because I think
6 it's a travesty that this misinformation is being
7 given to you. To be very clear, subcontracted
8 workers must be offered their jobs at the same or
9 higher salary if their agency is let go, and anyone
10 is telling you something to the contrary, that's
11 unconscionable and shameful. We're going to move on.
12 Thank you very much. The next panel is Eric Mosher,
13 Jem Diaz [sp?], Teal Inzuenza [sp?], Blair Durush
14 Wather [sp?], Stephanie Power [sp?], Elijah Pulan
15 Frank [sp?]. Thank you. You can begin while
16 everyone comes up, yes. Thank you.

17 ERIC MOSHER: Good afternoon Chair Menin,
18 members of the Committee on Consumer and Worker
19 Protection. My name is Eric Mosher and I'm a Lead
20 Economist for the Independent Budget Office. My
21 testimony today will highlight findings from a
22 forthcoming IBO report that explores the potential
23 impact of Introduction 991B, or the Safe Hotels Act,
24 on hotels in New York City. There's minimal
25 information on the wages and employment of

2 subcontractors in the New York City hotel industry,
3 limiting the scope of IBO's analysis to hotel
4 establishments rather than employees and wages. It's
5 important to note the topics and issues that are not
6 included in IBO's research presented today. First
7 potential meta-effects of the bill on wages and
8 hospitality industry to the potential economic impact
9 of changes to hotel employee wages, ways that
10 hoteliers may respond to the bill's provisions such
11 as absorbing higher wages into operating budgets or
12 raising room rates, and levels of tourism to the
13 City. Today, I will specifically focus on what types
14 of hotels are most likely to be affected by the
15 bill's provision that restricts subcontracting for
16 certain types of hotel employees. Two premises
17 underlie IBO's analysis. First is that requiring
18 direct employment of core employees would impose
19 higher payroll costs to non-union hotels relative to
20 union ones, because union hotels are already more
21 likely to follow some or all of the labor
22 requirements in the bill due to existing union
23 contracts. The second is that the bill's impact on
24 establishment's payrolls would be greater for hotels
25 that currently have fewer direct employees per room.

2 In some cases, fewer direct employees may mean that
3 the hotel engages subcontractors. In other cases, it
4 may mean that the hotel simply has fewer employees
5 per room, whether direct or subcontracted. IBO
6 assumes that on average hotels with fewer direct
7 employees per rooms are likely to be using more
8 subcontractors than hotels with more direct employees
9 per room. Under these assumptions, IBO compared the
10 characteristics of unionized hotels and non-unionized
11 hotels and then compared the characteristics of
12 hotels with different ratios of direct employment per
13 room. And I will sort of--

14 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: [interposing] Yes, if
15 you want to--

16 ERIC MOSHER: skip ahead.

17 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: submit for the
18 record.

19 ERIC MOSHER: Absolutely. Yeah, if I can
20 just skip ahead to the summary. So in summary, IBO's
21 analysis, we focused on types of hotel establishments
22 and found a relationship between union status, direct
23 employment of staff, and daily room rates in New York
24 City hotels. Overall, IBO's analysis suggests that
25 the direct employment provision in the Safe Hotel Act

2 are likely to affect lower cost independent hotels
3 outside Manhattan to a greater extent than other
4 types of hotels in the City. Thank you very much.

5 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay. Thank you very
6 much for your testimony. Thank you. We appreciate
7 it. I mentioned a few names before. We also have a
8 Pam Reinerstein [sp?]. We just need a form filled
9 out. So if Pam Reinerstein is here, if she could
10 please fill a form out and join this panel. Okay,
11 let me repeat the names that I called before.
12 Stephanie Pyer [sp?], Blair Jarosh Wather [sp?], Teal
13 Inzuena [sp?], Jan Diaz [sp?], Elijah Pulan Frank
14 [sp?]. Okay, are any of these individuals here? If
15 they could please come forward. And Pam Reinerstein,
16 are you hear? Pam Reinerstein? Yes, could we just
17 give pam Reinerstein a form, please? Thank you.
18 Thank you for the clarification. We're just getting
19 you a form to fill out. Good? Okay, go ahead,
20 please. Thank you.

21 PAM REINERSTEIN: And I'm a member of and
22 speaking on behalf of the Kew Gardens Civic
23 Association established 110 years ago. Our
24 membership includes homeowners, co-op and condo
25 owners and renters in Kew Gardens, Queens. The KGCA

2 urges you to enact this important proposed
3 legislation. If this bill had been enacted several
4 years ago, it's possible that 21-year-old Robert
5 Williams would still be alive today. On January 1st,
6 2021, after leaving a party of the Notorious Umbrella
7 Hotel in Kew Gardens, Mr. Williams was fatally shot
8 and his two companions seriously injured during a
9 dispute with gang members. Despite intense protests
10 by the Kew Gardens community and the efforts of our
11 effected-- elected officials and city administrators,
12 there was no legal basis to close the hotel that had
13 become a dangerous public nuisance and a haven for
14 illicit activities. In the absence of any legal
15 deterrent the only response the City could offer was
16 a variety of fines for building, fire, and
17 environmental violations which the owner just
18 accepted as the cost of doing business. Having this
19 law will not only serve to protect and save lives,
20 but will also reduce city expenditures. Notably,
21 despite repeated suggestions by the 102nd Precinct,
22 the Umbrella Hotel employed no security whatsoever,
23 notwithstanding a steep escalation in criminal
24 activity. After numerous complaint by local
25 residents regarding incidents at the hotel, the 102nd

2 Precinct stationed a police van in front of the hotel
3 manned by two officers on a 24/7 basis for over 18
4 months. We estimate that this constant police
5 presence over the extended period cost tax payers
6 over one million dollars and diverted much-needed
7 police coverage from other parts of the precinct.
8 Hotels operated by owners who exploit and fail to
9 abide by existing laws allow criminal activity on
10 their premises, especially for profit and criminally
11 disregard the safety and welfare of hotel inhabitants
12 and employees as well as residents of surrounding
13 areas, must be stripped of the privilege of
14 operating. Remedial action taken against offenders
15 must be swift and decisive to protect the public as
16 well as the employees of these establishments. We
17 urge you to pass this legislation. Thank you very
18 much.

19 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much.
20 One question that I have for you.

21 PAM REINERSTEIN: Of course.

22 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: So, do you feel then
23 that had the Umbrella Hotel been licensed at that
24 time that this tragedy could have been prevented?

2 PAM REINERSTEIN: We think that if there
3 had been some type of licensing that could have-- the
4 license could have been taken away and put those out
5 of business, at least temporarily close them. This
6 whole ugly epoch that happened during the pandemic
7 would not have happened. The people who were shot
8 would not have been shot. The people who were
9 murdered, the people who were maimed, the people who
10 were human trafficked, it would not have happened if
11 we had been able to take swift remedial action. A
12 the time, the public nuisance laws did not cover
13 this, and the best that the City could come up was a
14 March Act [sic] which was given into the hands of the
15 102nd precinct who were just out of their league. It
16 was just scratches and little nicks taken and the
17 whole situation got completely out of hand until it
18 was too late that someone's life was lost which we
19 had cautioned about, and then the hotel closed on its
20 own.

21 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much
22 for being here today. We appreciate your testimony.

23 PAM REINERSTEIN: Thank you so much.

24 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you. Okay. I'm
25 now going to go to the next panel. Keaton Patel

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2 [sp?], Ingrid Almanzar [sp?], Danny Mitta [sp?], Nita
3 Shahear [sp?], Kandu Patel [sp?]. If you could
4 please come forward. Thank you. Are any of the
5 individuals I called here? If not, we will move on.
6 Okay. Alright, I'm going to call the next panel.
7 Cesar Murillo [sp?]- and to note that we need
8 interpretation, please-- Sonia Umanzor [sp?], Biviana
9 Pereira [sp?], Albania Olivo, if you could please
10 come forward. Thank you. Okay, please begin. Thank
11 you.

