

Charter Revision Commission

Tuesday, June 23, 2026

5:00 p.m.

Staten Island University Hospital North

475 Seaview Avenue

Staten Island, NY 10305

Reported by: Paul Grasso

JOB NO: 8252552

A P P E A R A N C E S

List of Attendees:

Patrick Gaspard, Chair

Emma Wolfe, Vice Chair

Susan Kang, Secretary

Ruth Messinger, Commissioner

Theodore Moore, Commissioner

Carlina Rivera, Commissioner

Barika Williams, Commissioner

Kathryn Wylde, Commissioner

Marco Carrion, Commissioner

Raymond Miranda, Spanish Interpreter

Amanda Page-Hoongrajok, Expert

Martin Bernstein, Expert

JW/Josh Mason, Expert

Cheryl Williams, Public Attendee Testimony

Edward Brady, Public Attendee Testimony

Eugene Kim, Public Attendee Testimony

Eric Richardson, Public Attendee Testimony

Jeremy Gruber, Public Attendee Testimony

Coral Santos, Public Attendee Testimony

Danny Battista, Public Attendee Testimony

Samantha Wilkinson, Public Attendee Testimony

Melissa Caballero Umana [ph], Public Attendee
Testimony

A P P E A R A N C E S (Cont'd)

List of Attendees:

Julia Ricci, Public Attendee Testimony

Rob Richie, Public Attendee Testimony

Jon Paul Lupo, Government Affairs Professional

Stephen Louis, Center for New York City and State Law

Frank Morano, Council Member

Esther Rosario, Commissioner (by videoconference)

Marc Shaw, Commissioner (by videoconference)

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 MR. GASPARD: Good evening. Welcome to
3 the Public Hearing on the Commission on Government
4 Efficiency. My name is Patrick Gaspard. I am honored
5 to be the chair of this commission. We are here today
6 because New Yorkers deserve a government of the
7 possible -- one that is absolutely responsive but one
8 that's innovative at the same time.

9 A government that makes it possible to
10 build the urgent infrastructure that we need to
11 promote small business growth and development to make
12 the city as livable, but accessible as possible for
13 all.

14 The task that we are undertaking is a
15 review of the entire city charter to build a 21st
16 century government that we deserve, but we only have
17 an opportunity to make these changes if New Yorkers
18 themselves agree to them and vote for them at the
19 ballot box in November.

20 I know that I speak for all of my
21 public commissioners when I say that we're committed
22 to hearing from a broad cross section of New Yorkers.
23 We want to pursue the very best ideas that come
24 forward to us in testimony.

25 We've been fortunate now to be able to

1 engage with Manhattanites -- with our neighbors in the
2 Bronx. We've heard from committed and concerned New
3 Yorkers in Brooklyn. It's thrilling now to be able to
4 join you on a kind of, sort of rainy night in Staten
5 Island.

6 I want to reinforce the notion that
7 this is an independent, nonpartisan commission and we
8 are going to be guided by our judgment and by all of
9 our collective and shared values. Joining me in this
10 terribly important work are 14 extraordinary New
11 Yorkers who are committed to this process and
12 committed to the future of our city.

13 They are Vice Chair Emma Wolfe,
14 Secretary Susan Kang, Marco Carrion, Kapil Longani
15 [ph], Ruth Messinger, Theodore Moore, Carlina Rivera,
16 Marc Shaw, Barika Williams, Kathy Wylde.

17 Attending virtually tonight are
18 Commissioners Esther Rosario and Marc Shaw. And
19 absent tonight are three outstanding commissioners who
20 could not join us, Dawn Pinnock, Henry Garrido, and
21 Ana Oliveira.

22 Although I said that we are reviewing
23 the entire city charter, the commission is looking in
24 particular at the processes and procedures built into
25 our charter that can be updated to deliver a more

1 efficient government that serves all New Yorkers with
2 excellence.

3 Today we're focusing primarily on ideas
4 for saving for efficiencies -- saving from
5 efficiencies. We want to hear your ideas about how
6 making government more efficient will actually save
7 resources for all New Yorkers.

8 Maybe you're a government worker, and
9 have an innovative idea about how to improve a process
10 that you personally run. Maybe you've watched or
11 interacted with government services as a consumer of
12 those services for years and have noticed
13 inefficiencies that we could be looking into.

14 Maybe you are a small business owner
15 waiting for a permit and have a notion about how we
16 might just manage to speed that up.

17 Whatever your perspective may be, we're
18 excited to hear your ideas and to figure out how
19 together we can find savings from efficiency.

20 That said, while we welcome testimony
21 on all topics, I want to be clear that as a -- as a
22 consequence of being focused on that theme tonight,
23 there are some things that we're going to do to lift
24 up in advantage that -- that theme.

25 We're going to front load speakers who

1 have already made it clear that they would like to
2 provide testimony on that specific subject on their
3 interventions and innovations around it.

4 So both speakers who are in the room
5 and those who are online, who are clearly submitting
6 testimony on that subject will -- will be
7 foregrounded.

8 But we're going to do everything that
9 we can to make sure that we are able to hear from all
10 of you. If you have another idea about the New York
11 City Charter and its reform that's not specific to
12 that, you'll have an opportunity to testify, as well.

13 In addition to matters that have direct
14 charter impact, we've already heard from several
15 hundred New Yorkers who are just concerned about
16 accessibility, the speed of service, and effectiveness
17 of delivery, and they've made a number of
18 suggestions -- suggestions to us that are not charter
19 specific, but that will inform our direction of travel
20 and the mayor's direction of travel as we think about
21 long-term innovations in New York.

22 So I want to get right into tonight's
23 testimony, but we're privileged -- before we hear from
24 the public, we're privileged to have experts who need
25 to speak on a few important topics.

1 So testifying first at the top of this
2 hearing about reporting requirements and public bonds,
3 we'll hear from Stephen Louis, counsel to the Center
4 for New York City and State Law. Jon Paul Lupo,
5 founder of Arete Public Affairs and former director of
6 intergovernmental affairs for Mayor Bill de Blasio.

7 And testifying about the city's rainy
8 day fund, which is a subject that's come up in
9 previous charter commission hearings that we've had,
10 will be Amanda Page-Hoongrajok, a professor of
11 economics at FIT, Martin Bernstein, PhD candidate in
12 economics at Harvard University, and JW Mason,
13 associate professor of economics at John Jay College
14 and CUNY.

15 They'll each have five minutes to
16 present their testimony, followed by some brief
17 questions for the commission. And then we will open
18 up the -- the engagement for members of the public.

19 If you are testifying tonight in person
20 or online, please observe that we have a bright red
21 shine clock that will govern your testimony and hold
22 you to three minutes.

23 We -- I -- I won't allow you to go
24 further in three minutes, but you can get a whole lot
25 in in that time period.

1 We're hoping to be able to invite as
2 much testimony as possible, and every single evening
3 that we've had these hearings, unfortunately there are
4 many fine New Yorkers who've wanted to address the
5 commission who have not been able to, and they've been
6 compelled then to submit their testimony online.

7 I suspect tonight we're probably going
8 to get through everybody, but I'm still going to
9 really guard zealously those -- those three minutes
10 that -- that you've been given.

11 So I'd like to, you know, start with
12 our expert testimony and -- and then we'll turn this
13 open to the public. So with -- with that, I'm going
14 to invite our experts on reporting requirements and
15 public bonds, Jon Paul Lupo and Stephen Louis, at the
16 top.

17 And with -- with any of our experts, if
18 I mispronounced your name, I'm sure you will politely
19 correct me. This man we know. JP, how are you doing?
20 Good evening. You get to go first.

21 MR. LUPO: Good evening, Chair Gaspard,
22 members of the commission -- many of whom were
23 colleagues and friends in City Hall. My name is Jon
24 Paul Lupo, lifelong New Yorker and government affairs
25 professional.

1 Previously served as director of City
2 Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Affairs in
3 City Hall. I want to offer two proposals that I think
4 go directly at the commission's mandate reforming how
5 the City manages reporting requirements and
6 eliminating the surety bond requirements for public
7 officers.

8 First mandated reporting -- the City is
9 subject to more than 2,000 legally mandated reports.
10 I'm not here as a skeptic of government reporting. I
11 helped pass many of these bills as City Legislative
12 Affairs director, and they serve a real purpose.

13 They force agencies to gather data,
14 service problems, demonstrate accountability, and
15 they're also often the right first step before more
16 permanent action to give agencies the opportunity to
17 study an issue and inform whether legislation or
18 rulemaking is even warranted.

19 But effectiveness requires discipline,
20 and I feel the city has lost it. Right now, the City
21 Council is a one-way ratchet. It passes new
22 requirements every session with no mechanism to retire
23 old ones.

24 Agencies end up spread thin across
25 hundreds or thousands of mandates, many of them

1 outdated, duplicative, or never designed to be
2 permanent.

3 The same staff responsible for housing
4 inspections, benefit applications, and emergencies are
5 being asked to satisfy reporting requirements that no
6 longer serve anyone.

7 City agencies collectively spend at
8 least 125,000 hours a year on mandated reports.
9 That's the equivalent of nearly 70 full-time employees
10 who do nothing but file paperwork. A few examples of
11 some of the old reports.

12 There's still a report requirement in
13 the law that is about remote learning that was meant
14 for the COVID period. There is a controller's report
15 that requires you -- them to report on syncing funds.

16 If you've never heard of that, it's an
17 archaic 19th century debt mechanism that's hardly used
18 anymore. And 311 still has to report on the number of
19 calls they get of people asking them for phone
20 numbers. These are not the exception.

21 Nearly 400 reports have been quietly
22 discontinued in practice, but hundreds more that
23 should be dead are still being completed by agencies.
24 I can speak to this from direct experience.

25 When I served as director of City

1 Legislative Affairs, my staff along with the law
2 departments and council staff put together a list of
3 reports that we thought would be right for
4 elimination.

5 The staffs agreed, and when it got to
6 the time for the council leadership to pass
7 legislation eliminating those reports, we were told
8 no -- we would eliminate none of them. So it is not
9 sufficient for there to be a voluntary process. We
10 think charter change is actually the right way to do
11 it.

12 There are two fixes here. First is to
13 flip the requirement of the current commission on
14 reports. Right now it defaults to recommendations for
15 report elimination, but the council has to act before
16 those reports are eliminated.

17 We want to flip it and say reports that
18 the commission sends, which is City Council members
19 of, should be eliminated by default unless the council
20 extends them. We'd also like there to be an automatic
21 sunset in any new report.

22 I would propose four years so that you
23 ensure you're on a new City Council who can take a
24 fresh look at those reporting requirements and
25 determine whether they're still needed or need to be

1 extended.

2 The second issue is surety bonds for
3 public officers. The charter requires officials who
4 handle city funds to post a a surety bond for faithful
5 performance of their duties. This is a requirement
6 dating back in the early 1800's.

7 It made sense when public officers had
8 relatively unchecked access to city money and personal
9 financial accountability was one of the few
10 safeguards. That role doesn't exist anymore.

11 The city now has controller audits,
12 DOI, the conflict of interest board, and modern
13 financial controls, and the city pays the bond premium
14 itself right now, gutting the original rational for
15 personal accountability. What remains is a procedural
16 trap.

17 In 2022, several city officials fail to
18 properly file their bonds, making their offices
19 legally vacant. And it took emergency action by the
20 state legislature to -- to correct that. It's not
21 accountability right now. It's just administrative
22 chaos. The federal government eliminated this in
23 1972.

24 I don't think the state needs to
25 continue with that requirement. With that, I am done.

1 Hope I hit your time.

2 MR. GASPARD: Fantastic. Thank you,
3 JP.

4 Mr. Louis?

5 MR. LOUIS: Chair Gaspard and members
6 of the Charter Revision Commission, my name is Stephen
7 Louis. I'm counsel to the Center for New York City
8 and State Law and distinguished adjunct professor of
9 law at New York Law School.

10 Prior to taking this position in 2024,
11 I was chief of the legal counsel division member of
12 the executive of New York City Law Department.

13 As legal counsel chief, I participated
14 in discussions regarding the 2010 Charter Revision
15 Commission's creation of the -- of the Report and
16 Advisory Board Review Commission, RABRC, which was
17 created to ensure that reporting requirements in
18 advisory bodies to be reviewed on a regular basis to
19 assess their continued usefulness.

20 And subsequently, I was involved in the
21 implementation of these charter mandated processes as
22 set forth in Charter Section 1113. There's no
23 question that legally mandated reports and advisory
24 commissions perform an important, even essential role
25 in the city government.

1 Agencies should be held accountable and
2 reporting requirements can ensure that both those who
3 oversee those agencies such as the council and the
4 public at large have access to the data that drive
5 these agencies actions and indicate success or
6 failure.

7 Agencies can also benefit from advisory
8 commissions that can look at issues from a different
9 perspective and deliver alternative approaches to the
10 provision of government services.

