



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 1810

Resolution calling on the New York City Police Department to refrain from using tasers on the mentally ill and disabled.

By Council Members James, Dickens, Gerson, Koppell, Mark-Viverito, Palma and Stewart

Whereas, Taser guns are weapons that release electrified darts intended to stun and temporarily paralyze a target; each dart can release up to 3,000 volts of electrical current to the body with painful effects lasting for about five seconds; and

Whereas, Tasers can be a positive alternative to lethal force when used by trained criminal justice personnel; and

Whereas, The New York City Police Department regularly uses tasers to control and capture harmful criminals without causing them serious physical harm; and

Whereas, The Police Patrol Guide outlines procedures for how officers should deal with emotionally disturbed persons (EDPs) and states that officers should safeguard mentally ill or emotionally disturbed persons who do not voluntarily seek medical assistance; and

Whereas, The New York City Police Department issued an interim order to all uniformed personnel in June of 2008, which described an “exception group,” meaning the types of individuals on whom tasers should not be used; and

Whereas, The list includes children, the elderly and pregnant women, and further instructs officers not to use tasers in situations where the subject may fall from an elevated surface; and

Whereas, New York City experienced a tragedy in September of 2008 when the police used a taser on Iman Morales, an emotionally disturbed person who stood naked on an elevated surface in Brooklyn and then

fell to his death; and

Whereas, The Iman Morales incident resulted from the improper use of a taser, which caused a death that could have been avoided; and

Whereas, The use of tasers should not be permitted on individuals with clear and evident mental illnesses, disabilities, or retardation except in a case where such individuals pose a clear threat; and

Whereas, Some organizations, like Amnesty International, believe studies have not adequately examined the impact of tasers on potentially at-risk individuals - such as people who have medical conditions, take prescription medications, are mentally ill or are under the influence of narcotics; and

Whereas, Mentally ill individuals should be added to the department's "exception group" and included as people on whom officers cannot use tasers; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of The City of New York calls on the New York City Police Department to refrain from using tasers on the mentally ill and disabled.

RMP
LS #6523
12/29/08