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2		REVISION COMMISSION HEARING
3	POBLIC	DEARING
4		IGH SCHOOL
5	290 ST. N	TORIUM MARKS PLACE
6	STATEN ISLAND,	, NEW YORK 10301
7	<del>-</del>	25, 2018
8	6:30	
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10	APPEARANCES:	
11	COMMISSIONERS:	
12	COMMISSIONERS.	
13	CESAR PERALES, Chair RACHEL GODSIL, Vice Chair	
14	CARLO SCISSURA, Secretary	
15	DALE HO MENDY MIROCZNIK	MARCO CARRION UNA FCLARKE JOHN SIEGAL
16	ANNETTA SEECHARRAN	
17		
18		
19	ALSO PRESENT:	
20	LINDA BARAN ALEX CAMARDA	MARY BOURNE
21	MARJORIE GARDNER	BRENDON CLARKE KIM HINKSON
22	GONZALO MERCARDO HARRY TIMBERLAND	MIKE PERRY
23		
24		
25		

1	MR. PERALES: Good evening. Am I being
2	heard? Again, good evening. I'm delighted to be
3	here in Staten Island for the first public
4	hearing of the 2018 Charter Revision Commission.
5	Before we get into the substance of what we're
6	doing, I would like to call on our host
7	Commissioner Mendy Mirocznik to say a word or
8	two. Mendy.
9	MR. MIROCZNIK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
10	Thank you honorable committee. Thank you
11	audience public who are here this evening.
12	Staten Island is a wonderful place. It's a
13	passionate community with hardworking people who
14	care about community, family, society and major
15	issues. And tonight we see a nice turnout of the
16	public who take civics very seriously. I served
17	as the president of COJO, which is the umbrella
18	organization for the Jewish community. And
19	besides working within our community, we do
20	interfaith outreach work. We bridge all the
21	communities together. And on behalf of Staten
22	Island and COJO and the JCC which serves as a
23	board member, we thank you Mr. Chairman. We
24	thank you honorable committee for coming out to
25	my island tonight. Thanks everybody.

1	MR. PERALES: And we thank you for not just
2	hosting us tonight, but for agreeing to serve on
3	the commission. I know that the Mayor was very
4	pleased. I'm going to ask the commissioners to
5	introduce themselves. Why don't I start with
6	Marco on that end if I can. Tell the audience
7	what you do for a living or something.
8	MR. CARRION: Sure. Good evening everyone.
9	My name is Marco Carrion and I currently serve as
10	commissioner of the Mayor's community affairs
11	unit.
12	MS. GREENBERGER: Good evening. I'm Sharon
13	Greenberger. I'm the president and CEO of the
14	YMCA of Greater New York.
15	MS. SEECHARRAN: Hello and good evening. My
16	name is Annetta Seecharran. I'm the executive
17	director of CIA Community Development
18	Corporation.
19	MR. MIROCZNIK: It's Mendy Mirocznik again.
20	Good evening everybody.
21	MR. SCISSURA: Good evening. Carlo
22	Scissura. President and CEO of the New York
23	Building Congress.
24	MR. BRAGG: Good evening. I'm Kyle Bragg.
25	I'm the secretary and treasurer of 165,000 member

1	SEIU 32BJ Property Service Union.
2	MR. PERALES: I failed to introduce myself.
3	I'm Cesar Perales. I'm honored to serve as chair
4	of the commission. I recently stepped down as
5	secretary of State of New York. But I've had a
6	number of positions in both government and civil
7	rights as an advocate.
8	MR. SIEGAL: Good evening. My name is John
9	Siegal. I'm a practicing lawyer in Manhattan.
10	Partner in the law firm of Baker and Hostetler.
11	MS. CLARKE: Good evening. I'm Una Clarke.
12	I am current trustee for the City University of
13	New York. A former member of the New York City
14	Council and pleased to able to serve on this
15	commission. But formerly I was the educational
16	consultant for Staten Island. So all of your
17	head start, I was the chief trainer.
18	MR. HO: Good evening. My name is Dale Ho.
19	I currently serve as the director of the ACLU
20	voting rights project.
21	MS. WEISER: Hello. I am Wendy Weiser. I
22	am the director of the democracy program at the
23	Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law.
24	MS. ANGELO: I'm Larian Angelo. I'm a
25	former budget person for the mayor and for the