11 However, it's also clear as -- as just
12 been stated -- sometimes these reports and advisory
13 commissions outlive their usefulness sometimes because
14 the report or commission is duplicative of other
15 reports and commissions, sometimes because changed
16 circumstances have so change the mandates of the
17 targeted agencies that the reports or commissions are
18 no longer relevant to their mission.

19 Agencies end up spending time and
20 resources that could be better spent in other ways.
21 RABRC has served well in reviewing reports and
22 advisory commissions and recommending their
23 termination.

24 There have been at times when the City
25 Council has accepted these recommendations. But it

1 appears the process has not fully yielded the desired
2 results and relatively few reports and commissions
3 have actually been eliminated. I'm not going to
4 suggest specific reports and commissions that should
5 be ended.

6 We heard a couple of examples just now,
7 but I do suggest that Charter Division Commission
8 consider approaches to either strengthen the RABRC
9 process or change how reports and advisory commissions
10 are created in the first place.

11 These changes would not take away from
12 the City Council its ultimate authority to mandate
13 these reports and commissions. It might change the
14 process just enough to ensure that these reports and
15 conditions remain relevant and meaningful well after
16 their original mandate.

17 So one approach would be to make the --
18 as was suggested -- make the RABRC determination
19 final. Make that the conclusion that eliminates the
20 report or advisory commission.

21 The council could then upon due
22 consideration pass a new local law reinstating the
23 report or commission, but requiring a new local law
24 would give the City Council more of an opportunity to
25 reconsider the original mandate and/or modify it to be

1 more relevant rather than simply continue the prior
2 requirement.

3 And one another alternative -- again,
4 as mentioned -- would be to continue to process but
5 also require that any local law mandating a report or
6 advisory commission have an automatic sunset of a
7 period of years.

8 Four years was suggested. It could be
9 five. It could be any number of years, but it then
10 leads to a situation that all reports get a new hard
11 look at regular intervals. I'm sure there are plenty
12 of other approaches to improve the current process,
13 but this is an issue I think should be looked at
14 closely. Thank you.

15 MR. GASPARD: Thank you both JP and
16 Stephen. At the top of this hearing, I said that we
17 were determined to build a 21st century government and
18 I'm impressed that both of you are going help drag
19 local laws to at least the turn of the last century.
20 So we're making some progress here. I'm going to open
21 this up to questions from our commissioners. Ruth?

22 MS. MESSINGER: Hi. Ruth Messinger.
23 So having served and knowing some of what we're
24 talking about, it makes perfect sense. I guess what I
25 want -- and I love the notion of you get to remove and

1 the council has to decide whether to put it back.

2 I would also support sunsets for some
3 of these. Let me ask the devil -- the devil's
4 question, which is, what space does this give for
5 somebody or some sub-agency to sort of go berserk and,
6 like, remove a lot of things that aren't superfluous?
7 That's the only thing I worry about.

8 MR. LUPO: So I think there's a couple
9 of checks on that. As we mentioned, the commission
10 itself, I believe has City Council participation. So
11 they have the opportunity to influence that process of
12 which reports are put on the list.

13 And I -- and I think the ultimate
14 check; right -- and why I agree with Steve -- I don't
15 think this really takes away from council authority
16 is -- as you all know, that council can simply pass
17 the reporting requirement again if they think it's
18 important.

19 Maybe they ratchet up the pressure or
20 they make the report more frequent. If the agencies
21 play games, there's a lot of power the council has to
22 dial that back.

23 And I -- I actually think from a --
24 just a pure resource perspective, if the council -- if
25 some of these old reports got cleared out and these

1 agencies had more resources to devote to doing some of
2 this work, they might be more resistant to some new
3 reporting requirements.

4 I think some of the pressure that we
5 saw in our negotiations with them, and I -- I'm only
6 an expert up here because I learned from Steve for six
7 years in City Hall -- let's just be clear.

8 But some of the -- what we saw as large
9 resistance from agencies to adding new requirements.
10 If a lot of the old stuff was cleared out, council
11 members might have an easier time convincing
12 commissioners and deputy commissioners to engage in
13 some new work. Some of that work I did with Council
14 Member Rivera. Maybe I'm wrong.

15 MR. LOUIS: I'll just add to that that
16 in my experience when the RABRC commission did its
17 work, that there -- I don't recall ever an agency just
18 trying to get rid of the report because it didn't feel
19 like doing it. It was always based on serious
20 considerations of the ability to do the report and the
21 need --

22 MS. MESSINGER: No. I assumed that. I
23 was just looking for a check and balance in case
24 something -- but I hear what you're saying.

25 MR. GASPARD: Please, Council Member.

1 MS. B. WILLIAMS: Hi. Thank you for
2 being here. It was -- it was a pleasure to work with
3 you as to serve with Frank -- just a quick shout out.

4 I wanted to ask -- maybe I'm, like,
5 projecting a radical action, but did you imply like to
6 start over -- like, how would we eliminate the
7 reporting requirements considering there are 2,000 of
8 them?

9 Like, what do we deem or prioritize as
10 the most important; right? Some of that reporting is
11 significant because of accountability, but you're
12 right in that the amount of time it's taking and the
13 capacity from City Hall does sound extreme.

14 MR. LUPO: No. I don't think -- I
15 don't think we need to start over. I think we just
16 need to give the existing commission the ability to
17 eliminate the reports it deems "eliminatable" with
18 some authority.

19 So I -- you know, I mentioned a few
20 that I think are easily "eliminatable", but I don't --
21 I don't think we have to cut them in half or a third.
22 I think the commission should look at that and make
23 recommendations, and over time weed out some of the
24 19th and 18th century ones, as we move closer to the
25 21st century.

1 MR. LOUIS: And I would just add that
2 we've had this commission issue reports that have been
3 rejected by the City Council. So there already is
4 somewhere a list of reports that are ripe for
5 elimination.

6 MS. WYLDE: The commission is in the
7 charter? The commission was created in the charter.

8 MR. LUPO: Yeah.

9 MS. WYLDE: And that was to try and
10 curb reporting and it didn't.

11 MR. LUPO: I'm sorry?

12 MS. WYLDE: That was to try and cut
13 down on unnecessary reports --

14 MR. LUPO: Yeah.

15 MS. WYLDE: And it didn't work.

16 MR. LUPO: It -- it was well
17 intentioned, but it turned out that the City Council
18 did not perhaps live up to what we anticipated in
19 terms of going along with those recommendations.

20 MR. GASPARD: Other questions,
21 comments? I see you Marco.

22 MR. MOORE: I'm wondering if there's
23 any concerns about, as we look to eliminate, you know,
24 duplicative and no longer relevant reports by
25 potentially adding things in there about sunseting

1 reports, do we then create a -- an even more arduous,
2 duplicative process of having to pass legislation
3 again? And if there's any concerns about that?

4 MR. LOUIS: I personally think that in
5 terms of sunseting -- I mean, there are many laws
6 that have sunset provisions, and for better or worse,
7 it always give City Council an opportunity to revisit
8 an issue and strengthen or weaken or change the
9 requirements one way or the other. But I don't think
10 it's necessarily that burdensome for the City Council
11 to do that.

12 MR. GASPARD: Marco?

13 MR. CARRION: Yeah. I appreciate your
14 testimony, but I guess the question I have -- which is
15 close to Ruth's question -- is how is this not seen as
16 diluting or eroding the council's regulatory oversight
17 powers or statutory authority?

18 MR. LOUIS: I would say first of all,
19 City Council itself has obviously a lot of power to
20 investigate and oversee agencies.

21 I mean, any -- any information -- I
22 mean, with a handful of exceptions perhaps -- but in
23 general, any information that City Council wants, it
24 can get. It doesn't necessarily need a reporting
25 mechanism to get that information.

1 Although the reporting mechanism
2 can -- if well considered, can provide information on
3 a regular basis both for the City Council and for
4 other people -- the general public and other
5 officials, et cetera.

6 So I think there are plenty of
7 mechanisms where the city can still get the
8 information it needs. And again, I think both of
9 us -- the idea isn't to just say, oh, the mayor should
10 be able to not do any reporting.

11 It's -- it's that there be careful
12 consideration of whether specific reports have a
13 meaningful purpose.

14 MR. LUPO: And I would just add the
15 ultimate authority the council has is to mandate the
16 report. They will be able to do that.

17 After however many years it sunsets,
18 they can do it at five years, and do that same report
19 over again. And I think that is -- the bedrock
20 authority is still there. It's not being changed.

21 The council has it. They'll use it
22 aggressively, I expect, but at least if a council
23 member who was particularly interested in information
24 is termed out -- is gone -- maybe the council's not
25 interested in that report anymore.

1 And right now the default is just to
2 keep doing it and producing information in a way that
3 may even go into a black hole. You can tell 400
4 reports just don't get produced anymore, but they're
5 still in the books, so.

6 MS. WOLFE: Hi, there. It's great to
7 see you. Just very quickly. The testimonies were
8 great. Quick question or request and then an
9 editorial comment.

10 The question or request might be for
11 you -- might be for staff, but I do think it would be
12 great for the commission to have on record some
13 specific examples -- perhaps an agency, and I think
14 that will tell a pretty incredible story.

15 And then the editorial comment -- and I
16 don't know if this is still the case -- but I would
17 just say that there was a phenomenon at least when I
18 was in city government of sort of diluting a piece of
19 legislation that was inoperable or that was opposed by
20 the administration but for the aim of sort of
21 politically satisfying City Council member or whatever
22 set of folks in the -- in the council who were
23 advocates.

24 It was sort of -- reporting became the
25 thing that you could easily do. And for those of us

1 who weren't in agencies who didn't have to do the
2 reporting, it seemed like a fine compromise that had
3 very little to do with the actual operations of the
4 agency. So I would just add that as an editorial
5 comment.

6 MR. LUPO: I think that's absolutely
7 right. I -- and I think cleaning out some of the old
8 reports will give those agencies the ability to add
9 new ones on as we -- I think we're all in agreement,
10 not just for political reasons, but for substantive
11 reasons, you want to study these issues before you
12 regulate or pass a rule or anything.

13 So it is -- it is definitely an
14 important tool to continue to make available. For
15 sure.

16 MS. B. WILLIAMS: Excellent testimony.
17 Just really appreciate it. Maybe a question -- and if
18 it's not in your testimony -- on understanding what
19 aspects the committee is reviewing -- cutting reports
20 or recommending reducing reports for -- whether or not
21 there is any, like, equity lens analysis,
22 understanding disparate impact analysis, thinking
23 about some of these things that are now a part of city
24 government that maybe didn't exist back when the
25 committee was originally formulated.

1 So that's one question. And then the
2 second is you -- Stephen, you mentioned advisory
3 boards and wanting to understand -- the City and
4 agencies do advisory boards feels like all the time.
5 Is there a threshold of when the advisory boards would
6 fall within RABC [sic] or are there -- are there
7 certain ones that are outside of it?

8 MR. LOUIS: Okay -- first and then --

9 MR. LUPO: Sure.

10 MR. LOUIS: On the advisory
11 commissions, I don't have a list on me but, I mean, I
12 think it's pretty clear looking through the charter
13 and other provisions of law that there are advisory
14 commissions that are affiliated or associated --
15 associated with specific agencies.

16 And I think those are the ones that
17 there aren't necessarily a ton of them. I think the
18 reporting is more of an issue, but to the extent they
19 exist, again, they may not be needed because the
20 agency -- since they are advisory -- the agency of
21 course is not obligated to take any of the advice.

22 Nevertheless, there is a certain use of
23 resources involved in getting the -- those commissions
24 up and running, making sure they're staffed, and so
25 on.

1 So if the agency doesn't find the
2 potential outcome of the commission useful, I think it
3 at least could be considered whether that advisory
4 commission serves a role.

5 And again with these proposals, it's
6 not up to the agency to make that decision. It's up
7 to the agency to point that out and then let someone
8 else decide whether that's true or whether the
9 commission may scope that the advisory commission
10 still has some --

11 MR. LUPO: And I was just --

12 MR. GASPARD: -- ask you to be brief in
13 response JP, because we need to move on.

14 MR. LUPO: Yeah. Of course. I don't
15 know the standards in the RABRC now, but I think
16 certainly should the commissioners decide to take this
17 up, I would encourage you to look at what those
18 standards are. And if there are new things to be
19 added, I think it would be great to put new measures
20 in for how the --

21 MR. GASPARD: Perfect. Thank you both
22 for your testimony. That was precise and insightful.
23 Really appreciate you. So I'm going to mix up the
24 queue a bit. I know that we have our next panel,
25 which will be a virtual panel, on hold.

1 I'm going to ask Amanda Page, Martin
2 Bernstein, and -- JW Mason to please pause before you
3 put your cameras on, because we have been joined by
4 Council Member Frank Morano, and I'd like to invite
5 him to testify.

6 And -- and as you come up, Council
7 Member, I just want to appreciate just how committed
8 you've been to this process.

9 You joined us virtually last night when
10 we were in Long Island City, and you shared some
11 really important directional guidance on how we might
12 consider the role that the City Council needs to be
13 able to play in appointments to community boards.