12 SONIA UMANZOR: [speaking Spanish]

13 UNIDENTIFIED: Sorry, Ms. Menin, some
14 things were not clear when she was reading this.

15 TRANSLATOR: My name is Sonia Umanzor.
16 I'm a New York hotel worker and I support the Safe
17 Hotel Act. I am currently a room attendant at the
18 Margaritaville Resort in Time Square. I used to work
19 for a subcontracting agency at the Margaritaville
20 Hotel. The subcontracting agency paid me just \$17 an
21 hour. The work was back-breaking and I felt like the
22 agency manager did not respect us as human beings.
23 Our room cleaning quota was higher than most of the
24 hotels nearby, and we often had to work off the clock
25 to complete the work load. Last year, the

2 subcontracting agency left the hotel. It was one of
3 the best days of my career. My job was protected by
4 New York City law. I immediately got a raise from
5 \$17 to \$23 per hour. It makes me upset that there
6 are still subcontracting agencies in New York City
7 profiting off the backs of the hard-working people.
8 Please pass the Safe Hotel Act to protect workers
9 like me. Thank you.

10 ALBANIA OLIVO: [speaking Spanish]

11 TRANSLATOR: My name is Albania Olivo.
12 I'm a hotel worker in New York City. I have lived in
13 New York for 14 years. The law will make sure that
14 hotel workers like myself are treated fairly and can
15 work safely in our jobs. New York needs the Safe
16 Hotel Act. Please vote yes.

17 BIVIANA PEREIRA: My name is Biviana
18 Pereira and I'm a hotel worker in New York City. I
19 have worked as a room attendant for seven years. The
20 housekeeping department of hotel are made up of many
21 women and hard-working immigrants like myself. And
22 we often work alone on the hotel floor. I am a union
23 member, so I'm fortunate to feel safe at my work
24 because I have basic safety protections like a panic
25 button. But I know that many housekeeper in New York

2 City don't have these protections. I want all women
3 in the hotel industry to feel safe, respected and
4 unafraid when they are on the job. Please do not let
5 women down. Please vote yes. Please pass the Safe
6 Hotel Act to protect worker like me. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much.
8 Okay, we're going to call the next panel. Shiv Patel
9 [sp?], Melissa Brusdow [sp?], Robin Dier Chadra
10 [sp?], Punam Patel [sp?]. Are any of these
11 individuals here? Okay, we're going to move on to
12 the next panel. The next panel, Tayshav Tamereseron
13 [sp?], Sonia Randolph, Sonia Deloralen [sp?], Rolando
14 Rando Cantero [sp?], Eric Ocuusu [sp?], Raiza Pujol
15 Soriano [sp?], Carol Hamilton, if you could please
16 come forward. Thank you. Okay, thank you.

17 SONIA DELDAVITA: Hi everyone. I'm Sonia
18 Deldavita [sp?] and I work in housekeeping in
19 Manhattan Times Square hotel. I'm lucky to have a
20 union job where treat me respectfully, but
21 unfortunately a lot of hotel worker in New York
22 aren't so lucky. [inaudible] for agency [inaudible]
23 disrespected and have to deal with unsafe conditions.
24 Every worker should have basic protection at their
25 job. Please vote yes for the Safe Hotel Act.

2 SONIA RANDOLPH: Hello, my name is Sonia
3 Randolph. I work in New York City hotel. When I
4 first came to this country and settled in New York I
5 was determined to build a better life and manifest my
6 version of American dream. It was a lifelong
7 journey, but thanks to the support of a good job and
8 a strong wage, I was able to earn and sent my
9 daughter to college. To me, New York is a place
10 where I am-- I would work hard, be treated fairly and
11 not have to work in fear of my safety. The time is
12 now to protect the workers of the industry and that
13 includes the thousands of people who like me
14 immigrated here hoping to have a better life.
15 Please, please, pass the Hotel Safety Act. Thank
16 you.

17 ROLANDO RENDON CANTERO: Hi, my name is
18 Rolando Rendon Cantero. I'm a hotel worker in New
19 York City. I'm originally from Mexico and I have
20 lived in New York City for the past 27 years. Since
21 I moved here I was able to meet and marry my husband,
22 find a job at a union hotel, and build a beautiful
23 life for the two of us. I want other immigrant
24 workers to enjoy the same rights and protections and
25 the job as I do, but right now many cannot hold their

2 employers accountably or demand basic protections
3 like chemical screenings and panic buttons. The Safe
4 Hotels Act will make that possible. New York needs
5 the Safe Hotels Act. Please, vote yes.

6 RAIZA PUJOL: [speaking Spanish]

7 TRANSLATOR: My name is Raiza Pujol. I'm
8 a hotel worker in New York City. I'm also a mother
9 to six kids. I honor the dozens of hard-working
10 women who keep New York City tourist industry
11 running. You may not realize it, but in the
12 housekeeping department we work alone on the hotel
13 floors for hours. It can be scary and there are
14 times that many of us are worried about our safety.
15 It's time to protect us and provide us basic safety
16 protections like panic buttons on the job. New York
17 needs the Safe Hotel Act. Please vote yes. Thank
18 you.

19 ERIK OCUUSU: Hi, my name is Erik Ocuusu.
20 I'm a hotel worker in mid-town Manhattan. I am one
21 of the workers who will be benefit from protection
22 Safety Act. This law would give us a common sense of
23 protection, chemical safety, panic button, safety
24 staffing-- any hotel running good business would such
25

2 give us-- providing these protections to workers.

3 New York need the Safe Hotel Act. Please vote yes.

4 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much
5 to this panel. Thank you. I'll now call the next
6 panel, Richard Fosreh [sp?], Dominic Daleo, Franklin
7 Polonia [sp?], Boris Erlakov [sp?], Gutson Morgan
8 [sp?]. If anyone is still here, please come forward.
9 Thank you. Okay, please begin.

10 BORIS ERLAKOV: Good afternoon. My name
11 is Boris. I came originally from Russia and I'm an
12 asylum-seeker. I came to the U.S. a month before
13 pandemic in 2020 to build a safer future for myself.
14 My first job in America was for an outsourcing
15 company working in the hotel. I started off as a
16 houseman. Later on during pandemic as a housekeeper
17 in shelters, in hotels, and providing services for
18 that small number of travelers who were still coming
19 to the City. My dedication and hard work eventually
20 led to a promotion to a supervisory role, and in 2022
21 to a managerial position. In addition to my
22 professional achievements I met a person who I
23 started building a family with. However, since July
24 18th, all of this is at risk. The proposed Intro 991
25 threatens to take away my job, my stability, and the

2 life I have worked so hard to build. If this law is
3 passed, not only me and my husband will stay without
4 a source of income, but my mother, my grandmother,
5 younger siblings back in Russia who I support. I ask
6 Council Members to consider the profound impact this
7 bill could have on individuals like me, people who
8 have given everything to succeed and contribute to
9 this country. My story is not unique. It's one of
10 the countless others who have come to America in
11 search of a better life. I ask that my efforts, my
12 sacrifices and my dreams to be recognized and
13 respected. I ask not to pass Intro 991 and do not
14 take away everything I worked so hard for. Thank
15 you.

16 RICHARD FOSTER: Good afternoon. My name
17 is Richard Foster. My wife and I are owners of what
18 you're considering a subcontractor. When the COVID-
19 pandemic hit, I lost my previous business of over
20 30 years. In order to support my family, I went into
21 this industry. My business is a family-run business.
22 We hired around 600 employees during the pandemic
23 through the migrant increase, contributing to New
24 York's economy. Throughout these pandemics and
25 migrant needs, we worked with city agencies to staff

2 several of the shelters when they needed us to.
3 Additionally, we never took any PPE loans or any
4 other financial aid from the City, not to add stress
5 to the situation. As a small business owner, the
6 safety of both my staff and the hotel's guest has
7 always been a top priority for us. That's why I took
8 so much care in creating both my handbook and
9 separate additional safety manuals. This handbook
10 and safety manual contain detailed standards that all
11 staff must adhere to guarantee their safety and high
12 standards we strive for. We follow the same safety
13 standards as the hotels themselves. In terms of
14 cleanliness standards, the hotels that contract with
15 us, maintain an average cleanliness score of 96 to 98
16 percent. To put it simply, this law hides behind the
17 façade of safety standards which is merely a pretext
18 for forcing people into and to join a union to try to
19 grow the union in New York. Instead, this law would
20 close down small businesses throughout the City.
21 These businesses battled every day during the
22 pandemic to finally come out on the other side, just
23 to shut down this law-- just to shut down by this
24 law.

2 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: I'm going to ask you
3 to wrap up, please. Thank you.

4 RICHARD FOSTER: Okay. if it is the-- if
5 the intention here is really about safety, you would
6 draft and pass a law laying out safety standards that
7 must be met in the industry instead of you are
8 passing a law that impedes small businesses and puts
9 thousands of people out of work.