1	City Council. And I am currently a research
2	fellow of the institute for state and local
3	governance and a proud graduate of Curtis High
4	School.
5	MR. PERALES: Will Commissioner Fernandez
6	introduce yourself.
7	MS. FERNANDEZ: Good evening. Apologies for
8	my tardiness. My name is Angela Fernandez. I'm
9	the executive director and supervising attorney
LO	of the Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant
11	Rights. I also serve as a mayor's designee on
L2	the CCRB, Civilian Complaint Review Board.
L3	MR. PERALES: It is clear to me that we have
L4	a quorum. We're almost all here, which rarely
L5	happens. So I think it's a reflection of our
L6	interest in hearing from the folks in Staten
L7	Island.
L8	Just so you'll understand what our role is,
L9	the mayor of the City of New York who served as a
20	mayor has the opportunity to appoint a
21	commission, which they do every several years, to
22	review the city charter. That's the city's
23	constitution in essence. And our role is to
24	listen to the people who come to our hearings and
25	who write us questions and to talk to experts and

to come up with recommendations for amending the
city charter. Those recommendations are then
presented to the citizens in November when they
vote. So that we recommend and ultimately you
the citizens of our city decide whether or not
you will adopt our recommendations to revise or
amend the charter.

Having said that, we review the entire charter. Everything that is in the charter. But every mayor has a particular interest. Mayor De Blasio is interested in how our democracy works, how our elections work. And he's looking to us to engage you on questions of how our elections ought to be held. How much money should be involved. How could we get more people to vote. Those issues are of particular interest, and we're hoping to learn as much as we can about how to make our city more democratic.

For the record, we have conducted extensive outreach in advance of this meeting. We have filed all the legal notices. We've posted public notices in the city record. Posted hearing notices on our own website. And we've sent notices to media outlets, not just to Staten Island, but throughout the city. We are now on

1	Facebook and Twitter. You can follow us on
2	Twitter at NYCCharter. And rest assured we're
3	going to continue to ensure that we get as much
4	outreach as possible. As an example, we've
5	already posted a video of our first
6	organizational meeting. It is now available on
7	our website. We also have sign language
8	interpreters. And for those who need it, we have
9	Spanish language interpreters. I want to thank
10	the staff. I'll just run through their names to
11	assure you that they are very important to our
12	function. Candace Cho, Josh Stitz, Sabrina Fong,
13	Christine Billing, Aaron Bloom, Quami Acuasha,
14	Essence Franklin, Michael Shacki and Bruce
15	Thomas.
16	We're going to have four other meetings
17	after this. We're going to in the Bronx at the
18	Bronx Community College. In Queens, Queens
19	library in Flushing. Brooklyn at the Botanical
20	Garden in Brooklyn and in Manhattan at the New
21	York Public Library. We're also hoping to hold
22	neighborhood meetings after the first round of
23	what we call our borough hearings. I don't want
24	to go through the rest of the schedule. It is
25	available on our website.

1	I'm looking forward to hearing testimony.
2	What we're going to do is, we're going to
3	call three at a time. You'll come and take the
4	chairs there and we will hear from each of you.
5	Alex Camarda from the Reinvent Albany.
6	Linda Baran from the Staten Island Chamber of
7	Commerce, and Mary Bourne from the Housing
8	Dignity Coalition. If you'll come forward. You
9	have the floor.
10	MR. CAMARDA: Good evening. I just want to
11	make sure this is on. Good evening Chair Perales
12	and members of the charter revision commission.
13	My name is Alex Camarda. I'm the senior policy
14	advisor for Reinvent Albany. Reinvent Albany
15	advocates for transparency and accountability in
16	state government. We are the leading champions
17	for transparency of New York City government,
18	particularly the freedom of information law and
19	open data. We will present detailed
20	recommendations at future hearings of the
21	commission, but wanted to comment tonight on two
22	overarching issues as the commission begins its
23	work.
24	First is the scope of the work that the
25	commission takes on. The second when changes to