14 And you gave us some really helpful --
15 and one might even think obvious -- guidance in
16 suggesting that it might be helpful to make the
17 community board maps contiguous with City Council
18 districts. So really appreciate your ongoing
19 engagement with this commission.

20 MR. MORANO: Well, thank you, Chair.
21 And it's great to have all of you guys here in Staten
22 Island. Welcome to Staten Island. Especially nice to
23 see my old colleague, former Council Member Rivera,
24 who we miss greatly in the City Council.

25 I have testified before every charter

1 revision commission since 2002, with a variety of
2 ideas and suggestions, most of which end up being
3 ignored. But I'm still here, and I have a great deal
4 of respect for the job that you're doing.

5 It's not exactly glamorous and it
6 involves going to every corner of this city. So it
7 means a lot to us to have you here on Staten Island,
8 because a lot of Staten Islanders feel that our voices
9 aren't usually heard by those that get to make
10 decisions.

11 Now, in past commissions when they come
12 to visit Staten Island, usually I bring some sort of
13 unique Staten Island treat -- an Italian ice or pizza
14 or bagels.

15 Unfortunately, due to the work of a
16 predecessor commission, we're not allowed to do that
17 anymore. So I did print out a list of nearby
18 restaurants and establishments that you may want to
19 check out after tonight's hearing that I guarantee you
20 will not be disappointed by.

21 That being said, I printed out for you
22 a little bit more detailed version of my testimony
23 yesterday on the community boards and I wanted to
24 focus a bit tonight. I'm happy to answer any
25 questions about that.

1 But I wanted to focus a bit tonight on
2 electoral reform. You know, the charter revision
3 commission of 2017 and 2018 -- it was a two-year
4 commission. They gave this city rank choice voting.

5 They did it, though, in a very odd
6 manner -- special elections and primary elections
7 only. And I think it's great that New York City has
8 moved forward with ranked choice voting and it's great
9 that New Yorkers have eight years worth of experience
10 learning about it, participating in it.

11 But it has produced a very confusing
12 system for the voters where we essentially have three
13 different systems of elections -- maybe four if you
14 count other types of elections.

15 But we have non-partisan ranked choice
16 voting elections for specials, closed primary ranked
17 choice voting elections for primaries, and then
18 general elections with no ranked choice voting. And
19 if you're the voter, a lot of times it feels like you
20 need a decoder ring to determine how you vote in any
21 given election. It's not efficient.

22 It ends up having the -- every citizen
23 advocacy commission -- the Board of Elections --
24 individual elected officials -- candidates -- having
25 to spend a lot more money, resources, and time

1 educating voters just about how to vote in each
2 election.

3 So there's a couple of suggestions that
4 I've offered for electoral reform that are -- that are
5 very bold and probably not necessarily something that
6 you're going to do if this is only a one-year
7 commission.

8 But one which I think is fairly basic,
9 which I think would go a long way towards mitigating
10 voter confusion and adding a level of simplicity is
11 simply to extend ranked choice voting to the general
12 election.

13 We saw, particularly in Staten Island
14 last year -- and this is not a -- not -- this is not a
15 partisan observation, but there are partisan outcomes
16 that come with this observation.

17 We saw scores of Republicans and
18 conservatives who couldn't stand Andrew Cuomo -- they
19 blame him for everything from the nursing home scandal
20 to cashless bail, to congestion pricing -- you name
21 it.

22 We saw scores of Republicans and
23 conservatives running to the polls to try to vote for
24 Andrew Cuomo even though they couldn't stand him
25 because they believed that voting for the Republican

1 candidate that year would've splintered the vote and
2 allowed a candidate that they really disliked to slip
3 in with a plurality.

4 Obviously, the mayor won with a
5 majority. So those fears turned out not to be -- not
6 to be worthy, but that was a very real fear in voters'
7 minds.

8 And it was a rational fear because with
9 this first past the post electoral system with no
10 ranked choice voting, it encourages strategic voting.

11 Voters should be voting for the
12 candidate that they want to vote for, not
13 strategically voting or pressuring certain candidates
14 to drop out.

15 With ranked choice voting, you have a
16 situation where voters are free to vote for whomever
17 they want, and if that person doesn't win, their
18 second choice vote, who they may like a little
19 less -- that person may have an opportunity to win.

20 So for simplicity's sake, it matches
21 the system of specials and primary, and just for all
22 the reasons that rank choice voting makes sense for
23 the special and the primary, I would encourage you to
24 strongly consider putting that on the ballot this
25 year.

1 And if you end up choosing to be a
2 two-year commission, which, if you look at some of the
3 successful charter revision commissions that we've
4 had -- namely the Pritt [ph] Schwarz Commission in the
5 late '80's, and the 2018 Commission that was chaired
6 by Gail Benjamin, the work of the two-year commissions
7 tends to be not only much more comprehensive, but it
8 tends to be taken a bit more seriously by the public,
9 especially in this era under the last administration
10 where it seemed like they were pushing through charter
11 revision commissions just to stop other questions from
12 being on the ballot.

13 So I would encourage you to explore the
14 possibility of a two-year commission to look not only
15 at all these great efficiency areas, but to look at
16 a -- a broad look at electoral reform.

17 MR. GASPARD: Fantastic. Council
18 Member, thank you for your testimony. I will say that
19 while we are disappointed not to have our Italian
20 ices, we -- we are impressed with the listing prepared
21 for us and we're grateful for the provocation that you
22 bring in your suggestion about the general election.

23 And it will not surprise you to know
24 that your recommendation of an extended life for a
25 commission is near to the heart of Ruth Messinger

1 here. So I'd like to invite questions, comments from
2 the commission starting with your former colleague on
3 the council.

4 MR. MORANO: Easy questions only, as I
5 hope a former colleague would -- would expect.

6 MS. RIVERA: I just -- I wanted to ask
7 about the community boards. Specifically, what would
8 you like to see the commission take on? What do you
9 think are some of the challenges or some of the issues
10 that you hope to rectify?

11 MR. MORANO: Sure. So there's three
12 areas that I spell out in my testimony. One, I think,
13 is very easy and could be done tomorrow. Two may
14 require a little bit more work.

15 The -- the one area which I think is
16 the most urgent need of reform is right now we have a
17 framework where the borough president appoints all the
18 members of the community board.

19 Half are based on the recommendation of
20 a council member, but there's no mandate that the
21 council member gets to appoint anybody. So if you
22 have a borough president that just doesn't like a
23 council member's picks, they simply don't act.

24 We see that in Staten Island. I've
25 heard that from my colleagues in Queens, and we've

1 seen -- as I've talked to a lot of my colleagues about
2 this, and it's supported by a majority of the
3 council -- we've seen a lot of other instances of
4 borough presidents almost afraid to act.

5 One colleague brought up that -- the
6 fact that there was a troublesome community board
7 member that he would love to get rid of, but the
8 borough president in that particular borough was
9 afraid to get rid of him because that borough
10 president happened to be white, and this happened to
11 be a community board member of color.

12 And that borough president didn't like
13 the perception of removing a board member. So this
14 council member said to me, "If I could make binding
15 appointments, I would just replace this community
16 board member."

17 But it has a lot more to do with
18 representing communities and neighborhoods than it
19 does reflecting any one or two people's political
20 desires. The council members, as you know, having
21 served admirably for eight years -- we are the closest
22 people to what's going on in the neighborhoods. We
23 have to fight for our little sector of our borough.

24 The borough president has a different
25 mandate. They're looking out for what's best for the

1 borough as a whole.

2 It's not that they don't necessarily
3 have the interest of a given council district or
4 community district at heart, but they just are maybe
5 not as familiar with certain neighborhoods.

6 They don't necessarily know all the
7 activists, the organizers -- but they just have a
8 different mandate under the charter. And it would be
9 great if you had half the members appointed by the
10 borough president and half bindingly appointed by the
11 local council member.

12 I think that would offer not only a
13 diversity of gender and ethnicity and age as a lot of
14 other reforms to the community board have already
15 brought, but it would offer a diversity of experience
16 and a diversity of -- of worldview.

17 The other recommendations, which I
18 think may require a little bit more study -- and if
19 it's a two-year commission, I think are worth
20 exploring -- is one is making the community districts
21 coterminous with the council districts.

22 If you look here in Staten Island, we
23 have three community districts and three council
24 districts. So it makes sense to just have three and
25 three.

1 But instead, I have a portion of two
2 community districts, so I'm sending staff to two
3 community board meetings. Council Member Carr has a
4 portion of three community districts.

5 He's sending staff to three community
6 districts, and it adds a level of duplication and
7 redundancy that I think could easily be avoided. Now,
8 it becomes a little bit troublesome, because there are
9 59 community districts and 51 community boards --
10 excuse me -- 51 council districts.

11 So how do you exactly merge -- that
12 requires a bit of study to make them coterminous. But
13 in the long run, I think it's much more efficient and
14 much more beneficial for both the council members and
15 the people there to -- to do that.

16 Now, the last thing on the community
17 board front that I'll mention -- that I hope this
18 commission will consider -- is undoing the work of a
19 prior commission.

20 Now, I happen to be for term limits.
21 I -- I owe my job to term limits, but I -- I would be
22 for it even if I didn't have a rooting interest.

23 But I think there's a big difference
24 between term limiting people who have a six-figure job
25 that scores of people want versus term limiting

1 volunteers, particularly on boards where it's often
2 difficult to recruit.

3 In 2017, the charter revision
4 commission put on the ballot and the voters adopted
5 term limits for community board members. Those term
6 limits begin to take effect next year and the
7 following year.

8 And I know developers all over the city
9 that are salivating at the prospect of going into
10 these community boards and running rough shot over
11 inexperienced board members.

12 I think the decision to term limit
13 community board members was shortsighted. While I'm
14 all for the concept of term limits in practice, this
15 is going to lead to inexperienced board members not
16 knowing what questions to ask developers, not knowing
17 how to stand up to developers, not even in some cases
18 knowing what provisions are in the charter to stop
19 them from seeking certain variances.

20 Not knowing the difference between when
21 an application has to go before the Board of Standard
22 and Appeals versus the City Planning Commission.

23 That only comes with the experience of
24 being on the -- on the community board. So I hope you
25 guys will take another look at that. I -- I think

1 that has the potential to be disastrous come next
2 year. Thank you for the question.

3 MR. GASPARD: Thank you, Councilman.
4 Other questions? I see Barika, and I see Ruth. Let's
5 go in -- in that order and then -- and Theodore has a
6 question, and those will be the last three.

7 I'm going to ask both the questioners
8 and the respondent to be brief because I know that you
9 want us to hear from your neighbors and constituents
10 on the island.

11 MR. MORANO: Absolutely. And I'll be
12 back. I'll be back next time you're on Staten Island.

13 MS. B. WILLIAMS: Appreciate your
14 testimony, Council Member, especially all this pieces
15 on community boards.

16 Would love to hear or get in writing
17 from you your thoughts on some more details on the
18 thoughts around community boards and coterminous, as
19 you mentioned -- right -- the 59 versus 51 council
20 districts to community boards, but then also 200 and
21 something ZIP codes and one set coincides with ZIP
22 codes and the others do not.

23 And then we've got the 60-plus assembly
24 districts and the 26 senate districts. So we've got a
25 map in the city of political districts and

1 jurisdictions that none of which overlap with each
2 other.

3 And in Staten Island it's three and
4 three, but pretty much anywhere else in the city it
5 doesn't line up. So just would love your thoughts now
6 or later on how to think about that.

7 MR. MORANO: So I get into that a bit
8 in my written testimony. This was also explored a bit
9 by the 1975 Charter Commission, but I'd love to stay
10 in touch with you offline and give you a little bit
11 more insight of how I think that might work on a
12 practical level.

13 But I recognize it's a complicated
14 problem. It's not as easy as it may seem, which is
15 why I think if it's a two-year commission, you'll be
16 able to hear testimony from experts and others that
17 have studied this that might be able to make that a
18 bit more practical.

19 MS. MESSINGER: Thank you, Council
20 Member. You're, in many ways, a man after my own
21 heart. Thank you for talking about the two-year
22 commission and thank you for remembering the first
23 Schwarz Commission, which is where we dramatically
24 restructured the government with the collaboration of
25 the commissioners.

1 I have, like, three comments, and I
2 think most of you have to leave them for offline.

3 MR. MORANO: Sure.

4 MS. MESSINGER: I'll make them -- one
5 is you talked about ranked choice voting. We heard
6 several witnesses advocating for open primaries
7 without party registration in New York. I'd love to
8 hear your thoughts on that very quickly.

9 On the appointment issue, I'm sensitive
10 to what you say, but I also experienced, having been
11 both a council member and borough president, that the
12 prerogative of the borough president was to actually
13 look at what the -- what and who the council members
14 proposed and try to be sure that there was a
15 collaborative community board emerging.

16 And the notion of three or four or even
17 two independent appointers who might not necessarily
18 be working together where one doesn't have oversight
19 can produce a pretty wacky community board.