10 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay.

11 DOMENIC DELEO: Hi, my name is Domenic
12 DeLeo. I'm a small business owner who started a
13 commercial cleaning company back in 2015. I am one
14 of the third-party vendors you are trying to put out
15 of business. So far today I've heard a great deal
16 about safety of workers. No one is looking to put any
17 employee in an unsafe environment. What I fail to
18 understand is how banning third-party partnerships
19 between hotels and businesses like mine have anything
20 to do with safety measures. Yes, there are bad
21 actors. There are bad actors in almost every single
22 industry, but those actors, bad actors, are extreme
23 minority. But to destroy the lives of the majority
24 who are not bad actors, who are pro employees, care
25 about their teams is not fair and just. It seems to

2 be-- it seems this is the part of the bill that is
3 not being spoken about yet and has the biggest impact
4 on small businesses and workers. We pride ourselves
5 on working with small boutique hotels for
6 housekeeping services, who many are seasonal
7 locations. We hire mainly legal immigrants and
8 minorities looking for opportunity which not only
9 have we been giving them the opportunity, but many
10 has been very successful. Some have now grown to
11 management and are earning over \$100,000 a year,
12 allowing them to buy homes, provide for their
13 families and have true careers. In the seasonal
14 hotels during the off-season, the staffing levels
15 drop almost by 50 percent. Being a third party to
16 these hotels, I can take those employees and move
17 them to other hotels and keep everyone working and
18 making money. This bill will force hotels to let go
19 of employees during the down times, and these people
20 will lose their jobs and their incomes. We have an
21 in-depth training program that allows our team to go
22 in and become skilled laborers for these hotels at a
23 fair wage for everyone to thrive. Businesses helping
24 businesses which also is good for the employees.
25 This is my entire livelihood. You all preach how

2 pro-business you are, especially how pro-small
3 business you are. I am the small business you are
4 supposed to care about. And with the signature of
5 this passing of the law, you are closing my business
6 and taking away my livelihood that took me nearly a
7 decade to build. All the hard work and sacrifice
8 will be gone. How is that fair? How is it fair--

9 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: [interposing] I'm just
10 going to ask you to wrap up, please.

11 DOMENIC DELEO: I'm almost done, yes.
12 You are literally putting me out of business and
13 taking away for 70+ employees we have working for us.
14 I beg you to understand that you are hurting small
15 businesses, ruining livelihoods of many and adding
16 the burden the operate in extremely difficult city to
17 do business. Do not pass this bill and please take
18 care of the small businesses and the people that you
19 say you care about.

20 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Sorry, the mic is
21 off. Thank you very much for your testimony. And
22 again, I'm just going to clarify for the record, that
23 subcontracted workers must be offered their jobs at
24 the same or higher salary if their agency is let go.
25 I just want to make sure people understand that.

2 DOMENIC DELEO: For how long?

3 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: We can't--

4 DOMENIC DELEO: [interposing] How long do
5 they have to keep their jobs?

6 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: I'm not going to
7 engage in a debate, sir.

8 DOMENIC DELEO: I'm just--

9 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: [interposing] I'm
10 clarifying for the record--

11 DOMENIC DELEO: [interposing] You're not
12 being fair.

13 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: that what you stated
14 was not correct information. So I want to make clear
15 for the record, under the Worker Retention Bill that
16 this City Council passed several years ago, every
17 worker must retain their job, period. We're going to
18 move on to the next panel. Michael Angelo Savino
19 [sp?], Erica Awasu [sp?], Sabrina Desamanourg [sp?],
20 Elizabeta Gawinowska [sp?], Elizabeth Sanchez [sp?],
21 Yudelina Santiago, if you could please come forward.
22 Thank you. Okay, please begin. Thank you.

23 MICHAEL ANGELO SAVINO: Good afternoon.

24 My name is Michael Angelo Savino. I'm a hotel worker
25 in New York City. I'm a lifelong New Yorker, born

2 and raised in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn and a proud union
3 member for 28 years of my life. I love my job and I
4 love New York City. Here I met my husband here-- I
5 met my husband here and he is also a hotel worker. I
6 am not exaggerating when I say that we are living the
7 American dream, being able to buy our first home
8 together with our hotel jobs. I want these
9 opportunities to be available to other hotel workers,
10 whether they are lifelong New Yorkers like myself or
11 immigrants like my husband, my grandparents and my
12 father. I want them to know that they can count on
13 staying safe on the job and going home to their
14 families every night. The Safe Hotel Act will make
15 that possible. Please, New York needs the Safe Hotel
16 Act. Please vote yes.

17 YUDELINA SANTIAGO: My name is Yudelina
18 Santiago. I'm a New York City worker in support of
19 Safe Hotel Act. I'm here today to tell you about my
20 experience working for all-- constructing agency. I
21 work as a room attendant for Green Magic [sic]
22 Excellent Cleaning Agency in the fall of 2021. This
23 subcontracting agency did not pay me for multiple
24 days that I worked cleaning rooms because they called
25 them training days. They told us if any guest

2 complained that their room wasn't clean, they were
3 going to take money out of our paycheck to compensate
4 the guest. And we constantly have to work off clock
5 to finish our work. I have to stay late many days
6 but I was only paid for eight hours. I'm a hard
7 worker, but I felt like it was impossible to properly
8 clean the room because the agency didn't provide any
9 of us with cleaning supply. When I asked a
10 supervisor what should I use to clean the room, I was
11 given a bucket and a cup of water. I was give no
12 chemical, disinfectant or soap. Instead, agency told
13 us that we should use dirty guest towel and use guest
14 shampoo to clean the rooms, and I had to wash the
15 dishes with hot water, no soap, because there was no
16 dish detergent. I couldn't believe what I was
17 seeing. It was so gross. I couldn't believe that
18 guest were paying money for this. Please, pass the
19 Safe Hotel Act to protect worker like me.

20 SABRINA DESAMOURS: Hi, my name is
21 Sabrina Desamours. I am New York worker. I am a New
22 York City worker, and I support the Safe Hotel Act.
23 I work in the agency Magic Green on September 2021.
24 I was working-- that was the worst work I ever had in
25 my life. My job was in cleaning rooms and not given

2 any cleaning supplies, no chemical, no dishwasher, no
3 soap, no disinfectant. The agency told me to use the
4 dirty guest towels to clean the rooms and the hot
5 water to clean the dirty dish. I remember that I
6 think myself this is so very, very dangerous. I
7 couldn't believe that the guest are paying to stay in
8 the room that weren't clean with the dirty towels of
9 the guest that stayed there before them. I wonder
10 how this could possible be allowed in New York City.
11 I was-- I quit. I was working for three days. I was
12 terrified that was going to-- that was going to my
13 family from all the filthy germ. When I was getting--
14 - when I was getting here, I was telling that should
15 be paid for \$18 an hour, but I quit. Only pay one
16 day work, and one day work just for \$15 an hour. I
17 ask agency why I only get paid for one day of work,
18 not three days, and [inaudible]. They told me it was
19 because I quit, and that going to pay me for one day
20 work. I feel robbed. Please pass Safe Hotel Act to
21 protect worker like me. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you.

23 ELZBIETA GAWINOWSKA: Hello. My name is
24 Elzbieta Gawinowska and I work in New York hotel
25 worker and I support the Safe Hotel Act. I work for

2 subcontractation agency currently [inaudible] for two
3 years. Each day the agency would send me to clean
4 rooms at different hotels. I would work with
5 strangers, new hotel workers, different management
6 every day. And hotel rooms were disgusting, because
7 some of them was not enough supplies to clean hotel
8 room. Sometimes there was not enough linen to change
9 the sheets between the new guests. So, the agency
10 would tell me to put-- sometimes don't change the
11 sheets for the guest because we not have enough
12 [inaudible]. So it was disgusting, and they want to
13 send the rooms for another guest. Management would
14 get upset at us for not being able to finish our work
15 loads. Even that I was because-- even that, I was--
16 because we did not have enough supplies and I was
17 worried if I did not stay to finish my rooms that I
18 would maybe lost my job. I would have to work extra
19 hours to finish my room because I want to do my job
20 and I did not have the supplies. So I stayed longer,
21 but I would not paid over time for this. The
22 management of some hotels when I work very badly
23 abuse me. They call me fat, told me to have to lose
24 weight because I don't fit in the uniform. This was
25 not normal for me, because supposed to be abusing

2 words. There was no rules or protection to protect
3 me. It was very difficult to relive those things.
4 And this experience was tried to forget because I was
5 working in another hotel 23 years. So my experience
6 was good clean rooms to make good job, and I'm hard-
7 working person at this job. I was [inaudible]--

8 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: [interposing] Okay,
9 I'm just going to ask you to wrap up, please. Thank
10 you so much.