1	campaign finance law should become effective. So
2	first I'm going to talk about the commission
3	scope of work. As was mentioned, the municipal
4	home rule law requires the commission review the
5	entirety of the city charter. Although Mayor De
6	Blasio has requested the commission particularly
7	focus on campaign finance reform and increasing
8	public funding of campaigns. The good news is
9	that the city's campaign finance system, 30 years
10	in the making, is a model for governments across
11	the country. We support changes to improve the
12	city's already strong campaign finance system.
13	But New York City has a ways to go before it
14	curbs the perception of an undue influence of
15	money on government decision making. As the
16	city's campaign finance system has gotten
17	stronger over the years, money has flowed outside
18	of the system. Today we believe the fastest
19	growing area of outside influence, and in some
20	instances corruption risk, is from people doing
21	business for seeking favors from government
22	contributing to nonprofit organizations
23	affiliated with government. We ask the
24	commission to take a close look at the large
25	unregulated contributions. In some instances

1	over a million dollars and often tens of
2	thousands given by companies, individuals and
3	others doing business with the city to the city
4	affiliated nonprofits, city agencies and other
5	city offices. We believe there are well over a
6	hundred city affiliated nonprofits. However,
7	there's no public listing. We ask the commission
8	to consider significantly restricting donations
9	to city affiliated nonprofits and city agencies
10	by companies and individuals doing business with
11	the city, and greatly increase the transparency
12	of these donations. Currently there's not nearly
13	enough transparency for contributions to
14	nonprofits tied to city government.
15	Contributions of \$5,000 or more are disclosed
16	every six months. And the amounts reported are
17	provided in seven broad ranges rather than the
18	actual amount of the donation. In some instances
19	contributions are not disclosed by agencies to
20	the public at all. There's a separate process
21	for making contributions anonymous.
22	Additionally, the conflicts of interest board,
23	which regulates this, releases the information in
24	a very large 500 plus page PDF instead of a
25	tabular form that can be reviewed in a

1	spreadsheet. Thereby making it very difficult
2	for outside groups and journalists to analyze the
3	donations. We also urge the commission to review
4	conflicts of interest potentially created when
5	city officials help fund raise for city
6	affiliated and unaffiliated nonprofits and also
7	city agencies. The current restrictions on fund
8	raising for city agencies, city affiliated
9	nonprofits and unaffiliated nonprofits are
10	nuanced and complicated, but ultimately too
11	permissive and very challenging to enforce.
12	Reinvent Albany is particularly concerned about
13	the role of volunteer fundraisers for city
14	affiliated nonprofits who are not subject to
15	conflicts of interest board laws or advisory
16	opinions. Second issue I wanted to go over was
17	the effective dates of any campaign finance
18	reform. We expect the commission will propose
19	changes to the campaign finance system, given the
20	priority by the Mayor. We ask the commission to
21	keep in mind the unprecedented administrative
22	challenges faced by the campaign finance board in
23	2021, the next regular city election. 41 council
24	seats and all citywide borough wide offices will
25	be vacant. We anticipate as many as 300 to 400

1	candidates are expected to run for office, which
2	will require the campaign finance board to
3	provide extensive candidate services and handle
4	an enormous volume of post election audits of
5	every campaign. Because of this extraordinary
6	workload, Reinvent Albany recommends that major
7	proposed changes to the city's campaign finance
8	system made by the commission be phased in over
9	time. This could be done by eliminating the
10	implementation of changes to city wide offices in
11	2021 or in all offices in 2023. The
12	redistricting term of two years from 2022 to 2023
13	limits the delay in implementing changes while
14	reducing the burden on the campaign finance board
15	to smoothly administer the 2021 elections. We
16	believe it is better to implement changes
17	smoothly when the campaign finance board has
18	adequate time and organizational capacity rather
19	than overwhelm the agency during an unprecedented
20	election in 2021. There's no pressing needs to
21	hurry changes in 2021 instead of just two years
22	later. Thank you for the opportunity to testify
23	this evening and for your service. And we
24	welcome any questions you may have.
25	MR. PERALES: I'm going to ask the