20 And then the third -- and then you can
21 figure out whatever you want on the coterminous thing,
22 which sounds so lovely, at least in my experience in
23 the parts of the city that I know well, including, but
24 not limited to Manhattan, there is a desperate need
25 for some neighborhoods to feel coherent and

1 coterminous with themselves even though they don't
2 happen to have the magic numbers to produce a council
3 district.

4 And so the strength of community boards
5 was that they could be a place that could be about
6 let's -- this is an obvious example -- of the
7 Dominican community in northern Manhattan, even though
8 it didn't make for a -- didn't make for a district
9 that the Justice Department would accept, but it made
10 for community board that allowed that community --

11 MR. MORANO: Yeah. I -- I'll work
12 backwards. One on the co-terminality aspect, it -- it
13 is an area that requires some study. And I realize
14 it's a concept that sounds a bit simpler than it would
15 be to implement in practice.

16 I do think if the commission were to
17 start looking into the benefits of co-terminality, I
18 think you'd find a lot of these neighborhoods
19 well-represented because of the increased attention
20 they'd be getting from council member offices who are
21 no longer having to staff two and three community
22 districts.

23 But again, that's why I think maybe a
24 two-year commission makes the most sense. Obviously,
25 nobody has your perspective except for Gale Brewer

1 [ph] who -- she and I debated this just yesterday
2 about the challenges of appointing someone as a
3 borough president versus nominating them as a council
4 member.

5 What I would say about binding
6 appointments for council members -- it seems so unfair
7 for somebody who has the best interest of their
8 neighborhood to at heart, who only wants to volunteer,
9 who only wants to contribute in a meaningful way --
10 just because the council member that's nominating them
11 might not be on the same page politically as the
12 borough president to end up in this limbo where they
13 never even get told if they're selected for the
14 community board or not, which is the case here on
15 Staten Island.

16 Lastly, as far as open primaries, I --
17 I'm going to respect Chair Gaspard's desire to have me
18 give a brief answer. I do support non-partisan
19 elections, but I support the kind of non-partisan
20 elections like we already have in New York City, like,
21 special elections -- like, the one that I was elected
22 in.

23 I -- I support every taxpayer getting
24 to participate in the meaningful way. Unfortunately,
25 what we've seen with the people -- most of the people

1 that have used that term open primaries to you in the
2 prior commissions is two things.

3 One is the system that they're putting
4 forward is top two, which is what they have in
5 California. And the fact of the matter is it's been a
6 disaster in California. If you look at the fact that
7 in Los Angeles voters are getting to choose between
8 two Democrats, that's going to have a depressive
9 effect on turnout.

10 No right-leaning voter has much of an
11 incentive to show up not only in the mayor's race, but
12 in the down ballot races. It -- there are 150
13 democracies in the world. There's not one that uses
14 top two, and there's a reason for that.

15 I mean, even the creator of top two in
16 California just this week came out and said, given
17 what we've seen over the course of the last 17 years,
18 it was a mistake to implement it.

19 It leads to, in several instances, in
20 Republican districts, two Democrats making the final
21 round because there are a lot of Republican candidates
22 and only a few Democratic candidates, and in some
23 cases the same situation with two Republicans making
24 the final round in Democratic districts.

25 So I -- I think top two is a flawed

1 model. Also, I think it's important to look at what
2 open primaries mean. Both the Supreme Court and
3 political scientists -- they use the term open
4 primaries to have a partisan primary where the
5 Republicans nominate a candidate, Democrats nominated
6 a candidate, but any voter can participate in.

7 This -- that's not really what the
8 folks that are proposing what they call open primaries
9 are talking about. They're talking about one unitary
10 primary election, like a non-partisan election, where
11 both candidates -- where the top two candidates then
12 advance to the second round.

13 They've kind of changed the definition,
14 I think because open primaries sound good. I think a
15 much better model is what we've already been doing in
16 New York City for the last 33 years. Non-partisan
17 special elections.

18 And what we've been doing since 2018,
19 non-partisan special elections with ranked choice
20 voting.

21 If we made all elections special, not
22 only could we have one round of elections saving the
23 entire cost of the June primary, but so much of the
24 fear that people were concerned about in terms of
25 general election turnout, which led them to consider

1 moving the date to even numbered years -- that would
2 go away because you'd have everybody campaigning in
3 one round.

4 But I -- I wrote more about that, and
5 I'm happy to engage with that in the -- in the future.
6 Sorry.

7 MR. GASPARD: I was -- I was swept away
8 by your arguments, so I allowed you to run a little
9 long, but we're going to get a very quick question.

10 MR. MORANO: And then an even briefer
11 answer.

12 MR. MOORE: Well, I was disappointed
13 because I was promised baloney, but quickly, do you
14 know of any locations that have either -- on the
15 petitions that have switched from having petitions to
16 just filing fees or switched from having petitions
17 to -- to an either or option?

18 MR. MORANO: Florida is the best
19 example. In Florida, they give you the option of
20 submitting a filing fee or collecting petitions. Not
21 surprisingly, almost everybody selects the filing fee.

22 By the way, the charter revision
23 commission in 2010 -- they're the ones that moved the
24 number of signatures needed from 900 signatures in a
25 partisan primary to 450 and for -- from 7,500 in a

1 mayor's race to only 4,750.

2 So the -- this has been upheld by the
3 courts. The commission does have the ability to
4 change how you qualify for the ballot in city races.

5 And I think a filing fee that actually
6 brings in some money for the city rather than cost
7 money determining how to sift through who gets
8 challenged and who doesn't -- that would be incredibly
9 efficient quote for election administrators,
10 candidates, and the public.

11 Thank you, Chair. And I appreciate
12 your patience very much.

13 MR. GASPARD: Thank you so very much
14 for these insights. We really appreciate your ongoing
15 engagement with this commission and very much look
16 forward to seeing you again.

17 MR. MORANO: Thank you very much.
18 Appreciate it.

19 MR. GASPARD: Thank you. I want to
20 invite our expert virtual testimony, Amanda Page,
21 Martin Bernstein, JW Mason. And Amanda, I think I
22 pronounced your name Hoongrajok earlier. Please
23 correct me if that is wrong, and we're looking forward
24 to your testimony.

25 MS. PAGE-HOONGRAJOK: Hello? Can you

1 hear me okay?

2 MR. GASPARD: We can loud and clear.

3 MS. PAGE-HOONGRAJOK: All right. Thank
4 you. Yeah. You didn't do so bad of a pronunciation.
5 It was pretty close. So hello members of the Charter
6 Revision Commission.

7 My name is Amanda Page-Hoongrajok, and
8 I'm an assistant professor of economics at FIT. I'm
9 here today because one of my primary research areas
10 explores how state and local governments interact with
11 fiscal policy and business cycles.

12 So today I just wanted to briefly
13 present some arguments against tightening rules on the
14 city's revenue stabilization fund, otherwise known as
15 the rainy-day fund.

16 So first, strengthening the
17 restrictions on rainy-day fund withdrawals could
18 actually weaken policymakers ability to address
19 unexpected current crises.

20 So the more narrow and the more
21 specific the withdrawal rules are, the less likely the
22 city could use them in a genuine time of need.

23 Limiting the amount of money that may
24 be withdrawn from the rainy-day fund in a single
25 particularly harmful because there's really no way of

1 predicting how much is going to be necessary to
2 provide -- to continue providing essential city
3 services.

4 What -- what this basically means is
5 that you could have painful spending cuts happening
6 while money is just sitting in a reserve and you're
7 not able to use it.

8 Second, legally mandating rainy-day
9 fund deposits could potentially create the budgetary
10 stress that it's meant to avoid.

11 The idea of formula-driven deposits is
12 to save during the good times, which basically means
13 when revenue is above trend. However, just because
14 revenue is above trend, that doesn't tell you what's
15 going on with spending and the needs of current New
16 Yorkers.

17 So if you force the city to make
18 contributions to the rainy-day fund, because tax
19 revenues are above trend, that is funding that legally
20 can't be used to meet the current needs of New
21 Yorkers. Third, the city has demonstrated that it can
22 make meaningful contributions to the rainy-day fund
23 without being legally forced to do so.

24 In fiscal year 2026, budget reserves as
25 a whole were at a record high of 8.5 billion across

1 the four reserve funds. By leaving a rainy-day fund
2 flexible, the city maintains the opportunity to save
3 directly good times without these additional risks
4 that are created by the required contributions and the
5 stricter withdrawal limits.

6 Fourth, the rainy-day fund is not the
7 only counter cyclical tool. Policymakers have the
8 desire to set aside significant amounts of savings in
9 a rainy-day fund -- may be driven by the idea that
10 it's the only tool that the city has to rely on in a
11 recession.

12 Rainy-day funds have always been useful
13 and very helpful in counteracting a recession, but
14 it's just one tool in a broader toolkit. So just to
15 keep it short, saving for rainy day -- it sounds good
16 on paper, it's a worthwhile idea, but it should not be
17 done at the expense of current New Yorkers' needs.

18 Adding more constraints to the
19 rainy-day fund reduces the tools policymakers have to
20 ensure essential goods and services are being provided
21 to New Yorkers that need them today. Thank you.

22 MR. GASPARD: Thank you so much,
23 Amanda. Please stay on the line.

24 Martin?

25 MR. BERNSTEIN: Great. Thank you so

1 much. Thanks for having me. I have some slides that
2 I was planning on presenting. Great. They're coming
3 up now. Great. Okay. Thanks for having me.

4 So I just wanted to give an economist's
5 perspective on the purpose of a revenue stabilization
6 fund on the purpose of these deposit withdrawal rules.
7 And then I'll present some evidence on the efficacy of
8 rules, like these.

9 You can go to the next slide.

10 So just for some background to be on
11 the same page, a lot of this is going to overlap with
12 what Amanda just told us. The goal of a rainy-day
13 fund is to smooth economic shocks; right?

14 An established paradigm in
15 macroeconomics is that government spending is supposed
16 to be countercyclical. Governments are supposed to
17 save in good times so that they can spend in bad
18 times. Economic downturns -- they're painful because
19 households are forced to cut back on spending.

20 This hurts the whole economy. And the
21 government safety net is there to help cushion this to
22 support household income and improve economic
23 recovery.

24 So I also want to just mention some
25 evidence that this -- this countercyclical spending is

1 most effective when it smooths the incomes of low- and
2 middle-income households specifically. So
3 distribution of -- of the downturn matters.

4 Low- and middle-income households are
5 the households whose spending falls the most typically
6 during downturns. And these are also the households
7 whose consumption is most helped by each extra dollar
8 of government spending.

9 So this is just to say that thinking
10 about the distribution matters and smoothing these
11 household's spending is often most important for
12 macroeconomic stability.

13 So the reason we have an RSF -- I think
14 this is -- it may be not news to anybody here -- is
15 because balanced budget requirements prevent state and
16 local governments from performing countercyclical
17 spending.

18 And the point of a reserve fund is
19 precisely to enable them to do so. So well-designed
20 rules help a reserve fund smooth shocks, but poorly
21 designed rules can prevent it from achieving this
22 goal.

23 You can go to the next slide. Thanks.

24 So what I want to show you next is just
25 some suggestive evidence that while deposit rules can

1 help, overly strict withdrawal rules specifically may
2 not. And in fact, these rules sometimes pose risks
3 for state and local governments preventing them from
4 spending precisely when they need to.

5 So the existing analysis I'll show is
6 about state governments. That's what research we
7 have, but I think we can still draw lessons for -- for
8 New York City, given the size and importance of the
9 city's economy.

10 Okay. So -- so combining some results
11 from 23 published analyses, I just want to briefly
12 tell you the following evidence. So this first bullet
13 point -- that reserve funds are correlated with more
14 government saving.

15 That makes sense. That's what they're
16 designed to do, and they're correlated with less
17 government fiscal stress, which suggests that indeed
18 they are helping government smooth shocks.

19 But crucially, the -- the second
20 correlation does not hold for reserve funds with
21 strict withdrawal rules, meaning rules where there are
22 specific triggers permitting withdrawal.

23 And this is some suggestive of that
24 indeed strict withdrawal moves might end up offsetting
25 the stabilizing force of reserve funds. So why might

1 this be the case? Amanda talked about this.

2 Withdrawal rules are essentially tying
3 a government's hands and economic downturns can be
4 triggered by a variety of factors.

5 It's difficult to specify these ahead
6 of time and withdrawal rules that are based on course
7 indicators may prevent governments from reacting and
8 spending money when they need to.

9 You can go to the next bullet point.

10 In addition, the -- the most
11 macroeconomically painful shocks, as I mentioned, are
12 the ones that affect low- and middle-income
13 households. And crucially, these don't always show up
14 as conventional recessions.

15 So for example, estimates are that cuts
16 to federal aid in the OBBA will reduce household
17 income in the bottom quintile by something, like, 6
18 percent. And these are cuts that pose real risks for
19 these households.