11 ELZBIETA GAWINOWSKA: Please pass the
12 Safe Hotels Act. Protect workers. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you. Thank you
14 very much.

15 ELIZABETH SANCHEZ: Good afternoon. My
16 name is Elizabeth Sanchez, and I'm a hotel worker
17 here in New York City. I've been working in the
18 hospitality industry for 24 years, and if it weren't
19 for the union my life would be totally different.
20 Thanks to the union, I have been able to earn a good
21 income and provide excellent medical care for my
22 three children, my husband and myself. I have also
23 been able to plan for a comfortable future when I
24 retire. Being compensated fairly for your hard work
25 should not be controversial. I'm especially wanting

2 to work in a safe environment-- should also not be
3 controversial. Never once during my 24 years in the
4 industry did I ever feel-- did I ever feel unsafe in
5 my workplace or insecure about my job. When I work
6 with subcontractor workers that it was all I saw on a
7 daily basis. The ladies on the floor were afraid of
8 every day for their job security. They were afraid
9 that if they didn't finish their room quote [sic],
10 they would be fired from the hotel. I know this
11 because I was one of their-- I was one that assigning
12 the rooms to them. It's time to protect them and to
13 hold these greedy agencies accountable. New York
14 needs the Safe Hotel Act. Please, vote yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much
16 to this panel. Thank you. I'm now going to call the
17 next panel. Massiel Lugo who is on Zoom, Sandra
18 Seracco [sp?], Eric Addago [sp?]- I'm sorry,
19 Addoquaye, Benjamin Liu, Chandra Singh, Aissata
20 Bocoum, Shirley Charles, if you could please come
21 forward, and will start on Zoom with Massiel Lugo.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

23 MASSIEL LUGO: Hi. Good afternoon
24 everyone. My name is Massiel Lugo. For the past 32
25 years Jackson Heights and Elmhurst have been my home.

2 I also work in Corona as an educator, but above all I
3 am a mother. This bill will bring us a step closer
4 to improving the quality of life in my neighborhood
5 which is why I support it. I have protested and
6 voiced my opinion against the brothels posing as
7 massage parlors. I shouldn't have to pass by
8 brothels on my way to the closest bakery at seven in
9 the morning to get breakfast for my kids. When these
10 prostitutes are asking and pulling every man they see
11 for a massage early in the morning, I shouldn't have
12 to feel afraid. This is also the time when families
13 are walking their children to school. There are
14 brothels in front of elementary schools and parents
15 have protested for their closure. After being closed
16 for a day, they reopen the following day and continue
17 the operation. My daughter who is 15 years old and
18 rides public transportation shouldn't have to tell
19 me, "Ma, I'm scared to-- I'm scared that people would
20 think I'm prostitute if I wear a skirt. I worry that
21 a man would grab me one day." She passes these
22 brothels on her way to the train to go to school
23 every day. I shouldn't have to experience such
24 intense fear every morning saying goodbye to my
25 daughter. My neighbors, my friends, my family, my

2 mother and I all live in fear. I had never witnesses
3 women selling themselves before 2020. The community
4 was never perfect, but the extent to which things
5 have changed is shocking. Each time I leave my house
6 I am in disbelief. I'm a single mom who works two
7 jobs and goes to college. This past summer I felt
8 such deep sadness because I was unable to enjoy the
9 weather and take walks with my children. These
10 brothels have taken over and with that comes crime.
11 I have even traveled to other states in an attempt to
12 move, but why should I disrupt my family and
13 relocated. My father has a business, and like any
14 other business owner, he requires the necessary
15 permit to continue operating. So why shouldn't we
16 demand that other businesses also acquire the
17 necessary permits. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay. And now please
19 start.

20 ERIC ADDOQUAYE: Good afternoon Council
21 Members. My name is Eric. I am a hotel worker in New
22 York City, a proud dad, and a proud resident of the
23 Bronx. I am one of the thousands of hard-working men
24 who keep New York City tourism industry running.
25 Earlier this year, while I was working at the front

2 desk, I was pepper-sprayed. Hotel work can be
3 dangerous. It's time to protect us and provide basic
4 safety protections to all hotel workers like those in
5 the Safe Hotels Act. Please vote yes.

6 BENJAMIN LIU: Good afternoon. My names
7 Benj [sic]. I'm a New York City Hotel Worker. I
8 support the Safe Hotel Act. I used to work for
9 subcontracting agency called Green Magic Clean
10 Company at hotel in New York City. I was only
11 [inaudible] house man [sic] for a hotel. There was
12 no overnight safety and no manager on duty at the
13 hotel. I feel very unsafe. While I was working the
14 job I was all alone. It's no back-up and no help.
15 Knowing that I was the only one to deal with my
16 problem [inaudible]. What if there was a fire or
17 someone dangerous had entered the hotel premise? I
18 would have to deal with all, all alone. I'm not
19 trained to handle. I was in a constant state of
20 anxious and fear about what would go wrong. I wish I
21 had more protections. Please pass the Safe Hotel
22 Action to protect work. Thank you.

23 AISSATA BOCOUM: Good afternoon. My name
24 is Aissata Bocoum. I am a New York City hotel worker.
25 The Safe Hotel Act is important to me, because I--

2 UNIDENTIFIED: [interposing] We're going
3 to pause just for a moment for the Chair to return.
4 Give us one moment.

5 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay, thank you. So
6 sorry. Please begin. Thank you.

7 AISSATA BOCOUM: Good afternoon. My name
8 is Aissata Bocoum. I am a New York City hotel worker.
9 The Safe Hotel Act is important to me, because I
10 believe all the hotel workers in New York City should
11 have access to panic button. Every day we go in
12 those rooms by ourselves. During the pandemic time--
13 I'm speaking to my own experience. I went to the
14 floor and do the routine work. I knock the guest room
15 to do the daily cleaning. The guest opened the door
16 very aggressive, ask me to come inside the room. I
17 refused. He was so aggressive. He want me to come
18 inside. I run and went to the next room. He come
19 stand behind the door knocking the door. I look on
20 the peep hole, see him. He had something in hand
21 hiding behind his back, knocking the door wanting me
22 to come outside. I refused. I pressed panic button.
23 When I pressed the panic button, the panic button--
24 the good thing about it, it show your location. When
25 I press the security, the security came. When the

2 security came, asked me to come outside. I was still
3 panic, hiding inside the room scared to come outside
4 because I'm afraid of my life. They ask me to come
5 outside. Then I finally come out. The security told
6 me they secure of the guest. I came outside. When I
7 come outside, then I have a chance to look. At that
8 time, they already removed the guest. I have a chance
9 to look at the room. The guest destroyed entire
10 room. He turned everything upside down. So since
11 the panic button that day-- because of panic button,
12 it save my life. So, I'm asking you to please Bill
13 991, please vote yes. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you.

15 CHANDRA SINGH: Good afternoon everyone.
16 My name is Chandra Singh and I'm a proud member of
17 the Hotel and Gaming Trade Council. I have worked at
18 the Mandarin Oriental Hotel for the past 21 years. I
19 am originally from Trinidad. I moved to New York
20 three decades ago. My hotel job has allowed me to
21 raise my two daughters, care for my family, and
22 fulfill my American dream. I want the same for other
23 immigrant hotel workers who like myself came to this
24 city in search of their American dream. All hotel
25 workers deserve to feel safe on their job and should

2 have basic safety protection. Please, please pass
3 the Safe Hotel Act to protect working people in New
4 York City. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much.