1	commission if they have any questions? But I
2	just want you to clarify something for me. You
3	are suggesting that we not change anything
4	related to campaign financing before this coming
5	election? I'm not sure I understood your point
6	about making gradual changes.
7	MR. CAMARDA: We support improvements to the
8	City's campaign finance law. What we're
9	suggesting is that the effective date of those
10	solutions, not the entire, wait for the next
11	regular city election which is in 2021, because
12	of the number of vacant seats and hundreds of
13	candidates potentially running for office.
14	MR. PERALES: I understand. In other words,
15	you're saying we should look at it, but not put
16	them in place for the next election in 2021?
17	Phase them in somehow?
18	MR. CAMARDA: Yes. We think maybe just
19	making changes for citywide offices is one way of
20	limiting the burden on the campaign finance
21	board. And we think that because of the
22	redistricting terms that's two years that takes
23	place every ten years. That's actually
24	convenient in that delaying the changes two more
25	years in the long run doesn't matter so much. It

1	won't be delayed four years as it otherwise would
2	be.
3	MS. FERNANDEZ: I have a question. Angela
4	Fernandez.
5	How does Reinvent Albany define a city
6	affiliated nonprofit?
7	MR. CAMARDA: So it's not so much how we
8	define it. I think it's more important as to how
9	the city defines it. And that's something that
10	we were seeking clarity on. We've looked at this
11	issue at some level of depth. But I think
12	obviously a greater examination is needed by the
13	commission. But I think that's a key issue. I
14	think for us the affiliation means the control.
15	So we would look for factors like elective
16	officials or city officials choosing board
17	members, serving as board members, providing a
18	disproportionate amount of funding. Whether the
19	nonprofits were carrying a governmental purpose.
20	Whether the nonprofits are subject to some of the
21	laws that an agency would otherwise be subject
22	to. For example, the freedom of information law,
23	open meetings laws, procurement practices, these
24	are all factors we think should be looked at, if
25	they're not already. I imagine there's an

1	official city definition affiliated, but I think
2	that's a very important point, and obviously the
3	stronger the affiliation the more concern about
4	contributions. We are not concerned about
5	donations to unaffiliated nonprofits by people
6	who don't have ties to the city. And similarly
7	we're not concerned about donations by companies
8	or individuals to the city who do not have
9	business with the city.
10	MR. PERALES: I was about to ask a followup
11	question on your question.
12	Can you give me an example of an affiliated
13	nonprofit that comes to mind?
14	MR. CAMARDA: Sure. We believe there's over
15	a hundred city affiliated nonprofits.
16	MR. PERALES: Give me the name of one I
17	might be familiar with.
18	MR. CAMARDA: Sure. The mayor's fund is an
19	example. Another example is the there's
20	I'm forgetting the name, but there's an
21	association tied to the NY PD. That's a major
22	city affiliated nonprofit. There's several ties
23	to the Parks Department.
24	MS. WEISER: This is Wendy Weiser. With one
25	followup question on the city affiliated

1	nonprofits.
2	Do you have recommendations relating to
3	officeholder affiliated nonprofits separate from
4	city affiliated ones or do you define that as
5	part of city affiliated.
6	MR. CAMARDA: There was council legislation
7	passed in recent years that we think mostly
8	addresses elective officials' ties to nonprofits.
9	We're really looking at the nonprofits that are
10	tied to city agencies.
11	MR. SIEGAL: John Siegal. I have a question
12	about your suggestions regarding the campaign
13	finance board which I practice in front of a lot
14	over several decades. I was not surprised to
15	hear somebody argue that any changes in campaign
16	finance law should take place following the next
17	election. I've already been contacted by several
18	elected officials who will be candidates in 2121
19	making the same suggestion, but for a different
20	reason that they are now conducting themselves
21	based on the expectations of current law.
22	There's some real issues about retroactivity if
23	we're going to change them on this cycle. But I
24	am surprised to hear you say this is
25	administratively necessary for the campaign