20 These are exactly the type of shocks
21 that one might want to use reserves to help smooth,
22 but strict withdrawal rules may end up preventing
23 governments from smoothing out shocks like these
24 because these things don't necessarily show up in
25 course recession indicators that are used.

1 Okay. And very briefly, I just want to
2 conclude by showing you some evidence that this was
3 relevant even in the 2008 recession. We know that
4 many state governments did not draw down on existing
5 reserves during that downturn.

6 And with the benefit of hindsight, I
7 think the macroeconomic consensus now is generally
8 that stronger stimulus would've sped up what ended up
9 being a slow and painful recovery coming out of 2008.

10 As you can go to the next slide, if we
11 split states into two groups -- states with strict
12 versus flexible withdrawal rules -- we see in this
13 figure that indeed it looks like states with strict
14 rules in red on average appeared to end up cutting
15 spending more coming out of the recession.

16 So this is very suggestive, but it --
17 but on the next slide you'll see it looks like this
18 may have mattered somewhat for their recovery. So we
19 see that coming out of the 2008 recession, states with
20 flexible withdrawal rules ended up with slightly
21 faster recovery rates.

22 So this is certainly not rigorous
23 causal evidence. It's very suggestive. But I just
24 want to highlight for this committee, that at times
25 the government's hands can also have real economic

1 risks.

2 Even though these rules are certainly
3 well-intentioned, there are risks in both directions,
4 and I think we should keep these in mind. Thank you.

5 MR. GASPARD: Thank you. Thank you so
6 much, Martin.

7 JW? JW, can you hear us?

8 MR. MASON: Thank you. Yes. I -- yes.
9 I also have some slides if we could put those up. My
10 name is Josh Mason. I'm associate professor of
11 economics at John Jay College of CUNY.

12 And, like the previous two speakers, I
13 want to speak to criticize the notion of implementing
14 strict rules about the use of city reserve funds.

15 You maybe can go back to the first
16 slide. The -- in particular including the retired
17 health benefit trust. So, okay. Next slide.

18 So I think next -- I think the general
19 principle that we want to follow here is that over the
20 long run, of course the City needs to match spending
21 with revenue.

22 But when we're talking about short run
23 adjustments to unexpected changes in revenue or
24 program costs, we want to look for areas to make the
25 adjustment where it's easy to substitute spending from

1 one year to the next, where essentially subtracting a
2 dollar this year can be made up with for an additional
3 dollar next year.

4 And I think it's very clear that that's
5 much more true of contributions to reserve funds.
6 Again, I would include the -- the employ of health
7 benefits trust in -- in reserve funds here.

8 That -- that a dollar of contributions
9 next year really does make up for a dollar shortfall
10 this year in a way that is not true for city services.

11 Okay. Next slide. So everybody
12 obviously accepts this when we're talking about very
13 short-term fluctuations within a year. If you look
14 quarter to quarter, you know, city revenues often
15 bounce up and down by 10, 15 percent or more.

16 Nobody thinks that city spending should
17 be adjusted on a quarter by quarter basis to -- to
18 match these large fluctuations in -- in city revenue.
19 But there's nothing magic about the length of one
20 year, and I think it's clear that we should be trying
21 to smooth spending over longer periods, as well.

22 Next one -- next slide. Okay. So here
23 you can see how much variation there is in city
24 revenue or taxes from year to year. And -- and the
25 goal obviously is not to have expenditure bouncing

1 around like that, but to follow a smooth increase in
2 line with the trend in revenue.

3 Next. So there's been proposals from
4 the controllers and others that we should have some
5 sort of strict pool perhaps linked to economic
6 conditions, withdrawals, and deposits into the reserve
7 funds.

8 I think this is a -- a challenging
9 idea. There's problems with this idea. First of all,
10 our New York business cycle does not match the
11 national business cycle. So using national indicators
12 like recessions is not going to work for the city.

13 New York City specific economic
14 indicators do not move together. It's not clear which
15 is the right one, and we don't have reliable economic
16 data in real time that would allow us to implement the
17 sort of rules that have been proposed.

18 Okay. Next slide. So here you see the
19 dotted line is showing national employment. The solid
20 black line is showing New York City employment. You
21 can see, for instance, that the recession at the end
22 of the 1990's was very mild nationally -- very small
23 decline in employment.

24 Whereas here in New York we lost a full
25 10 percent of our jobs, and it took a full decade for

1 New York City employment to get back to where it was
2 at the beginning of the recession. So this is a very
3 different pattern nationally.

4 The blue line then shows property
5 values in New York as measured by the Case-Shiller
6 Home Price Index for the city. And arguably that is a
7 more relevant category than employment, given that
8 almost 50 percent of New York City taxes come from the
9 property tax.

10 And as you can see, the property values
11 and employment don't move together. So an
12 employment-based rule, as has been proposed, would not
13 necessarily actually capture the economic conditions
14 that are most relevant for the city budget.

15 Okay. Next. An even bigger problem is
16 that we don't have good real time economic data.
17 Employment data is revised multiple times after it's
18 released.

19 And the final employment data for local
20 areas, like New York City, is not released until a
21 full year after the period. And these revisions can
22 be quite large, as we'll see in the next slide.

23 So this slide -- the blue line, shows
24 the gains in employment over the course of 2025, as
25 they were initially reported. So we can see that

1 initially as -- as the BLS initially released the
2 data, it appeared to be had a healthy 50,000 jobs
3 added over the course of 2025.

4 The orange line then shows the most
5 recent revisions to these same data. You can see
6 there was a big downward revision to job growth in the
7 spring of 2025, so that the current data shows that
8 there was no job growth whatsoever during the course
9 of the year.

10 So this really shows you how
11 treacherous it would be to rely on employment data
12 as -- as to set a hard rule for city reserve funds
13 because we're not getting an accurate picture in real
14 time of employment conditions in the city.

15 And a rule that -- that obviously is
16 going to only tell you what you should have been doing
17 with the reserve funds a year or more afterwards is
18 not going to be a useful or helpful guide to how the
19 reserve funds should be used.

20 Okay. Next slide. So my confusion I
21 take from this is that targets for the reserve funds
22 are perfectly appropriate and helpful, but the hard
23 rules -- binding rules about maximum withdrawals,
24 required contributions, limited circumstances in which
25 withdrawals can be made -- these are going to be

1 counterproductive -- virtual connectivity
2 interruption --

3 MR. GASPARD: Josh, did we lose you?
4 Josh?

5 MR. MASON: -- going to have term
6 consequences for the city's economy that could not be
7 made good in future years. Whereas if you cut back on
8 contributions to various trust funds in one year, it's
9 much easier to make good those contributions in future
10 years.

11 So my suggestion would be to avoid any
12 sort of rigid rule about the use of reserve funds and
13 simply rely on the discretion of the city's elected
14 government. Thank you.

15 MR. GASPARD: Thank you so much. Thank
16 you for all of your testimony. Josh, I'll just say
17 quickly that sometimes you read someone's name on a
18 piece of paper and you fail to recognize it, but I see
19 you on screen now and recognize you from your work
20 of -- oh God -- about two decades ago as a policy
21 director for the working family.

22 So it's great to see you again. It's
23 great to know that you're still doing really important
24 thoughtful things on behalf of the city. I'd like to
25 turn to the commission to take up any questions and

1 comments.

2 MS. KANG: So this question is for all
3 three of you, and I really appreciate this expert
4 testimony.

5 I guess what I'm hearing you say is
6 that rather than inflexible targets -- whether they're
7 on, like, contributions to the rainy-day fund or rules
8 around withdrawals -- there needs to be kind of
9 flexible targets or, you know, a certain amount of
10 faith in either, you know, whoever does the budget --
11 City Council, et cetera.

12 I think that one of the motivations for
13 having something stronger is to avoid the fiscal
14 situation that our current administration found
15 themselves in at the beginning of this year.

16 And a lot of the things that you're
17 recommending sort of assume that there's good
18 intentions of maintaining fiscal discipline, but
19 sometimes we do not have that in our city government
20 for whatever reason.

21 And so I'm asking you as experts who
22 are warning us against inflexible rules that can lead
23 to negative economic and social outcomes, what do you
24 recommend instead to avoid, we'll just call it
25 un-republican government -- and I mean small R

1 republican, not partisan Republican; right?

2 When sometimes those who govern don't
3 always have the interest of the people in mind and
4 maybe aren't thinking about the city in the next year
5 in the future administration. So this is kind of a
6 difficult question, but I think it will help us guide
7 how to evaluate your recommendations.

8 MR. GASPARD: Not all at once. That's
9 a question to all three of you, but whoever wants to
10 jump in -- Josh, I saw your hand go up.

11 MR. MASON: Yeah. I mean, I think
12 ultimately there -- there's no substitute for good
13 government. There's no substitute for responsible
14 government.

15 You know, I think that we -- the idea
16 that we can bind and establish rules that are going to
17 solve the problem of people in office who abuse their
18 office or aren't responsible their office -- I think
19 that's just not -- not realistic.

20 We -- we certainly don't have any
21 reason to believe that today's council or today's
22 mayor are necessarily going to be more responsible
23 than ones in the future.

24 What we do know is that future
25 administrations will be better informed about future

1 economic conditions than we can be today.

2 And so I think unfortunately it's a
3 little bit of a fantasy to think that you can -- you
4 can avoid -- you just actually do need to have
5 people -- responsible people in office because there's
6 no set of rules that's going to get you around that
7 from my point of view.

8 MR. GASPARD: I am -- I'm assuming that
9 Josh is the only one who wanted to take -- oh, you're
10 speaking, but you're on mute. You're muted.

11 MS. PAGE-HOONGRAJOK: Oh, can I jump
12 in? I know Martin's -- sorry -- speaking. Yeah. And
13 so I would just, you know, support what Josh just said
14 about the governance.

15 And also I think just one of my points
16 too in my testimony was to say that we've actually
17 seen, you know, without any sort of hard legal
18 requirements, meaningful contributions to the
19 rainy-day fund.

20 So it seems that, you know, the City is
21 able to save when it can. I think it's just we need
22 to leave it to the discretion of, you know, our
23 elected officials of when it can do that and when the
24 needs of the city are more important than tucking
25 money away for the future.

1 And, you know, that's knowledge that we
2 don't have, but hopefully our elected officials, you
3 know, have good -- better insights into that. So I'd
4 just add that way really quick.

5 MR. GASPARD: Great. We're -- we'll
6 take one last question from our commissioners.

7 Ruth Messinger?

8 MS. MESSINGER: I'm afraid it's less a
9 question than a comment. I appreciate your -- your
10 various chart and bullet points, which we'll get to
11 look at in more detail.

12 And I understand them having been in
13 the elected office and dealt with New York City
14 budget -- the cautions that you're all putting in
15 about, you know, rigid rules that don't address
16 current situations.

17 I guess what I'm wondering for another
18 time -- not to answer this now -- is are there any
19 things that any one of you think about that would
20 provide some constraint on a city administration mayor
21 and/or council just clearly spending because the money
22 was there?

23 And are -- the question is, are there
24 any ways to constrain that kind of behavior without
25 getting us into a situation that, as you say, might

1 defy common sense?

2 MR. BERNSTEIN: I can respond briefly
3 because I think these are related. So I think -- I
4 mean, unfortunately I'll say that I do not have the
5 policy expertise of everybody in this room.

6 I think what I want to accomplish with
7 my testimony is just to say that first there are, I
8 think, political incentives and safeguards on both
9 sides of these.

10 From my perspective, there are strong
11 political incentives not to save during good times and
12 to use that money to spend. And so I understand that
13 rationale behind the deposit rules.

14 My sense is that there are plenty of
15 political pressures that do discourage spending out of
16 the reserve fund that already exist. And that's --
17 some of that has been seen in the budget negotiations
18 and that's been seen. We have bond rating agencies
19 and things like this.

20 And so I guess all I want to say is
21 that from my perspective, there are also risks towards
22 tying the city's hands and there are existing
23 pressures that already exist to do this.

24 And -- and so I am encouraging -- I
25 don't know -- the people with more policy expertise to

1 think about these risks, as well, when we design these
2 rules.

3 But I will fully grant that I am not in
4 a position to -- it's outside of the scope of my
5 research to be able to speak about those specific
6 proposals. So that's what I'll add. Thank you.

7 MR. GASPARD: Josh, I'm recognizing
8 your desire to get in on this, but I'm going to limit
9 you to a 30-second response.

10 MR. MASON: Yeah. I think two things.
11 I mean, I do think -- I think that there's a place for
12 reporting requirements and more transparency, even
13 though we've heard that we want to reduce required
14 reporting as a way of a softer constraint.

15 And then I do think we should be
16 cognizant of the danger that it is sometimes easier to
17 make cuts in ways that have lasting negative effects
18 that I'm not sure it's true that there's always a
19 tendency to spend as much as you can.

20 And I think there is a history of city
21 administrations that have been in the past responsible
22 with -- with taking advantage of good times to
23 accumulate reserves.

24 MR. GASPARD: Great. Thank you all for
25 your testimony and for your responses. All of your

1 charts are being submitted into the record, and I
2 suspect that there will be some follow-up with you
3 over the next several weeks. So thank you so much.

