

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

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APRIL 29, 2021  
Start: 9:30 A.M.  
Recess: 9:41

HELD AT: REMOTE HEARING VIRTUAL ROOM 1

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

COUNCIL MEMBERS: STEPHEN T. LEVIN  
MARK LEVINE  
VANESSA GIBSON  
BRAD LANDER  
BARRY GRODENCHIK  
RAFAEL SALAMANCA  
MARK TREYGER  
DARMA DIAZ  
OSWALD FELIZ

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

2 SGT. POLITE: PC recording is under way.

3 SGT. BRADLEY: Cloud recording is up.

4 SGT. MARTINEZ: Back up is rolling.

5 CHAIR LEVIN: Good morning, everybody.

6 SGT. LEONARDO: One second, Chair, one  
7 second. Good morning, and welcome to the remote  
8 Council hearing on the Committee on General Welfare.  
9 At this time, we ask that all Council staff turn on  
10 their video for verification purposes. Please place  
11 all cell phones and electronic devices to silent or  
12 vibrate to minimize disruption. Mr. Chair, we're  
13 ready to begin.

14 CHAIR LEVIN: Thank you, Sergeant. Good  
15 morning, everybody, and welcome to this vote on the  
16 City Council's Committee on General Welfare. Today,  
17 the Committee will vote on two Bills sponsored by  
18 Council Member Mark Levine, co-sponsored by Council  
19 Member Vanessa Gibson concerning protecting the  
20 rights of tenants, Intro 1529A and 2050A. First, I  
21 want to acknowledge my colleagues that are here. We  
22 are joined by Council Member Lander, Grodenchik,  
23 Council Salamanca, Levine, Council Member Treyger,  
24 Council Member Darma Diaz, and I want to give a  
25 special welcome to Council Member Feliz for his first

2 hearing with General Welfare Committee, his first  
3 vote, so welcome Council Members. So, I'll just read  
4 briefly on the Bills. The COVID crisis has  
5 underscored the importance of safe and secure housing  
6 with the Center of Disease Control issuing guidance  
7 for a nationwide eviction moratorium has never been  
8 more apparent that housing is healthcare and human  
9 right. It is for the public health and economic  
10 priority to keep people in their homes for the  
11 duration of the pandemic, but the moratoria will  
12 eventually end, and we must have a plan in place to  
13 accommodate what could be a massive influx of new  
14 clients in needs of assistance. The Bills that we  
15 are voting on today will ensure that tenants become  
16 more engaged and educated about their rights in  
17 housing court and have access to legal services.  
18 Intro 1529A would require the Office of the Civil  
19 Justice Coordinator to collaborate with community  
20 groups in engaging and educating tenants on their  
21 rights in housing court and then report on their  
22 efforts. Intro 2050A would expand the right to  
23 council for tenants facing eviction proceedings  
24 starting June 1 of this year, instead of the current  
25 phase-in. The right to council has contributed to a

2 30% reduction in evictions in the city between  
3 February 2019 and February 2020, and Intro 2050A will  
4 expand upon this success by assuring that access is  
5 not limited to Z-I-P code. I want to thank the  
6 advocates, members of the public, and those who have  
7 lived experience to testify in favor of these Bills.  
8 At this time, I'd like to turn to my colleague,  
9 Council Member Mark Levine for a statement on these  
10 Bills. I'd like to thank my staff, (inaudible)  
11 Senior Council Chrystal Fond (SP?), Senior Policy  
12 Analysis (SP?) Natalie (inaudible) and Policy  
13 Analysis Frank Sarno (SP?), Finance Analysis.  
14 Council Member Mark Levine.

15 CM LEVINE: All right, thank you so much,  
16 Chair Levin. I'm not going to give a full statement  
17 cause I'll do that at the State today. I just want to  
18 briefly thank you, Chair Levin for bringing these  
19 Bills to the floor so quickly at a moment where we  
20 face a potential emergency for tenants with an  
21 avalanche of evictions, and these two Bills will  
22 protect tenants in two critical ways as you  
23 explained. First, by taking the right to Council law  
24 to every Z-I-P code in every borough immediately,  
25 accelerating what had been a plan, a five-year

2 implementation so that no tenant facing an eviction  
3 has to confront that with the benefit of an attorney,  
4 and I'm so thrilled we're pulling this off today  
5 ahead of the schedule and of the eviction moratorium,  
6 and secondly, Intro 1529, ensures that people know  
7 they have this right by deploying community-based  
8 groups throughout the city, contracted with the city  
9 to organize tenant so that they understand that if  
10 they ever face evictions, they will have protection  
11 by provision of an attorney, so they stand and fight,  
12 fight for their rights. This will be a great  
13 equalizer in struggles with landlords. Two big Bills  
14 coming at just at the right moment. I thank you  
15 Chair Levin. I profoundly thank Speaker Cory Johnson  
16 for pushing this forward and a special shoutout to my  
17 friend and colleague, Council Member Vanessa Gibson  
18 who has been my partner in this effort over the last  
19 seven years. Thank you so much.

20 CHAIR LEVIN: Thank you Council Member  
21 Levin. Actually, Council Member Gibson would like to  
22 make some remarks as well. Council Member Gibson.