1	finance board. Its audit function takes place
2	largely after the next election. I'm not clear
3	on what you think they can't implement. If we
4	were to change, for example, the contribution
5	limits or any other line item, why is that hard
6	for their auditors to do. They're just applying
7	whatever rule is in effect as of the audit date.
8	So I don't understand the workload argument?
9	MR. CAMARDA: I think you're right, for
10	example, with contributions where that would
11	probably pose less of a burden than other
12	changes. There are other proposals that are put
13	forth before the City Council that I think the
14	changes would be a tougher task for the campaign
15	finance board to take on. I do want to make
16	clear, we're simply saying that the commission
17	should consider the administrative workload.
18	We're not saying that the commission should not
19	put forth reforms and that some of those reforms
20	should not take place in the next election.
21	We're just saying that it's something to keep
22	into account as you decide which reforms to put
23	before the voters.
24	MR. PERALES: Right. One of the issues I
25	always had with the campaign finance board is

1	that their resources are relatively constant
2	during a four year cycle and need to ramp up
3	around election years and just after election
4	years. And certainly we should keep that in mind
5	in terms of the impact and anything that we do we
6	should support their ability to get the job done,
7	which may result in other issues. So I
8	appreciate the suggestion in that regard.
9	MR. CAMARDA: Thank you.
10	MR. PERALES: Are there any other questions?
11	Thank you for your testimony.
12	MR. CAMARDA: Thank you.
13	MS. BARON: Good evening, Commissioner. I
14	would like to thank Chairman Perales and the team
15	that's up here today for listening to us tonight.
16	I'm going to go in a little bit of a different
17	direction.
18	My name is Linda Baran, I'm the president of
19	Staten Island Chamber of Commerce. We represent
20	about 700 businesses here with about 20,000
21	employees. I would like to ask that you take a
22	comprehensive look at the charter. One of the
23	main issues that we see here on Staten Island is
24	the lack of local control. And that's across all
25	five boroughs. We've had numerous situations out

1	here where we have very limited
2	representatives. We have three City Council
3	members. We have a borough president. I know
4	that when the board of estimate was in place, the
5	borough president had a lot more power. We can't
6	get things done. I'm sure the situation is
7	similar in other boroughs. You get a stop sign
8	put in or a street wide without waiting an
9	enormous amount of time. After Super Storm Sandy
10	hit Staten Island, there were numerous
11	recommendations from Borough Hall in terms of how
12	to handle that situation with the actual, like,
13	relocation of some of the housing. Five years
14	later, some of those people are even back in
15	their houses right now. Transportation
16	infrastructure planning. I would like to
17	recommend that the commission look at giving some
18	local control back to the boroughs and also
19	looking at a master plan for each of the
20	boroughs. Creating some type of a situation
21	where we can have a master plan so that we
22	literally can look into and make recommendations
23	for our own boroughs, because one size does not
24	fit all. Staten Island has been left out of the
25	five borough well, it's now called the five

1	borough ferry plan, but the fast ferries. We
2	have limited transit options. We have a lot of
3	development here, but we don't have the
4	infrastructure to support it. In terms of
5	getting more people engaged, I think a lot of the
6	public hearings that we have out here, the reason
7	that people don't come out and vote and attend
8	some of the hearings, because they're disengaged.
9	They feel like it doesn't make a difference if
10	they show up to say anything. Because they feel
11	like the powers that be in Manhattan are making
12	the decisions and no matter what they say is not
13	heard. Thank you very much. I appreciate the
14	time tonight.
15	MR. PERALES: Let me just take the first
16	question so I understand.
17	When you talk about local control in the
18	past, your borough president had more control
19	over things like stop signs et cetera?
20	MS. BARAN: From what I understand, this is
21	before my day, there was a board of estimate that
22	was in place. And the board of estimate, the
23	borough president sat on that and had a very
24	specific say. Now a lot of the say, especially
25	when it comes to planning, goes through the

1	community board with a recommendation through the
2	City Council. There's a process for it, but the
3	borough president's office has become more of a
4	cheerleader for the borough. Where legislatively
5	they can't do much to make change.