4 Now, we're going to turn to testimony
5 of the public, both those of you who are in this room
6 and those who are joining virtually.

7 I'm going to invite two participants at
8 a time to join us at the front of this room. You'll
9 each be given three minutes to offer your insights.
10 We'll start with Cheryl Williams and Edward Brady.

11 Good evening, Cheryl. You're up first.

12 MS. C. WILLIAMS: Okay. Great. Thank
13 you, Commissioners. As you know, my name is Cheryl
14 Williams. I'm here tonight because I am could not
15 vote in the primaries. I'm denied the right to vote
16 because I have chosen to be an independent.

17 My mother passed away in 2024, at 90
18 years old, born into the Jim Crow era, South Carolina.
19 She grew up surrounded by signs that said white only
20 and colored.

21 She died hoping that her children and
22 all children of every background, race, or belief
23 would never have to live under that kind of tyranny
24 again.

25 But here we are in 2026, primary

1 election day, when 1.2 million New York City voters
2 are locked out of the most important round of
3 voting -- our primaries. And 54 percent of those
4 voters are people of color.

5 Dr. Lisa Hanley, a deeply respected
6 voting rights expert, conducted an analysis of the New
7 York City electorate in 2025. Here's what she found.
8 12.2 percent of New York City independents are black.
9 23.1 percent of the independents are Latino.

10 19.2 percent of New York City
11 independents are Asian. That's 54.5 percent of who
12 are from communities of color. So this is a civil
13 rights issue, a voting rights issue, and as a
14 registered independent, I help fund elections that I
15 am barred from participating in.

16 These are public elections, not private
17 elections. They are administered by public agencies.
18 We pay for them with our tax dollars and therefore
19 every voter should have a right to participate.

20 That's the bottom line in a democracy,
21 and it's something that we have grappled with in this
22 country from our birth 250 years ago. It is time for
23 New York City to do the right thing and join 85
24 percent of the major cities in the country and let
25 independents vote in every election.

1 Now, just so you know, some of those
2 major cities include Boston, Massachusetts, Chicago,
3 Illinois, Denver, Detroit, Los Angeles, Nashville,
4 Tennessee, Phoenix, Arizona, and I believe it was just
5 announced today, DC -- Washington, DC -- the District
6 of Columbia -- open primaries. Thank you.

7 MR. GASPARD: Thank you so much,
8 Cheryl.

9 Edward?

10 MR. BRADY: Commissioner. Fellow
11 community members. Good evening. Thank you for
12 having. My name is Ed Brady. I'm a Navy veteran. I
13 served on the USS Enterprise. Like so many military
14 veterans, I am also a lifelong independent.

15 In fact, half -- half of American
16 veterans are independent voters. Often, we travel
17 abroad to fight for democracy far from our shores only
18 to come home and find ourselves excluded in our own
19 communities.

20 When we lowered the age to vote from 21
21 to 18 so many years ago, it was because we believed as
22 a country that if you can be sent to fight, we should
23 be able to vote for the folks making those decisions.
24 This is primary day.

25 I did what I always do. I went to my

1 polling place, Church of Heavenly Rest, over on 90th
2 and Madison, and I demanded that I be allowed to vote.
3 I was given an affidavit ballot, and I voted knowing
4 that the ballot will ultimately be tossed in the
5 trash.

6 I am sick and tired of being shut out
7 of the primaries that are public primaries paid with
8 our tax dollars and where most key decisions are made
9 about who represents the city. I wanted to come today
10 to say two things.

11 I believe that the opening of primaries
12 is a priority for our city. This is not a radical
13 change. As Ms. Williams pointed out, there are many
14 cities across this country, and they have open
15 primaries, and they work.

16 Independent voters are our fastest
17 growing community of -- a community of voters. This
18 is where our young people are going. According to
19 Gallup, 56 percent of Gen Z voters are independents.
20 We need to upgrade our primaries so they work for all
21 voters and not just the party regulars.

22 Many independents like me have not had
23 a meaningful vote in decades. Please, I'm asking you
24 do not let us wait any longer. I have a dozen of
25 these pens. Okay?

1 I also have my little voting here --
2 okay -- knowing I'm going -- in a few weeks, I'm going
3 to receive a letter from the Board of Elections saying
4 that my vote didn't count. Please, I implore you, let
5 all citizens vote in all elections.

6 One last quick thing, Mr. Chairman. I
7 don't brag that I'm a veteran, but when people hear
8 that, they say, "Oh, thank you for your service." I'm
9 very gracious. I say, "Thank you."

10 I am hoping that at the end when you
11 turn in your dossier, I can come back and say to each
12 and every one of you, "Thank you for your service, for
13 allowing every single citizen in the city to have
14 their voice heard." Thank you.

15 MR. GASPARD: Thank you Cheryl and Ed
16 for bringing this testimony on a day when it is most
17 relevant. Questions from our commissioners --
18 comments? Great. Thank you so very much.

19 MS. B. WILLIAMS: I just wanted to make
20 sure -- for Ms. Williams -- if your data that where
21 you broke down -- if it's just -- can you make sure
22 it's in your written testimony -- would be wonderful.

23 MS. C. WILLIAMS: The 54 percent or
24 where the data came from?

25 MS. B. WILLIAMS: Where the data came

1 from. That's all.

2 MS. C. WILLIAMS: Dr. Lisa Hanley. Did
3 I skip that paragraph? Okay. 12.2 percent of
4 independents are black. 23.1 percent are Latino.
5 19.2 percent are Asian American.

6 MR. GASPARD: Thank you both.
7 Appreciate it.

8 Eugene Kim. Eric Richardson.

9 MR. RICHARDSON: Good evening, Chair
10 Gaspard, and members of the committee. Thank you for
11 the opportunity to testify this evening.

12 This is a shortened version of my
13 testimony to stay within the timeframe, but the full
14 testimony will be submitted in writing. I'm here to
15 urge the commission to establish a permanent
16 Department of Fleet Management in the City Charter
17 reporting to the deputy mayor of operations.

18 Fleet management is currently housed in
19 the Department of Citywide Administrative Services
20 where I served for 23 years before retiring in July
21 2024.

22 Before 2012, agencies largely
23 maintained their own fleet with limited citywide
24 direction or shared services or modern reporting.

25 Since 2012, the creation of NYC Fleet

1 DCAS [ph] -- NYC Fleet and more than 1,400
2 professional fleet public servants have helped make
3 New York City a national and international leader in
4 municipal fleet management.

5 The city has led in electrification,
6 alternative fuels, fuel management, road safety,
7 performance management, and has now the world's
8 largest electric vehicle fleet for a municipality --
9 has renewable diesel that has cut emissions by more
10 than 50 percent, and is a global leader on vehicle
11 safety technology.

12 This proposal is not about correcting a
13 failure. It is about preserving success and giving
14 this essential function the permanence it has grown
15 into. DCAS [ph] has helped build today's modern fleet
16 program, but the scope and the importance of fleet
17 management has grown dramatically.

18 The city operates more than 25,000
19 vehicles that support nearly every municipal function,
20 travels hundreds of millions of miles a year, deliver
21 critical services, respond to emergencies, and
22 interact with millions of New Yorkers and visitors.

23 Fleet management has become a core
24 government function that deserves permanent
25 recognition in the City Charter. First, a dedicated

1 department would improve accountability.

2 It would create clear citywide
3 standards for fleet policy, performance, acquisition,
4 safety, sustainability, and public reporting. Second,
5 it would improve efficiency.

6 The city fleet is a
7 multi-billion-dollar investment that requires
8 centralized leadership, long-term planning and
9 consistent standard for maintenance, staffing,
10 specifications and balancing citywide agency needs.

11 Third, it would advance sustainability
12 and safety. The city's climate and emission zero
13 goals requires sustained leadership on
14 electrification, charging infrastructure, safer
15 vehicles, driver training, and crash reviews.

16 Finally, this proposal would provide
17 institutional permanence. Agency priorities and
18 commissioners change, and in DCAS [ph] fleet
19 operations must often compete for attention including
20 procurement, facilities and real estate. But this is
21 not a criticism of DCAS [ph].

22 NYC Fleet success makes this
23 conversation possible and fleet management now
24 deserves its own dedicated mission and leadership
25 structure.

1 For these reasons I respectfully urge
2 the commission to establish a Department of Fleet
3 Management reporting to the deputy mayor of
4 operations.

5 New York City has built one of the
6 finest municipal fleet programs. Now is the time to
7 give it a permanent place in the City Charter it
8 deserves. Thank you.

9 MR. GASPARD: Thank you so much, Eric.
10 Eugene?

11 MR. KIM: Good evening, and thank you
12 for the opportunity to speak with you and share my
13 thoughts and opinions. This feels like a community
14 version of Festivus, for those of you who get the
15 reference.

16 All views and opinions expressed here
17 are solely my own and do not represent those of my
18 current employer, previous employers, future employers
19 or previous and potential future clients.

20 My name is Eugene Kim, and I'm a
21 lifelong New York City resident. I was born actually
22 in the old Staten Island Hospital and grew 3 miles
23 from here, educated in New York City public schools,
24 the CUNY system, and Columbia University.

25 I currently live in Brooklyn where my

1 wife and I have raised our three daughters.
2 Professionally speaking, I have some unique insights
3 and lessons in government efficiency that I would like
4 to share with you.

5 In November of 2024, after 25 years of
6 working in the private sector as a technology and
7 legal operations expert, I took a job with a major New
8 York State public benefit corporation.

9 I believe I was one of the first legal
10 operations hires in the -- in the state's public
11 sector. It was an opportunity for me to use my
12 experience and expertise to help my city. I was hired
13 as an operations director to fix a department bleeding
14 millions of dollars.

15 After four months on the job, I did
16 what any experienced operations person would do,
17 analyzed the problem, gathered requirements, developed
18 a solution, and presented it to senior management.
19 Over a year later, I've made little progress.

20 I'm at odds with the very people who
21 hired me to fix the problem because of egos, politics,
22 bureaucracy, ignorance, and general incompetence.

23 If I was given what I was needed, what
24 I -- what I needed and what I asked for, I'd probably
25 be 95 percent of the way done. But instead, I'm

1 sitting here with you airing out my grievances and
2 actively looking for a new job.

3 The solutions are obvious from an
4 operations perspective. It starts with technology and
5 process optimization. These two factors alone would
6 save the city billions. I'm not talking about AI,
7 which is equally exciting and scary.

8 I'm talking about workflow automation,
9 digitizing document processing, and better data
10 management. There also needs to be absolute
11 transparent accountability. In the private world,
12 everything is measured.

13 Productivity, quality, and return on
14 investment are tracked in detail, and people are
15 evaluated and held accountable using objective data.

16 In the public sector, there is no
17 incentive to innovate or improve because very little
18 is objectively measured. The only reward you get is
19 more work because there's no fundamental lack of
20 accountability.

21 If you can objectively define and
22 measure productivity, you can create greater
23 transparency and incentivize progress. I also think
24 that the -- one of the other key ideas is to lawyer
25 up. There needs to be a day of reckoning.

1 You're going to need to clean house,
2 especially at the senior management levels. We also
3 need updated legislation and regulations that support
4 change, not prevent it. Hire and empower business
5 leaders with real world experience.

6 Find people who have proven track
7 records and give them the authority to make necessary
8 changes. Without the authority, you run the risk of
9 running to them at a public hearing and listening to
10 them -- to them complaining about how frustrated they
11 are in their job. Thank you.

12 MR. GASPARD: That was a good way to
13 bring it full circle.

14 MR. KIM: I tried. I'm sorry I went
15 over.

16 MR. GASPARD: Don't apologize.
17 Commissioners?

18 MS. MESSINGER: Just a minute or two
19 of -- what did you do in your agency when you said,
20 here's a review, and here's what should be looked at.
21 What happened?

22 MR. KIM: So some senior management --
23 a couple of them agreed with it and they said, "Okay.
24 We're going to go forward with it." And just some
25 internal politics, and, again, egos. I was sort of

1 denied any authority to purchase things I needed to
2 purchase and to implement any meaningful change.

3 MS. MESSINGER: Okay.

4 MR. GASPARD: Other questions,
5 comments? Thank you both for your testimony. Thank
6 you.

7 Coral Santos, Jeremy Gruber. Coral and
8 Jeremy, please?

9 MR. GRUBER: My name is Jeremy Gruber.
10 I'm a lawyer, election law expert, and the senior vice
11 president of Open Primaries, a national organization
12 dedicated to protecting the voting rights of
13 independent voters.

14 We represent more than 5,000
15 independent voters in New York City, primarily from
16 Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens -- many of them voters
17 of color. I want to thank the commission for the
18 opportunity to testify today, particularly as was
19 noted earlier, on election day, when the contrast is
20 unavoidable.

21 I am from Brooklyn. I, like, 1.2
22 million independent voters in this city, including as
23 was mentioned earlier, 54 percent voters of color, are
24 denied the right to participate in these most
25 meaningful elections.