23 CM GIBSON: Thank you so much, Chair  
24 Levin. Good morning colleagues. Thank you so much.  
25 I apologize for my delay, so sorry. I am proud to

2 join Council Member Mark Levine, my partner in this  
3 effort to support today's agenda items. Intro 2050  
4 is going to significantly expand the right to council  
5 law that passed back in 2017 which many of you  
6 supported, and it really gives so many of our tenants  
7 the ability to have legal representation as they are  
8 facing eviction in housing court, and since that time  
9 in 2017, we've seen a significant reduction in the  
10 number of evictions almost 40% and that was prior to  
11 COVID, and we know that with the eviction moratorium  
12 in place, there are about 30,000 evictions that are  
13 pending in housing court. So, I think it's our best  
14 interest as a City Council to stay ready so we don't  
15 have to get ready and make sure that we are prepared  
16 for the wave of evictions that we know we will see.  
17 Intro 2050 recognizes that the right to council law  
18 five-year phase-in, it recognizes the global pandemic  
19 of COVID-19 and how it has further exacerbated so  
20 many rent-burdened tenants, many of whom lost their  
21 income and lost their employment and have fallen  
22 behind in rent. So, I'm so proud of this day. I'm  
23 so proud of the movement from the Rights of Council  
24 coalition and so many organizations like CASA and  
25 Northwest Bronx and the Right to Council coalition,

2 the Homeless Can Stay Home coalition members,  
3 everyone that was really united around this  
4 particular issue and Intro 1529 would require the  
5 Office of Civil Justice Coordinator to collaborate  
6 with all of our sole community-based organizations  
7 and community partners in engaging and educating our  
8 tenants on their rights in housing court and  
9 reporting on their efforts. We know that the best  
10 way that we can get this information out is through  
11 comprehensive education and outreach, and it's one  
12 step for us to pass Legislation and codify the local  
13 law, but we also have to take it another step to make  
14 sure that New Yorker's are educated about the laws we  
15 pass and how it benefits them. I'm so grateful to  
16 you, Chair Steve Levin, thank you for being a  
17 relentless advocate for so many New Yorkers that are  
18 rent-burdened, that are facing eviction and  
19 harassment by landlords every day. We see those  
20 faces; we know that they are our constituents and we  
21 have to do everything possible to help them. So,  
22 thank you so much. Thank you, Council Member Mark  
23 Levine, for always being a great partner in this  
24 effort. I'm so proud to call you my friend and  
25 partner in this. We just need to do this ground-



2 breaking Legislation that relates to the rights of  
3 Council and balancing the scales of justice in  
4 housing court. So, I proudly vote I on today's  
5 agenda and encourage all of my colleagues on General  
6 Welfare to do the same. Thank you so much, Chair  
7 Levin.

8 CHAIR LEVIN: Thank you, Council Member  
9 Gibson, and with that, I'll turn it over to William  
10 Martin, Clerk, to call the roll.

11 LEGISLATIVE CLERK, WILLIAM MARTIN: Sure,  
12 good morning. William Martin, Committee Clerk, roll  
13 call vote, Committee on General Welfare on proposed  
14 Introductions 1529(A) and 2050(A), both items are  
15 coupled. Chair Levine, I mean, excuse me, Chair  
16 Levin.

17 CHAIR LEVIN: I vote I on all.

18 LEGISLATIVE CLERK, WILLIAM MARTIN:

19 Lander.

20 CM LANDER: With profound congratulations  
21 and gratitude to Council Members Levine and Gibson on  
22 this tremendous Legislation, its extension, and it's  
23 coming right on time. I enthusiastically vote I on  
24 all.

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2 LEGISLATIVE CLERK, WILLIAM MARTIN: Thank

3 you, Gibson.

4 CM GIBSON: I proudly vote I on all.

5 Thank you.

6 LEGISLATIVE CLERK, WILLIAM MARTIN:

7 Treyger.

8 CM TREYGER: I.

9 LEGISLATIVE CLERK, WILLIAM MARTIN:

10 Grodenchik.

11 CM GRODENCHIK: I. Give me one quick

12 second, hold on.

13 LEGISLATIVE CLERK, WILLIAM MARTIN:

14 Salamanca.

15 CM SALAMANCA: I vote I.

16 LEGISLATIVE CLERK, WILLIAM MARTIN: Thank

17 you. Darma Diaz.

18 CM DIAZ: As a housing advocate, I know

19 that housing is a right for all. I vote I.

20 LEGISLATIVE CLERK, WILLIAM MARTIN: Thank

21 you. Feliz.

22 CM FELIZ: I proudly vote I. Thank you.

23 LEGISLATIVE CLERK, WILLIAM MARTIN: Okay,

24 one moment. By a vote of eight in the affirmative,

25

2 zero in the negative, and no abstentions, both items  
3 have adopted by the Committee.

4 CHAIR LEVIN: Okay. Wonderful. I don't  
5 think we need to keep the roll open.

6 JOHANNA M. CASTRO: We do not. You can  
7 close.

8 CM LEVINE: Okay. What was the count  
9 again, Billy?

10 LEGISLATIVE CLERK, WILLIAM MARTIN:  
11 Eight, eight in the affirmative, zero in the  
12 negative, no abstentions.

13 CM LEVINE: I love it.

14 LEGISLATIVE CLERK, WILLIAM MARTIN:  
15 Congratulations.

16 CHAIR LEVIN: Sounds good.

17 VANESSA GIBSON: Thank you.

18 CHAIR LEVIN: Congratulations Council  
19 Member Levine and Council Member Gibson on a hard  
20 flat victory here on behalf of New Yorkers in need.  
21 I know how much work you both have put into this and  
22 I'm very, very grateful to you, and with that, this  
23 hearing is adjourned.

24

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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 May 30, 2021