MR. PERALES: Right.

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MR. SCISSURA: Hi, Linda. I had the pleasure of working with Linda when I was at the chamber. Carlo Scissura.

I think one of the things we've heard over the years, and this was brought up in the 2010 charter review commission, was how do you strengthen maybe not necessarily the role of the borough president or the role of the council or the role of the community board. But how do you bring it more together. So one of the byproducts of the 89 big charter review was to create something called borough boards. And the borough boards were created to do exactly that. To have local input with the borough president, with the council, and with other state office holders. I think it is worth this commission looking at what is the role of the borough board? And is there a way of making that more of a locally strengthened entity? And I think this is something that we

1	will hear in other boroughs. I think you will
2	hear it more in Staten Island when he come back.
3	But it is something that I know we've commented
4	on in our finding sections in 2010.
5	MR. PERALES: We have the advantages of
6	somebody who served on the charter revision
7	commission last time around in 2010. So I think
8	it's useful. But thank you very much for your
9	comments.
10	MR. SCISSURA: Thank you, Linda.
11	MR. BARAN: Thank you.
12	MS. BOURNE: Good evening, Commissioner.
13	Good evening everyone. Thank you for this
14	opportunity to testify before you. My name is
15	Mary Bourne. I am a deacon at First Central
16	Baptist Church and a member of the Housing
17	Dignity Coalition. The coalition is a group of
18	faith based leaders. Our goal is to make sure
19	that affordable housing is maintained on Staten
20	Island. We're currently in the process of a lot
21	of planning for rezoning especially around the
22	Bay Street area. And the coalition has discussed
23	the plan that the department of city planning has
24	setup. In discussing this with a lot of the
25	members of our churches, we get a lot of concern

1	from the congregates that the prospect of being
2	able to afford to live after this rezoning is
3	done to afford the rent is becoming more scarce.
4	We've met with several people in the families who
5	already complained that landlords are already
6	increasing rent. And as you know, there are so
7	many families that are on this north shore that
8	are already rent burdened. So we're really
9	concerned about the effects of this rezoning and
10	how it will affect our north shore families that
11	have been here for so many years. I also want to
12	include the fact that the public the use
13	public land. And we're also concerned that
14	public land, and we have very few pieces of
15	public land left that's owned by the city, that
16	they're not giving over to private developers so
17	that they can create affordable housing. And our
18	target is to not only have affordable housing,
19	but deep affordable housing as this plan goes
20	forward.
21	MR. PERALES: Any comments from any of the
22	commissioners?
23	I think we know the issue of housing
24	affordability is a major issue in the city. It's
25	something we expect to hear wherever we go. But

Τ	I thank you for your testimony.
2	We may have a question.
3	MR. BRAGG: I have a question. Thank you.
4	Kyle Bragg.
5	I was wondering if there's an issue with the
6	revitalization of current affordable housing. Is
7	that also of equal concern and is the current
8	affordable housing adequate for the current
9	population?
LO	MS. BOURNE: Well, according to the plan,
11	the affordability is not deep enough. We're
12	talking families that earn an income between, I
L3	would say, \$25,000 and \$35,000 annually. And the
L4	plan targets families that are earning \$52,000
L5	annually. So it leaves a pretty large percentage
L6	of the families that currently reside on the
L7	north shore.
L8	MR. PERALES: Thank you all very much.
L9	I'm going to call three other people to the
20	desk. Brendon Clarke from NYPIRG. Marjorie
21	Gardner, the organization is Black Homes is a
22	Thing, and Kim Hinkson.
23	MR. CLARKE: Good evening. Thank you for
24	holding this public hearing. My name is Brendon
25	Clarke. I'm the project coordinator at the