1 This is not a minor procedural issue.
2 It's a denial of democratic participation. Previous
3 commissions have heard from independent voters about
4 what it means to be treated as a second-class voter in
5 our city, and you'll undoubtedly continue to hear from
6 independent voters because we are not going away.

7 I'm here today to share the findings of
8 an independent survey we commissioned of New York City
9 Democrats -- not independents -- Democrats, that will
10 be submitted for the record. The results are clear.

11 A majority of New York City Democrats
12 support letting independent voters participate in Open
13 Primaries. The one finding of our independent survey
14 should really concern this commission.

15 40 percent of registered Democrats in
16 New York City identified as Republicans or
17 independents. Think about that. 40 percent. Four
18 out of ten registered Democrats do not identify as
19 Democrats. Why?

20 Because our closed primary system
21 pressures voters with government support to join
22 political parties they do not share a belief system
23 with simply to vote in our city.

24 That includes two thirds of Latino
25 voters and a majority of Asian voters in New York City

1 who identify as independent, but are forced by the
2 rules of our election system to join the Democratic
3 party and adopt a party label they do not share.

4 Throughout our country's history, every
5 expansion of voting rights from ending property
6 qualifications, to women's suffrage, to the civil
7 rights movement, has been met by those who demanded
8 that excluded citizens prove their worthiness before
9 being allowed to vote.

10 But the right to vote in a public
11 election is not something government can make
12 contingent on joining a private political
13 organization. It is a right of citizenship.

14 As we approach the anniversary of the
15 Declaration of Independence next weekend, we should
16 remember its opening words -- "We hold these truths to
17 be self-evident."

18 The right of citizens to participate in
19 our government is one of those self-evident truths.
20 Dr. King called the denial of voting rights, "A
21 tragedy of human dignity and a denial of democracy
22 itself."

23 Former President Obama said the right
24 to vote is the, "Cornerstone of our democracy and that
25 we should make it easier, not harder, for people to

1 exercise that right."

2 Independent voters across New York City
3 are organizing. We are demanding nothing more and
4 nothing less than equal citizenship. The question
5 before this committee is simple.

6 Will New York City continue the system
7 that excludes over a million voters, or will it open
8 the door to a democracy that truly belongs to
9 everyone?

10 But I would ask -- there's one
11 additional question that several of our earlier
12 testifiers mentioned. Earlier today, the city of
13 Washington DC -- the Washington DC City Council
14 adopted an initiative that 73 percent of Washington DC
15 voters voted for in 2024.

16 That proposal was to allow independent
17 voters to participate in Washington DC's election. So
18 I think one more question we have to ask is, why
19 Washington DC and why not New York City? Thank you.

20 MR. GASPARD: Thank you so much.

21 Coral?

22 MS. SANTOS: Good evening,
23 commissioners. My name is Coral Santos. I am an
24 infrastructure and energy transition professional, a
25 member of the Riverside Conservancy, and a proud New

1 Yorker.

2 I'm here because I believe New York has
3 an opportunity to lead. We often talk about roads,
4 bridges, and transit as infrastructure, but parks are
5 infrastructure too.

6 Our urban forest captures more than
7 500,000,000 gallons of storm water annually, stores
8 over 1,000,000 tons of carbon, improves air quality,
9 reduces extreme heat, and delivers millions of dollars
10 in public health benefits yearly.

11 When we invest in green infrastructure,
12 we are investing in safer neighborhoods, healthier
13 families, lower emissions, and a stronger economy.
14 The challenge is not a lack of evidence.

15 The challenge is moving as quickly as
16 the opportunity demands. Today parks received roughly
17 0.6 percent of the city's budget. Down thumbs. I
18 believe we can do way better, not because parks are a
19 luxury, but because they're one of the highest return
20 investments available to us.

21 As someone who works at the
22 intersection of infrastructure decarbonization and
23 economic development, I've seen an opportunity for New
24 York to streamline approvals for green infrastructure
25 projects, expand public private partnerships, and

1 unlock investments from philanthropy, community
2 organizations, and the private sector.

3 This is not at all about spending more.
4 It's about investing some smarter. I'm not asking to
5 choose between economic growth and environmental
6 progress. I'm asking us to prove that the world's
7 greatest city can achieve both.

8 New Yorkers are ready for cleaner air,
9 cooler neighborhoods, safer parks, and healthier
10 communities.

11 New York can become the global model
12 for how green infrastructure drives economic growth,
13 public safety, and environmental progress through
14 charter reform, accountability measure, and funding
15 mechanisms, ensuring commitment to parks.

16 I believe here we can get that to be a
17 reality. Today, major projects often evaluate costs,
18 environmental impacts, and procurement requirements.
19 What gets measured gets managed, what gets managed
20 gets funded.

21 So I'm asking for a few things. First
22 one, I would love to have a green infrastructure
23 impact statement. What is that?

24 The charter's going to require major
25 capital projects to publicly disclose storm water

1 capture, heat reduction achieved, emission reduction,
2 and estimated public health benefits. This will
3 create accountability.

4 I also would like to ask for a
5 performance-based budgeting. This will allow us to
6 not only report outcomes instead of understanding
7 where the money is spent. So what do taxpayers
8 receive?

9 New Yorkers deserve to know not just
10 where the money goes, but what results it delivers. I
11 would love, number three, a project -- a public
12 infrastructure transparency dashboard that allows us
13 to see budget timelines, delays, change orders, and
14 contract performance. This is anti-waste. I heard
15 that sunlight is the cheapest auditor.

16 And number four, public private
17 partnerships. This will allow charter mechanisms
18 encouraging foundations, corporations to co-invest.
19 So commissioners, if the last time New York came close
20 to dedicating 1 percent of its budget to parks, that
21 was nearly 50 years ago -- kind of like the Knicks
22 championship.

23 I believe that these charter reforms
24 that are implemented or can be implemented today can
25 make great infrastructure easier to build, easier to

1 measure, and harder to neglect. I don't believe New
2 Yorkers are asking for more promises. I believe
3 they're asking for a system that consistently delivers
4 results. Thank you.

5 MR. GASPARD: Thank you so much. I
6 just so love that the Knicks have become a point of
7 political reference now all the time. It's a good
8 thing. Questions for our witnesses? Questions,
9 comments?

10 Thank you.

11 MS. B. WILLIAMS: I just want to say
12 thank you, Coral, 'cause I know you came back, 'cause
13 you didn't --

14 MS. SANTOS: Yes. I've been here three
15 times. I stayed three-and-a-half hours. So thank
16 you. I heard everyone.

17 MR. GASPARD: Thank you. And we
18 appreciate the testimony, and we'll all review it.
19 We'll review what you submit.

20 A question for you, Jeremy. I don't
21 know how much -- if it's a question as much as me
22 struggling towards some clarification on this issue.
23 Yeah. I'll just editorialize for a second. I think
24 this is a hugely important issue.

25 I struggle with the notion of

1 discrimination in it because voters are making choices
2 here. I know that for as long as Gallup has been
3 tracking this question of independence consistently
4 about 45, 47 percent of all American adults
5 self-identify as independent, irrespective of what
6 their party registration is.

7 Party registration falls to about 27
8 percent for each party. But even those who
9 self-identify as independent consistently demonstrated
10 they have very, very strong leans towards one party or
11 another.

12 And when they have an opportunity to
13 vote, they, you know, vote in ways that track with
14 what party registration looks like. Help me to
15 understand the implication of what you're recommending
16 for this notion that Gallup has tracked of the very,
17 very strong partisan leans of self-identified
18 independents.

19 MR. GRUBER: Well, to correct the
20 number -- so the latest number -- CNN actually just
21 did a poll in this past week -- 47 percent of
22 Americans identify as independent. It's not just --

23 MR. GASPARD: Forty-seven?

24 MR. GRUBER: Forty-seven percent.

25 MR. GASPARD: Yeah. That's the --

1 that's been consistent.

2 MR. GRUBER: But it's not just a
3 question of identification; right? It's a question of
4 actual voter registration.

5 So in ten states in this country,
6 independent voter registration is the highest number
7 in -- of any registered voter in the state -- ten
8 states. They are the second largest group of voters
9 in almost every other state.

10 So we're talking about a group of
11 voters -- millions of voters around the country who
12 are subject to statutory limits on their ability to
13 participate in elections based on their -- their voter
14 registration status. Correct.

15 MR. GASPARD: Based on the choice that
16 they made when they registered to vote?

17 MR. GRUBER: Based on the fact that the
18 state decided to make -- put additional requirements
19 on the right to vote beyond the fact of simple
20 registration. There are 20 states, Mr. Chairman,
21 where you simply register as a voter.

22 MR. GASPARD: Yes.

23 MR. GRUBER: And so the simple fact
24 that the state requires you to register with a
25 partisan affiliation and then hold you to an

1 additional standard that limits that choice to
2 participate is wrong.

3 And I would simply ask you to
4 contemplate the following question. If the City of
5 New York were to go to -- we're a five to one voter
6 registration Democrat city. So let's use Democrats as
7 an example.

8 If the City of New York were to go to
9 every Democrat in the City of New York and say, "In
10 order to vote, all you have to do is change your
11 registration to Republican." That's all you have to
12 do. No big deal.

13 What do you think the -- the response
14 would be from Democrats in the city? I -- I would
15 respectfully argue it would be outrage. They would be
16 in the streets, as they should be, because the city
17 government or any government should not demand you to
18 affiliate with any private association in order to
19 vote.

20 Certainly one that you do not share
21 values with. For independent voters, like myself, and
22 the millions of independent voters in the city, it is
23 the exact same struggle.

24 The idea that your government should
25 ask you to affiliate with any organization that you do

1 not share values with is deeply, deeply upsetting and
2 deeply antithetical to our first amendment right of
3 association.

4 So I would argue that the government's
5 ability to make those decisions is not in the best
6 interest of the voters. It's in the best interest
7 certainly of the parties, but there's no reason that
8 the City of New York has to make it contingent.

9 And there's a reason why 85 percent of
10 cities don't -- because letting everybody vote in an
11 election is the highest ideal we have as citizens in
12 the city, and the state, and in this country. And we
13 should be pursuing that.

14 MR. GASPARD: Thank you so much,
15 Jeremy. I really appreciate the opportunity to engage
16 with you on this -- this question that I think is
17 going to continue to put some real pressure on our
18 political infrastructure, not just in New York, but
19 across the country for many years to come. So thank
20 you.

21 MR. GRUBER: I'm happy to provide any
22 additional information as is required. Thank you.

23 MR. GASPARD: Thank you.

24 Danny Battista and Samantha Wilkinson,
25 please join us.

1 Thank you, Danny. You are up first.

2 MR. BATTISTA: Thank you for the time.
3 My name is Danny Battista. I'm a lifelong New
4 Yorker -- a resident of the city for 21 years, 15
5 years a Staten Islander.

6 Among the other endeavors in my public
7 life, I've had the chance to work with and mentor
8 young people at organizations like Civics Unplugged,
9 the All Stars Project of New York, and while teaching
10 public affairs and local policy at Peru [ph] College.
11 I've also served on the board of the St. George Civic
12 Association here on Staten Island.

13 And I have voted in every election I've
14 been eligible to cast a ballot in since I turned 18.
15 Today's primary election day.

16 I should be at a poll site right now,
17 or by now I might have cast my ballot during early
18 voting as I've enjoyed doing in recent years, but I'm
19 not allowed to vote in the primary election because
20 I'm an independent voter.

21 While I understand and appreciate the
22 history, role, and function of political parties in
23 our politics and governance, I can recognize that
24 party politics also has a tendency to distort and
25 diminish the democratic process itself.

1 Three minutes is not enough time to
2 adequately discuss all the reasons why it's
3 problematic that here in New York we do not have open
4 primary elections.

5 But I'm here this evening to say that
6 it is a problem. Forcing people to register in a
7 political party as a condition to vote in a publicly
8 funded and administered election is wrong.

9 What that means here in our city is
10 that 1.2 million voters are effectively shut out of
11 what is usually the determining stage of our
12 elections. I don't feel disenfranchised. I am
13 disenfranchised.

14 My ability to exercise my right to vote
15 and participate in a publicly funded election is
16 contingent on an exercise in meaningless labeling,
17 tribal mentality, and coerced box checking.

18 This is galling for an otherwise
19 civically engaged voter in our city. And the longer
20 I've had to sit out with the primaries, the more I've
21 had to suffer the often smug, disingenuous arguments
22 and ultimatums from people of all party affiliations.

23 Just join the party if you want to vote
24 in the primary. You could just change your
25 registration back after. Or that's just the way we do

1 politics, as one prominent politician stated at these
2 very same hearings last summer.

3 This is zombie politics, complacent and
4 unimaginative nonsense that defends a broken status
5 quo that's way out of step with the majority -- the
6 way that majority of cities across the country conduct
7 their primaries.

8 Just because this is the way we've been
9 doing elections for decades doesn't mean it's right or
10 fair or good. We need to do better.