6 [inaudible]: My name is [inaudible] I'm
7 a-- my name is [inaudible] I'm an immigrant from
8 China. I live and work in Queens. I have been in
9 hotel-- I have been working for hotel business for
10 more than decade. I work hard to support my family
11 and to raise my kids. I'm here today for a simple
12 purpose that I support bill. In fact, I worked
13 overnight. I came directly from my work, because I
14 strongly believe safe work environment is very
15 important for us, for all of us, every hotel worker
16 who work in the New York City. Please pass the
17 bill. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much
19 to this panel. Thank you. Okay, I'm going to call
20 the next panel. Vanessa Aronson on Zoom, Tracy
21 Bennett, Charles Safo, Emilye Yunque [sp?], Kwadimo
22 Opoku Berko [sp?], Rafael Coman [sp?], Damion
23 Lawrence. Okay, and we're going to start on Zoom
24 with Vanessa Aronson.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

2 VANESSA ARONSON: Hi, good afternoon
3 everyone. My name is Vanessa Aronson, and thank you
4 to the Chair, Council Member Julie Menin, and the
5 members of the Committee for convening today's
6 hearing, and thank you for allowing me to testify
7 remotely. I live and work on the Upper East Side of
8 Manhattan, and although I live and work in New York,
9 I've actually spent a lot more time in local hotels
10 than the average New York City resident in my former
11 capacity as the U.S. Foreign Service Officer leading
12 multilateral negotiations on food security topics at
13 the U.N. and in my current capacity as a leader at a
14 large national nonprofit that has thousands of
15 employees across the United States, but our
16 headquarter is here in New York City where we
17 frequently gather for important conferences and
18 meeting. I fully support Intro 991B, the Safe Hotels
19 Act, because I want to ensure that I-- that when I,
20 my family or my teammates are staying in New York
21 hotels, that we are safe, and that the workers in New
22 York City hotels are safe and are protected from
23 predatory bad actors. This includes the panic button
24 and requiring information on hazardous chemicals in
25 the workplace, and the fact that this is not the norm

2 across the industry is shocking. As a community
3 member, I find it concerning that in just the past
4 five years the NYPD reported over 14,000 quality of
5 life complaints. This demonstrates to me that the
6 status quo is not tenable. Intro 991 is supported by
7 36 Council Members, two Borough Presidents, the BPA,
8 five District Attorneys, and the Attorney General,
9 and this all highlights just how critical the bill
10 is. And it also highlights key worker protection
11 issues which is something that Council Member Menin
12 had consistently championed including in her formal
13 role as the Commissioner for Consumer and Worker
14 Protection. Similar legislation, licensing hotels,
15 are already exists in many major cities across the
16 country, including my hometown of Chicago, and it's
17 clear that this is the norm for the hotel industry
18 elsewhere where bad actors are addressed through
19 regulation and we need that here. I urge the City
20 Council to support the legislation and to pass Intro
21 991B. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you. And now
23 we will go to the in-person panel.

24 KOJO OPOKU BERKO: [inaudible] Council
25 Member. Shalom, peace and love from all walks of

2 life, particularly immigrant hotel workers in our
3 great city of New York. My name is Kojo Opoku Berko
4 [sp?]. I am a house person for the [inaudible] hotel
5 where I come from Ghana. I came to this country to
6 seek a better life for myself and for my family.
7 Thankfully, the hotel that I work at through an HDC
8 CBA championed agreement have been successful.
9 Everybody and everyone in New York deserves the
10 chance that I got. [inaudible] contrary to the fear-
11 mongering testimony that we may have heard, which
12 you've rightly called out, "travesty of
13 misinformation" on the bill. this bill is arguably a
14 panacea to the safety and job protection for all
15 hotel workers in New York. For that matter, it is my
16 humble opinion that you please pass and vote yes to
17 the Hotel Safety Act. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you.

19 CHARLES SAFO: Good afternoon everyone,
20 and we thank God almighty for giving us this day. My
21 names is Charles Safo. I'm a hotel worker in New
22 York City. The Safe Hotel Act will provide basic
23 safety protections to hotel workers like me. We are
24 talking about things like chemical safety, human
25 trafficking training and protecting workers from

2 being exploited by a subcontracting agency. No good
3 hotel should have any problem with providing these
4 basic protections. New York needs the Safe Hotel
5 Act. Please, kindly vote yes. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you. If you
7 could just press the button, please. Thank you.

8 TRACY BENNETT: Thank you. Hi. My name
9 is Tracy Bennett. I have been working in a hotel in
10 New York for 17 years. Please pass the Safe Hotel
11 Act. Please protect us. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you.

13 EMILYE YUNQUE: Good afternoon. My name
14 is Emilye Yunque. I'm a hotel worker in New York
15 City. The Safe Hotel Act will provide basis safety
16 protection to the hotel coworkers like me. I'm
17 talking about things like chemical safety, panic
18 button, protecting worker from wage theft. No
19 [inaudible] have any problem with providing these
20 basic protection. New York needs the Safe Hotel Act.
21 Please vote yes.

22 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you.

23 DAMION LAWRENCE: Good afternoon. My
24 name is Damion Lawrence. I have worked in the hotel
25 industry for over 12 years, and have been a proud

2 resident of Baychester Bronx for seven years. One of
3 the things that I love about New York City is that we
4 stand up for what's right. Thousands of your
5 constituents, including me, work in New York City
6 hotels. We need this law. Do the right thing. New
7 York needs the Safe Hotels Act. Please vote yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much
9 to this panel. Appreciate your testimony. I'll now
10 call the next panel. Roamy-- sorry, it's very hard
11 to read this card-- Espinal, Oksana Owdauldo,
12 Catherine Morgan, Drita Ceric [sp?]. If you're here,
13 if you could please come forward. Thank you. Okay,
14 please start. Thank you.

15 DRITA CEKIC: Good afternoon, Council
16 Members. My name is Drita Cekic [sp?], and I work
17 for Noor Staffing Group, an honest and reputable
18 company, and we oppose this bill. We provide
19 essential service in New York City, primarily in
20 housekeeping, the hardest working team in the hotel.
21 I began my career 25 years ago as a room attendant.
22 Throughout these years, I've dedicated myself in
23 helping individuals of all backgrounds secure jobs,
24 enable them to support their families. We focus on
25 offering respect and hands-on training, because my

2 team and I have firsthand experience in these roles.
3 A big part of my job is ensuring my company is
4 compliant with many of the items noted in this bill
5 like the safe work environment. We take immense pride
6 in providing our core and essential employees with
7 the necessary tools and training, including human
8 trafficking awareness, harassment prevention, safety
9 training and customer service. We can confidently
10 say at any of our hotels that we provide service that
11 there have been no human trafficking incidents, that
12 our hotels service-- excuse me. All our hotels have
13 panic buttons. We as hotel subcontractors understand
14 our employee's needs because we have walked in their
15 shoes. We know how to treat our employees with
16 dignity and respect they deserve. Please reconsider
17 this bill, and thank you for your time.

18 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you.

19 UNIDENTIFIED: Good afternoon, Council
20 Members. Thank you for giving us this opportunity to
21 hear our concerns regarding this bill. for over 15
22 years I have worked in the hotel industry providing
23 services, jobs, hopes, stability, longevity to
24 employees and their families. Up until now, we have
25 employees working with us for nine years. This is

2 showing dedication and stability. Today, I'm here to
3 plea for my job, our employee's job, and their
4 families' way of life. Please do not pass this bill.
5 Passing the bill will create tremendous hardship,
6 displacement to ourselves, employees, and our
7 families. Thank you.

8 ROANY ESPINAL: Good afternoon. Roany
9 Espinal [sp?]. I'm a supervisor on Springhill Suites.
10 I just want to thank the company [inaudible]
11 attendant and then as a training and for giving the
12 necessary tools to learn and to live for [inaudible]
13 to climb little by little and to help me to support
14 myself and my family and for care of all the staff. I
15 only ask to you to continue to support us, to
16 continue growing so that we can be better people and
17 better professionals in the future. Thank you.

18 OKSANA OWDAULBO: Thank you. Good
19 afternoon. My name is Oksana and I'm here to
20 represent not just my business, but many individuals
21 who depend on me for support. From health insurance
22 and bank account to job applications and social
23 services, my role extends-- my role extends far
24 beyond that an employer. I'm a vital link in that
25 work that helps newcomers integrate and [inaudible].

2 The proposed bill threatens to undermine the delicate
3 balance, potentially creating barriers that would
4 negatively impact our community. This is not just
5 about the jobs and businesses. This is about the
6 people we serve and support every day. The services
7 we provide help individuals and families rebuild
8 their lives and contribute positively to our city.
9 While I understand the positive intention behind the
10 bill, I believe there a more effective ways to ensure
11 safety in our community. Our company have
12 effectively established safe training protocols that
13 enhance security without imposing new harsh
14 regulation on the small businesses like mine. As a
15 subcontractor cleaning service business, myself and
16 other subcontractors are happy to work with the
17 legislators to develop comprehensive safety solutions
18 that benefit everyone without needing to-- for the
19 restrictive measures that this bill requires. The
20 proposal-- the proposed bill will place undue burden
21 on small businesses and people who work with us. I
22 urge you to reconsider the needs for this bill in its
23 current form, and instead focus on more collaborative
24 efforts that can prioritize safety through proven
25 methods. Thank you for your attention.