11 And I urge you all to think of all New
12 Yorkers while you wield the power that you have at
13 this moment to give us a chance to move forward and be
14 better. Please advance a proposal to, at last, let
15 all New Yorkers vote in New York City. Thank you.

16 MR. GASPARD: Thank you so much, Danny.
17 Samantha?

18 MS. WILKINSON: Good evening. My name
19 is Samantha Wilkinson. I'm a longtime, lifelong
20 Staten Island resident. So thank you for coming all
21 the way over here. I know it's a pain in the butt to
22 get here.

23 I'm a substitute teacher for New York
24 City Dewey, and I also work for Snug Harbor as a tour
25 guide, so Staten Island is very important to me. I'm

1 here to talk to you about our transit issues.

2 Staten Island is very car aligned and
3 it is a detriment to a lot of us. I personally do not
4 drive, mostly for my own personal reasons, but because
5 it's also a financial burden to own a car, especially
6 now.

7 So as somebody who relies on our bus
8 systems, we only have one train. We have our Staten
9 Island ferry, we have our fast ferries now -- we have
10 some to work on. It is incredibly difficult to get
11 off this island if you do not drive, especially to New
12 Jersey.

13 I have a partner who lives in New
14 Jersey, and it takes over two hours to get there if I
15 do not have a ride to Linden Train station.

16 What I am offering -- suggesting is
17 that we increase our bus systems, especially because
18 there's only one bus from Staten Island to New Jersey.
19 I know the BRT, Bus Rapid Transit, has been in limbo
20 for about 15 years maybe.

21 It's been a long time, and I believe
22 that we deserve better, especially because the way our
23 transit system works in all of the other boroughs is
24 much better.

25 Staten Island is often overlooked and

1 denied and put all the way at the bottom for funding
2 and recognition. We are often the butt of many jokes,
3 and we do not get anything.

4 We deserve better. As a non-driver, I
5 deserve better. As a New York City teacher -- future
6 teacher, I deserve better. We all deserve better.
7 Thank you.

8 MR. GASPARD: Thank you. Really
9 appreciate both of your testimonies.

10 And Samantha, you should not have to
11 thank us for coming to Staten Island. Staten Island
12 is terribly important and we'll be back yet again at
13 some point to hear from more of your neighbors on the
14 island.

15 Questions, comments, issues from our
16 commissioners? None. Thank you both for your
17 testimony really.

18 MS. WILKINSON: Thank you.

19 MR. BATTISTA: Thank you.

20 MR. GASPARD: Melissa Caballero Umana
21 [ph], and Julia Ricci?

22 Melissa, you are first.

23 MS. UMANA: Hello. Thank you again. I
24 also want to speak about our public transit issues. I
25 have much of the same grievances as Samantha. It's

1 very slow bus service.

2 Very, very limited capacity for getting
3 off the island if you're a non-driver. It has
4 required basically a car to be able to basically just
5 to commute off island.

6 As a result, Staten Island has many,
7 many traffic issues, especially around rush hour,
8 which does impact our busing service and all other
9 transit that is on the road.

10 Two transit option that this does not
11 impact is our ferries and our train route -- line.
12 The BRT project that has been currently slated to be
13 completed in 2035, has not gone fast enough.

14 St. George and the Bay Street area is
15 very important economically to us. It's our
16 connection besides the other four buses that bring us
17 into Brooklyn. And it really is necessary for our
18 connection to other areas of the North Shore.

19 Some projects have been proposed in
20 order to limit driving and to boost bus performance
21 such as bus lanes. However, anyone who's ever walked
22 down Highland Boulevard will know that those bus lanes
23 are always occupied by cars parked there and they
24 never seem to move.

25 It would be really great if the bus

1 lanes could also serve their purpose. Besides that,
2 it would be really helpful to have some sort of bike
3 infrastructure. Staten Island does not have any city
4 bike or any kind of bike loan project.

5 If you're going to bike on the island,
6 you need to have your own bike, as well. Yes. I -- I
7 do understand that these things take time.

8 But in order to, you know, promote
9 growth for our borough, these are things that we do
10 require, you know, just to decrease car dependency,
11 which is extremely expensive, especially for young
12 people. I apologize for how rambling my statement has
13 been. Thank you for your time.

14 MR. GASPARD: You have nothing to
15 apologize for. We appreciate the contribution that
16 you've made tonight. You were very, very clear, and
17 you were very bringing up a very urgent matter.

18 And you'll note just how critical this
19 is for the mayor who's always talking about bus
20 deserts, transportation deserts, and the need for
21 faster buses that can bring people like you close to
22 the centers of the economy. So thank you so much for
23 this contribution tonight.

24 Julia?

25 MS. RICCI: Hello, my name is Julia

1 Ricci. I am an illustrator. I'm a teaching artist.
2 I -- I'm a substitute teacher with the DOE, and for 12
3 years now, which is for as long as I've been old
4 enough to vote, I have been an independent voter.

5 I do not claim to be an expert, but in
6 my opinion, an efficient government is one in direct
7 communication with its citizens about what they need.

8 And voting is the most effective way
9 that we citizens have to get our voice across to our
10 representatives. So it would stand to reason that you
11 would want as many people to vote as possible for the
12 government to run efficiently.

13 So I have to ask, what's the benefit to
14 excluding 1.2 million independent voters from the
15 voting process through closed primary elections?

16 Every year I get -- I get bombarded
17 with messaging that the onus is on me because I made a
18 choice -- like you have brought up, Chairman -- that I
19 made a choice to be an independent.

20 I need to disregard my beliefs and
21 register into with a private organization to get the
22 permission to execute my constitutional right to vote.
23 Even though by choosing to be an -- an independent, I
24 haven't opted out of the process.

25 In fact, I would argue that I can't opt

1 out of the process because my tax dollars are being
2 used to uphold these barriers that stand in the way of
3 people -- the most important part of the government
4 running efficiently -- from participating to the full
5 extent.

6 Through my work as -- as a teaching
7 artist and a substitute teacher, I've learned that if
8 people are going to get the most out of what you're
9 trying to give them, you have to receive them as they
10 are.

11 There's no part of a person's identity
12 that's not important. And for your solutions to work
13 for people, you have to listen to them. You have to
14 work with people. You have to make sure it works for
15 everybody.

16 So I'm here today to say, listen to us.
17 Work with us. We want to be a part of building a more
18 effective and efficient government, but we want do it
19 as independent voters, not as something that we don't
20 identify as. So please allow us to vote to open the
21 primaries. Allow all voters to take part in every
22 single step of the election process. Thank you.

23 MR. GASPARD: Thank you so much, Julia.

24 Questions, comments? Commissioners?

25 There are none.

1 I appreciate both of your -- both --
2 what you both had to offer.

3 And Julia, I'll just say one thing -- I
4 wanted to give Jeremy Gruber an opportunity to bring
5 greater clarity into -- and some delineation to the
6 argument that he was making. So that's why I made
7 my -- asked my question about choice. I think it's a
8 really important issue that we need to continue to
9 really push into. So thank you.

10 MS. RICCI: Absolutely. Thank you.

11 MR. GASPARD: Thank you. We are -- we
12 have two Staten Islanders remaining. One in person,
13 one on Zoom. I will invite both of you together as
14 one panel. Samuel Rosenfeld in the room, and Rob
15 Richie who is online.

16 MR. GASPARD: Samuel, are you here?
17 Samuel appears to not be here, so let's go online to
18 Rob Richie.

19 Rob, can you hear us, please?

20 MR. RICHIE: Okay. Yeah. Sorry. It
21 didn't let me unmute there for a minute. So anyway,
22 you -- you went to me faster than I was ready. So,
23 anyways, let me get rolling here.

24 So one just -- I am Rob Richie. I am
25 head of a group called Expand Democracy, and ran Fair

1 Vote [ph] for many years. Very grateful to have this
2 chance to speak before you. I'm a national authority
3 on ranked choice voting.

4 I founded Fair Vote [ph] in 1992, and
5 we ran it until 2023. In that role actually met
6 Patrick Gaspard when we worked a little bit together
7 to preserve the ranked choice voting in the form of PR
8 for community school board elections. And I -- today
9 I also consult some with Fair Vote [ph] in --
10 Albany --

11 MR. GASPARD: You're -- you're dating
12 both of us here, Rob.

13 MR. RICHIE: Yeah. I've been around.
14 I recommend that your commission follow the model of
15 elections in Washington DC and Arlington. Most
16 importantly, I want to suggest extending ranked-choice
17 voting to all city elections.

18 New York City is actually the only
19 jurisdiction to use RCV only in the primaries, but not
20 the general election. As you know, New York City has
21 successfully implemented RCV, which could have been
22 pretty interesting if it had been used in your
23 congressional primaries today.

24 It's not been flawless, but it's
25 really, I think, gone well. 99.7 percent of voters

1 are casting valid ballots. Great majority of people
2 are ranking candidates. Your voter turnout in '21 and
3 '25 is the second and third highest in city history.

4 Used in the primaries, used in the
5 special elections, but not the general election.
6 Maine has -- uses RCV for elections for all primaries
7 in every general election where it is allowed.

8 Arlington does that, as well. As
9 you've heard from others, Washington DC has passed RCV
10 and semi-open primaries with 73 percent and just
11 rolled out the RCV part today or -- or this month.

12 And it took a while for ranked-choice
13 voting to get the consensus support that I think led
14 to its huge adoption from voters in 2019 -- was 74
15 percent support. I would suspect if you were to
16 extend this to the general election, voters would
17 embrace it.

18 I think it's been a popular reform in
19 which has a consistent ballot type. I think what
20 Maine and -- also does is this combination of -- of
21 semi-open primaries and ranked-choice voting. They
22 just had a huge turnout in their governor's race --
23 100,000 more voters than they'd ever had before.

24 And I think something that is -- is a
25 combination that kind of makes sense in -- in the

1 modern era. I just wanted to make one point about
2 some of the primaries is that when you have automatic
3 voter registration, you can't automatically register
4 people on a party.

5 So you just end up with a lot of new
6 voters being unaffiliated and giving them a chance
7 to -- to pick a party ballot -- I think has allowed
8 them to be connected to -- to their options in
9 November.

10 Two specifics that I lay out in my
11 written testimony is you can use ranked-choice voting
12 with fusion ballots. You can do the model of fusion
13 done in Oregon and Vermont, which is where the
14 candidate is listed with their party endorsements
15 after their name -- has a nice clean ballot design.

16 And you could put into the charter
17 measures that don't need to be in the charter, but to
18 accelerate the count. Most cities -- like San
19 Francisco does their first ranked-choice voting
20 tallies within an hour of poll closing.

21 New York City could accelerate that
22 process a lot and conceivably you could put some
23 things in the charter to make that happen. But
24 anyway, thanks for my chance to -- to be here and good
25 luck in your deliberations.

1 MR. GASPARD: Thank you so much, Rob.
2 Appreciate it.

3 Questions, comments for Rob? No.

4 Great. Rob, thank you so very much.

5 I want to thank everyone for your
6 testimony this evening. Staten Island is the first
7 time that we've actually managed to get through all
8 the testimonies, so you are the most efficient of all
9 of the counties. We appreciate you.

10 We also appreciate the staff at Staten
11 Island University Hospital, our stenographer, and our
12 interpreters who help make this an inclusive and
13 accessible evening. And our next -- our important
14 restaurant guide.

15 The next public hearing of this
16 commission will be in Brooklyn on June 30th at 5 p.m.
17 at Medgar Evers College, which is located at 1638
18 Bedford Avenue in Brooklyn. I'd like to bring this
19 hearing to the conclusion. Is there a motion to
20 adjourn? Is there a second?

21 MR. MOORE: Second.

22 MR. GASPARD: All in favor?

23 MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Aye.

24 MR. GASPARD: Thank you. We are
25 adjourned.

(Whereupon, at 7:18 p.m., the
proceeding was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

I, PAUL GRASSO, the officer before whom the foregoing proceedings were taken, do hereby certify that any witness(es) in the foregoing proceedings, prior to testifying, were duly sworn; that the proceedings were recorded by me and thereafter reduced to typewriting by a qualified transcriptionist; that said digital audio recording of said proceedings are a true and accurate record to the best of my knowledge, skills, and ability; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which this was taken; and, further, that I am not a relative or employee of any counsel or attorney employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

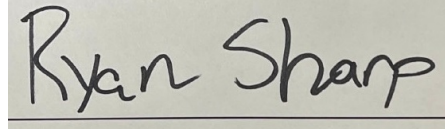


PAUL GRASSO

Notary Public in and for the
State of New York

CERTIFICATE OF TRANSCRIBER

I, RYAN SHARP, do hereby certify that this transcript was prepared from the digital audio recording of the foregoing proceeding, that said transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings to the best of my knowledge, skills, and ability; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which this was taken; and, further, that I am not a relative or employee of any counsel or attorney employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ryan Sharp". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style. It is positioned above a thin horizontal line.

RYAN SHARP

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