2 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much.
3 Thank you to this panel. And I'm now going to call
4 the next panel which is Lelonn Webb, Zylu Jang [sp?],
5 Catalina Quintanella, Denise Matthew, Bernard Gayle
6 [sp?], Nicole Louis, if you could please come
7 forward. Thank you. Okay, if you could please begin.
8 Thank you.

9 CATALINA QUINTANELLA: [speaking Spanish]

10 TRANSLATOR: My name is Catalina
11 Quintanella. I live in Yonkers. I work in the hotel
12 industry for 20 years, and this moment I work in a
13 Westchester hotel, and I believe that all hotel
14 workers should be safe every day at work. I came
15 here-- I have done-- I'm lucky. I'm sorry. I am
16 lucky because I have a-- at my work I have a panic
17 button, and I would like the millions of workers to
18 have the hotel button, too. And I support the Hotel
19 Safe Act. Please vote yes.

20 DENISE MATTHEW: Hi, good afternoon. My
21 name is Denise Matthew. I work in the hotel business
22 for 29 years. I'm here today to support the Safe
23 Hotel Act. I support this bill because I want safe
24 working condition for all hotel workers. Please pass
25 this bill and do the right thing to support working

2 people. We deserve to feel safe, comfortable. We
3 deserve to feel-- please do the right thing and
4 support the working-- support working people. We
5 deserve to feel comfortable and safe at work. Thank
6 you for your time.

7 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you.

8 BERNARD GAYLE: Hello. Good afternoon.
9 My name is Bernard Gayle [sp?]. I worked in the
10 heart of the Times Square, and I've been listening to
11 the pros and the cons of this whole meeting, and I
12 want to pose a question to the panel, right? If we
13 look at the word protection, the prefix is pro. So
14 we're asking you to look at the pros and the cons,
15 because you cannot tell me in the heart of Times
16 Square or the heart of New York, the heart of
17 Brooklyn, the heart of Manhattan, the heart of Queens
18 that workers whether non-union, union, black, white,
19 Chinese, gray, brown, doesn't need protection. We're
20 asking you to visualize the pros and the cons of this
21 city and understand that we need protection for all
22 workers, non-union and union workers. So we asking
23 you to look at that prefix, pro, and be proactive and
24 help us, and not for me, I, but for we, all of us.

2 Protect us. That's what we asking. Thank you. I
3 support the bill 991.

4 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you.

5 NICHOLE LOUIS: Hi, good afternoon my
6 name is Nicole Louis, and I am a worker in the hotel
7 in New York City. I've been working in the hotel for
8 29 years, and also I'm hard-working worker, and also
9 I live in Brooklyn. Please, support the bill.
10 Please, support the bill. Please, pass the bill.
11 Please, again, pass the bill. Thank you.

12 LELONN WEBB: Good afternoon everyone.
13 My name is LeLonn Webb and I am a security officer at
14 a hotel in New York City. I come with 30 years of
15 public safety experience, 13 years with fire, nine
16 years with PD, also nine years with FLSD, and I have
17 never felt so comfortable with supporting an act like
18 this act here. Our safety and concern is a priority,
19 not just for us, not for the workers, but for all the
20 guests, everyone who comes into New York City. New
21 York City has always thrived on safety. They have
22 always-- the NYPD has always pushed safety. There
23 are so many acts in place with health and safety acts
24 between the FDNY, Sanitation, and everyone else. We
25 want our fair share as well as hotel workers, and we

2 definitely support this act. So I ask you please
3 vote yes. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much
5 for this panel. Thank you. I'll now call the next
6 panel. Betza Suazo, Lantain Henry, Peteisha Brown,
7 Jasmina Borden, if you're here if you could please
8 come forward. If not, I will move on to the next
9 panel. They are here? Okay, okay, great. Thank
10 you. Great, thank you.

11 UNIDENTIFIED: Hi, thank you so much for
12 giving us this opportunity. I don't have a written
13 speech, but I'm just going to speak based on my
14 experience here. I migrated to New York two years
15 ago, and upon being here, it was so difficult for me
16 to, you know, find a job. I applied for several jobs
17 in the hotel industry because that's I've worked in
18 my previous country, and it was unsuccessful. Most
19 cases, I'd get a response maybe a month, two months
20 later saying that someone else was chosen or it's a
21 case where I'm scheduled for a second interview. I
22 was employed in my sixth month of being in the
23 country by subcontractor, and this has opened many
24 doors for me, being able to provide for my family.
25 Working for a subcontractor, of course, this provides

2 stability for not just me, but for my colleagues and
3 coworkers as well, for being able to provide to our
4 families back home, and of course, being able to
5 provide for ourselves while being here. Please do
6 not pass this bill, because I see where this will
7 negatively impact myself, my colleagues, and hundreds
8 of other employee in the hotel industry.

9 UNIDENTIFIED: Hello, everyone. It's my
10 pleasure to be with you all today. I'm representing
11 [inaudible]. I work with properties here in Manhattan
12 and in Queens. We staff hotel with various service
13 employees. in recent days I learned of a major change
14 that's said to be implemented in the near future that
15 will immensely affect most if not all of us here
16 today. One of the greatest advantage of the third-
17 party agency is we work closely with the property and
18 the staff to provide excellent service to our clients
19 and a great deal in supports for the employees. More
20 than representative are proudly served and advocated
21 of the staff. Our staff always commend us for being
22 less than a phone call away. We are either always
23 on-site to assist or they have a capacity to contact
24 us at any time or any day of the week. With the cost
25 of living here in New York City, my team and I

2 respectfully have no interest in paying union dues.

3 We simply cannot afford to. This will pose an
4 additional and unnecessary expense to us. Taking
5 money from our household for service we are already
6 receive from our agency at no additional cost. Why
7 fix this thing that is not broken? Thank you all for
8 listening.

9 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much.
10 I'm now going to call the next panel. Luis Penaloza,
11 Diana Middleman [sp?], Kevin McQueen, Mariam Karaski
12 [sp?], Kyla Bradcho [sp?], Juan Carolos Nino [sp?].
13 Okay, thank you. Please begin.

14 KEVIN MCQUEEN: Good afternoon. My name
15 is Kevin McQueen. I am a hotel worker in New York
16 City. I grew up in Queens and I am a long-life New
17 Yorker. I've been working in hotel industry 18
18 years, and all of my life years on the job I never
19 have felt more secure and in control of my life work
20 with the union representatives. New York City has
21 always been strong, a strong union town that has
22 protected the working class, and I am proud of that.
23 Passing this law is important because it would make
24 sure that all hotel workers, including non-union
25 workers are treated fairly and can work safely at our

2 jobs. New York needs Safe Hotel Act. Please vote
3 yes. Thank you.

4 LUIS PENALOZA: [speaking Spanish]

5 TRANSLATOR: My name is Luis Penaloza.
6 I'm a New York City hotel worker and I support the
7 Safe Hotel Act. I work at [inaudible] in Times Square
8 for a subcontracting agency Green Magic [sic]
9 Company. It was not a safe workplace. The agency
10 always wanted us to cut corners so they could save an
11 extra dollar. My coworkers and I had reported
12 management that the laundry chute door had broken a
13 few times, but they didn't fix it. If you have never
14 worked in a laundry room at a hotel, let me explain
15 to you. The chute door needs to be open and closed
16 automatically to prevent fires from breaking out, but
17 the door is heavy, so it can be very dangerous if
18 it's not working properly. One day I was working in
19 the laundry and the chute door broke, hit me and
20 break my open head. I start bleeding and neither the
21 managers from the hotel or the agency did anything.
22 It was the hotel receptionist who called the
23 ambulance for me. I had to go to the hospital and get
24 three staples in my head. I was out for two weeks
25 recovering. Green Magic like many agency didn't care

1 COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER AND WORKER PROTECTION 205
2 about rules or safety. Please pass the Hotel Safe Act
3 to protect workers like me. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much
5 to this panel. I'll now call the next panel.
6 Stephanie Perez, Nicole Vera, Bairon Valdes, Leonel
7 Sanchez, Amalia Garcia, if you are here if you could
8 please come forward. And we made need an
9 interpreter. Okay. Great. Okay, thank you.

10 AMALIA GARCIA: [speaking Spanish]

11 TRANSLATOR: My name is Amalia Garcia.
12 I'm working in a hotel in Manhattan for several
13 years.

14 AMALIA GARCIA: [speaking Spanish]

15 TRANSLATOR: I'm writing with this letter
16 with intention to raise my voice that what is going
17 to happen is going to affect me and affect my family
18 financially.

19 AMALIA GARCIA: [speaking Spanish]

20 TRANSLATOR: If this law is approved,
21 what will happen to me is that I will lose my job and
22 this will hurt my family financially, and the reason
23 of this is because I'm the head of my family.

24 AMALIA GARCIA: [speaking Spanish]

25

2 TRANSLATOR: Thanks to the agency that
3 I'm working, the employment agency, I'm able to have
4 a safe place for me to live and to have food in my
5 home as well.

6 AMALIA GARCIA: [speaking Spanish]

7 TRANSLATOR: The employment agency that
8 I'm working currently is helping me financially, is
9 giving me a lot of hours of work and they are very
10 human people. They are very kind people.

11 AMALIA GARCIA: [speaking Spanish]

12 TRANSLATOR: Councilwoman and gentlemen,
13 please listen to our needs and please let us work
14 well. We only need to work. This is everything for
15 now.

16 LEONEL SANCHEZ: [speaking Spanish]

17 TRANSLATOR: My name is Leonel Sanchez.
18 I'm a hotel worker in one of the hotels in Times
19 Square in Manhattan. All Council Members, I want you
20 to listen to this letter. I want to express how
21 satisfied and how happy I am with my work in this
22 hotel.

23 LEONEL SANCHEZ: [speaking Spanish]

24 TRANSLATOR: We have a very good job
25 environment. All of our coworkers are very friendly

2 and we always work as teammate, and also I have a
3 very good relationship with my bosses, and those are
4 my superiors, the people who have a higher level in
5 the hotel. I also wanted to highlight that they're
6 always giving us big support, and we also have very
7 big flexibility and a very good job schedule where
8 we're working ourselves in this hotel.

9 LEONEL SANCHEZ: [speaking Spanish]

10 TRANSLATOR: Sorry, the Spanish was a
11 little different one word. So, through my work,
12 we're able to sustain financially my own home, to pay
13 my rent, to buy food for my family.

14 LEONEL SANCHEZ: [speaking Spanish]

15 TRANSLATOR: Thanks to the hotel work
16 that I have, I'm able to send money to my family in
17 my home country and I'm able to support my family
18 financially who need the money from my work that I
19 send from the United States. They really need this
20 money when I need to send them the money.

21 BARION OPASSO: [speaking Spanish]

22 TRANSLATOR: Good afternoon. My name is
23 Barion Opasso [sp?]. I wanted to say to you that I'm
24 very happy working in this hotel I'm working at the

2 moment, and I'm also very happy and pleased with
3 employment agency I'm working at the moment.

4 BARION OPASSO: [speaking Spanish]

5 TRANSLATOR: We have a very good job
6 environment. We have a very good workers team, and
7 our bosses are very good with us. They also have
8 very flexible job schedules for all of us.

9 BARION OPASSO: [speaking Spanish]

10 TRANSLATOR: They also very
11 understandable to us. For example, if we need to go
12 to see a doctor when we get sick, right? Or we have
13 any emergency, they will, you know, give us that time
14 for us to go to the doctor or to face that emergency
15 that may come in the future.

16 BARION OPASSO: [speaking Spanish]

17 TRANSLATOR: If this law is approved, I
18 will get affected very much. I will be hurt
19 financially, and this is very bad for me, and this
20 will affect also my finances and my respons-- I have--
21 - my responsibilities. I have many responsibilities
22 I need to face, and I also debts I need to pay, and I
23 have to help my family I have here. Not only my
24 family here in the United States, but the family in
25 my country as well.

2 NICOLE VERA: [speaking Spanish]

3 TRANSLATOR: Good afternoon. My name is
4 Nicole Vera. I'm working in a hotel located in Times
5 Square in Manhattan, and through this letter I wanted
6 to express my big satisfaction I have because I'm
7 working in this hotel and the great opportunity that
8 the hotel have give us to work in this hotel.

9 NICOLE VERA: [speaking Spanish]

10 TRANSLATOR: You know, I have the
11 economic support through this hotel to help my family
12 back in my country. We have a very good job
13 environment between all of us, all of workers of the
14 hotel, and also my bosses are also very friendly as
15 well.

16 NICOLE VERA: [speaking Spanish]

17 TRANSLATOR: My bosses are very
18 understandable. They are giving us incredible
19 support and they're helping us also with flexible
20 schedules. We're able to work in a very good work
21 schedule, and also they're very understanding when we
22 have any problem in our work with our home. Our
23 bosses are helping us in these kind of cases.

24 STEFANY PEREZ: [speaking Spanish]

2 TRANSLATOR: Good afternoon. My name is
3 Stefany. Through this letter I wanted to show to you
4 the reasons why I wrote this letter. I have a very
5 big concern about the new law that you want to
6 approve, because this new law will affect my work
7 with the company I'm working currently.

8 STEFANY PEREZ: [speaking Spanish]

9 TRANSLATOR: In the job I'm working
10 currently, right, my bosses are very understandable.
11 They have helped me so much. They have give me very
12 flexible schedules. They're also very aware of our
13 teams and they're always trying to help us.

14 STEFANY PEREZ: [speaking Spanish]

15 TRANSLATOR: Thanks to this job, right,
16 and also to my bosses who are very understandable,
17 I'm able to keep this job. I'm able to sustain and
18 support financially my family in my country. If I
19 need to ask them to do a favor, any favor, they
20 always listen to us, because I'm also a mother,
21 right, a family and I have a very big concern about
22 this new law that you wanted to approve. Thank you
23 for listening to us.

24 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Again, I want to make
25 sure that this misinformation is being addressed.

2 I'm going to read a statement and I'm going to ask
3 for your indulgence to translate it into Spanish,
4 because it is imperative that you all know your
5 rights. Subcontracted workers must be offered their
6 jobs at the same or higher salary if their agency is
7 let go. Okay? It is unacceptable that this
8 misinformation continues to be spread. We're just
9 not going to allow it. And if you have any questions
10 and you'd like additional information about what the
11 law actually provides for you, a law that was passed
12 previously by the Council, please, we have those
13 resources available to you. Thank you.

14 TRANSLATOR: Ms. Menin, just one
15 question. Is the information available in Spanish
16 [inaudible] or just--

17 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: [interposing] Yes.

18 TRANSLATOR: in English?

19 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: We can have this
20 information available in Spanish so that you know
21 your rights. We cannot allow this misinformation to
22 continue. Okay, so I'm going to ask Council Staff if
23 we can have a translation of what the law provides so
24 that the workers know their rights. Thank you very

2 much. Okay, I'm now going to call-- thank you very
3 much for your assistance in that.

4 TRANSLATOR: You're welcome, Ms. Menin.

5 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: thank you. Thank you
6 for your testimony today. We appreciate it. I'm now
7 going to go to the next panel. Usiri Perecha [sp?],
8 Judith San Miguel [sp?], Carol Hamilton [sp?],
9 Romario Rodriguez, if you could please come forward.
10 Thank you. Hi.

11 JUSTADI: Hello, hi. My name is Justadi
12 Pereda [sp?]. I work in housekeeping department at
13 the Freehand Hotel. I came back to work just after
14 the highlight of COVID. At the time, our manager
15 told guests that we were only cleaning rooms under
16 the guidance of guests safety, but eliminating daily
17 room cleaning is a safety problem. Imagine, cleaning
18 less during a public health crisis. Really,
19 eliminating daily cleaning is an excuse to eliminate
20 jobs. For those who use-- who came back to work, our
21 job was much difficult. It was much harder to clean
22 a room when it was-- when it had been occupancy for
23 many, many days without regular cleaning, and for
24 many of us coworker, it also meant that there was no
25 work for them at all. Luckily for our union was able

2 to resolve this and today we are back at work and
3 providing daily cleaning, but many hotel workers in
4 New York City are not so lucky. We should have basic
5 standards to keep rooms clean and keep people
6 working.

7 SAHIA MITCHELL: Good afternoon. My name
8 is Sahia Mitchell [sp?]. I'm working hotel New York
9 City housekeeping. I am not-- I am one thousand
10 woman workers in New York-- New York workers in the
11 hotel. Our work is hard [inaudible] all them is
12 working hard. My hotel I work [inaudible].

13 TRANSLATOR: My name is Sahia
14 [inaudible]. I'm a hotel worker in New York City and
15 a mother of a wonderful son. I am one of the
16 thousands of hardworking woman who keep New York City
17 tourist industry running. In the housekeeping
18 department we work alone on hotel floors for hours at
19 a time. As a woman, this could be frightening if
20 there is an emergency. There is no one around who
21 can help us. A woman I work with accidentally
22 spilled bleach in her eyes, and she had to try to use
23 her cell phone to call her manager with her eyes
24 closed. It's time to protect us and provide basic

2 safety protections like panic buttons on the job.

3 Please vote yes.

4 CAROL HAMILTON: My name is Carol
5 Hamilton. I work in the-- thank you. I am a hotel
6 worker in New York City, and my union makes sure that
7 I get to feel safe working. Why I want you guys to
8 vote yes for the Hotel Safe Act-- I think about four
9 years ago I read this story about this lady who she's
10 a hotel employee, a housekeeper, and she had a
11 husband that is disabled, so on her lunch break she
12 would leave to go have lunch with him, and that was
13 the only reason why they found out that she was hurt
14 by a guest and locked in the closet in the hotel,
15 because when she did not turn up for the lunch break,
16 he called the job and then they went to the last room
17 she was in, saw the blood and so they were able to
18 apprehend the guy and get him. She did not make it
19 because the injuries were so severe. So for me, you
20 know, having safety knowing that-- and I was
21 listening earlier, I'm sorry. I was listening earlier
22 about where the other folks were saying that this
23 will cause small businesses to, you know, run into
24 problems and stuff. Without workers, nothing
25 happens, because we all-- you know, we're a cog

2 [sic], we all play a part in what happens. So making
3 sure and ensuring that the workers are safe, that
4 everybody feels this is a good thing, and you know,
5 we have the confidence to know that we get home to
6 our family works. It just works. And sometimes when
7 a family member gets hurt on the job, it's not just
8 the-- you know, if you're the bread-winner, the one
9 in charge, the one who takes care of everything, then
10 it's not just you who have had a loss. It's an entire
11 community, an entire family. So, this is sometimes
12 devastating, sometimes it hard. So, I want you guys
13 to vote yes for the Hotel Safe Act. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you.

15 JUDITH SEMONGA: Good afternoon. My name
16 is Judith Semonga [sp?]. I am a hotel worker in New
17 York City. I moved to this city from Trinidad 37
18 years ago in search of a better life, and I have
19 worked as a room attendant for 34 years. I am proud
20 of my job. It has afforded me a middle-class life. I
21 was able to send my children to college and buy two
22 houses. I believe every hard-working man, woman and
23 immigrant, every hotel worker deserves to live with
24 dignity and to pursue their own American dream. New
25 York needs the Safe Hotel Act. Please vote yes.

2 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much
3 to this panel for your testimony.

4 JUDITH SEMONGA: You're welcome.

5 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Our next panel, Teshe
6 Tamachu [sp?], Maria Altbergus [sp?], Arislady Gomez
7 [sp?], Flora Rosa, Kasi Hosen [sp?]. Are any of the
8 individuals I called here? Yes, sir, please come
9 forward. Yes, sir? Please begin.

10 KAZI HOSEN: My name is Kazi Hosen. I
11 came from Bangladesh to provide a better life for my
12 family in New York City. I raised my children in
13 Queens, and I am proud that they have gone off to
14 college. I believe that the American dream means that
15 if you work hard, you will be treated fairly. That
16 why can have save job and give your children a better
17 life. Please protect the workers who keep the
18 tourism industry running, including thousands of
19 immigrants who came here for a better life. Please
20 vote yes.

21 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Thank you very much.

22 KAZI HOSEN: You welcome.

23 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay, our last panel
24 I will call, Raul Rivera, Christopher Leon Johnson.
25 While they come up, let me just say, if we've

2 inadvertently missed anyone who is registered to
3 testify today and is yet to be called, please speak
4 with the Sergeant, or if you are remote, use the Zoom
5 hand function. You will be called in the order that
6 your hand has been raised. Want to mention we had
7 earlier called Tameka Johnson [sp?] and Catherine
8 Trappani [sp?], so if they are here, they should
9 identify themselves. Okay, now I'll call this panel.

10 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Okay, ready?
11 Hi, my name is Christopher Leon Johnson. I'm a
12 former 32BJ Stop [sic] Steward, used to work for MTA
13 Ease of Access, and I'm opposed to this bill Intro
14 991. The truth of the matter of fact is, Julie
15 Menin, you're the chair and the reason you're doing
16 this bill is because you don't care about safety,
17 about the hotel safety, because your district is like
18 a hell hole now, especially on Second Avenue with all
19 those illegal smoke shops. You only care about being
20 the next Speaker of the City Council over Amanda
21 Fariás. That's all you care about. You don't care
22 about the safety of these people behind us. these
23 people behind us that work ATC [sic], they're some
24 good people, real good people that just want to make
25 a paycheck, but they are getting paid off by the

2 union under the table, and they doing these backdoor
3 deals like I scratch your back, you scratch my back,
4 and you come out and advocate for a bill and support
5 a campaign that is going to hurt their fellow people
6 than help-- than help-- hurt them more than helping
7 them. This bill will hurt the industry. This will
8 hurt the businesses, and these people, we all know
9 that majority of these people can't even afford to
10 pay for those hotels they're working in even if they
11 wanted to. We all know this. This is all about
12 power for you, Julie Menin. You don't-- you're
13 selfish. You only care about yourself. You only
14 care about your political ambitions, and your
15 political ambitions is being Speaker of the City
16 Council, and you know that the only way you're going
17 to become Speaker of City Council is with union
18 support. Just this afternoon with this corrupt Chair
19 Richard Poppoko [sp?]--- stupid name is-- we asked him
20 a few questions about this bill. Is this really
21 about you becoming Speaker? Is it really about him
22 lining his pockets, and he disrespected us and tried
23 to intimidate us right outside City Hall steps. We
24 was being nicely, and he intimidate us outside those
25 steps. So we all know what this is about. You only

2 care about yourself. These members behind us are
3 good people, but they're being used by this corrupt
4 union head. This is all about-- these unions are
5 corrupt. I used to be part of a corrupt union, 32BJ.
6 This union is corrupt, too, HTC. And thank you. And
7 yeah, by the way, Shaun Abreu is corrupt, too. So,
8 thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay, your time is
10 up. Mr. Rivera?

11 RAUL RIVERA: My name is Raul Rivera. I'm
12 a native New Yorker, a TLC driver advocate and
13 founder of NYC Drivers Unite. I am 100 percent
14 against Intro 0991-2024, aka, the Safe Hotel Act.
15 This bill is nothing more than a pay to play bill.
16 The unions and nonprofits have weaponized this
17 committee and it's Chair Julie Menin, not to mention
18 all the money you get from the Tish family. It is
19 clear that abuse of power is at play here. Not sure
20 if the Conflicts of Interest Board will take any
21 action, but we filed a complaint anyway. Cronyism is
22 a specific form of in-group favoritism. The spoils
23 system practice of partiality in awarding jobs and
24 other advantages to friends or trusted colleagues,
25 especially in politics and between politicians and

2 supportive organizations, aka, the nonprofits. "Our
3 lives begin to end the day we become silent about
4 things that matter," Martin Luther King, Jr. "You
5 can fool some of the people all of the time, and all
6 of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool
7 all of the people all of the time," Abraham Lincoln.
8 And I've been hearing a lot about human trafficking.
9 If you're concerned about human trafficking and
10 lives, very simple, you gather your colleagues, you
11 hold a press conference and you say close the border.
12 You say close the border, because that's where the
13 trafficking is happening. Where they making it to?
14 Right here to the city, to this country. So you
15 close the border. We have a complaint here. We field
16 it with the COIB. There's your copy.

17 CHAIRPERSON MENIN: Okay. I first of all
18 want to thank everyone for turning out today, for
19 this incredibly productive and important hearing. We
20 so appreciate you all testifying today, and with
21 that, we are going to close the hearing.

22 [gavel]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date October 22, 2024