1	College of Staten Island for New York public
2	interest research group or NYPIRG. I'm
3	delivering testimony on behalf of Megan Adhern,
4	NYPIRG's program director. I will briefly review
5	five keys ways the city can offer greater
6	services and opportunities for voters with a
7	passage of amendment to the city's charter. More
8	information is provided in the printed testimony.
9	First establish same day voter registration
10	for city elections. Each year just as interest
11	in elections and candidates begins to peak
12	potential voters fight the deadline for
13	registering to vote has already passed. We
14	already know that participation has fallen to
15	shocking low levels.
16	MR. PERALES: Would you turn the mic to you.
17	MR. CLARKE: Is that better?
18	MR. PERALES: Much better. What did you say
19	about getting voters to do what?
20	MR. CLARKE: Yes. Absolutely. The first
21	thing is to establish same day voter registration
22	for city elections. Each year just as the
23	elections and interest in them is beginning to
24	peak, potential voters find that the deadline for
25	registering to vote has already passed. And we

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all do know that voter participation in New York
City has fallen to shockingly low levels. We
would encourage the city to do the same day or no
registration as states that have inputted them
traditionally have the highest voter turn out in
the country.

Second, to establish automatic registration for city elections by automatically registering eligible clients who interact with city agency databases. The system enfranchises many who might not register in time before the election. Provisions would have to be made to accommodate a dual registration system. But automatic registration is particularly important for the city due to the shortcomings that exist with the states motor voter law implementation. voters who interact with DMV enjoy a form of automatic registration. This opportunity maybe depressed for voters in the city who hold fewer licenses. Third, implement instant runoff voting for citywide primary elections. Allowing primary voters to not only vote for the candidate of their choice, but to rank in order of preference the other candidates as well would enfranchise absentee voters. There's simply not enough time

1	for the board of elections to turn around and
2	runoff absentee ballets by the election. In low
3	turnout elections, such as a municipal runoff, is
4	absentee voters can easily be the margin of
5	victory or defeat. The commission should propose
6	the implementation of the IRV for citywide
7	municipal primaries at an absolute minimum IRVs
8	should be introduced for all absentee ballets.
9	Something municipal primaries for citywide
10	positions. Fourth, establish early voting for
11	municipal elections. NYPIRG believes early
12	voting holds potential for increasing voter
13	participation. One important question is whether
14	there is an advantage for having voters cast
15	their ballots on election day when the latest
16	information about candidates and races is
17	available. Another concern is whether early
18	voting has dampened turnout for low turnout
19	elections. We would urge the commission to study
20	these issues and present their findings to the
21	public before deciding on how to implement early
22	voting for the city. And fifth, to make the
23	city's voter guide more useful. The 1988 charter
24	revision process established the city's motor
25	guide. We applaud the campaign finance board for

1	embracing and improving the guide since then.
2	But we suggest that the guide include district
3	attorneys and any state legislative races
4	occurring in the municipal election years and I
5	urge the commission to consider acquiring the
6	publication of a hardcopy guide for state and
7	federal races as well. Thank you for the
8	opportunity to testify and we look forward to the
9	conversations on these issues.
10	MR. PERALES: Before I turn it over to
11	commissioners who I know want to comment on your
12	suggestions. There is a major issue. The board
13	of elections is a state agency. So some of the
14	things your recommending are very attractive to
15	us, but we cannot implement on our own. But
16	we're going to try to find ways to meet the goals
17	that you're suggesting we pursue. Even though
18	we're going to have to very carefully study the
19	powers that the City of New York has and the city
20	charter, and the powers of New York State board
21	of elections. With that I'll throw it open.
22	Dale, did you have a question?
23	MR. HO: For the court reporter this is Dale
24	Ho. I just have a question, and if you don't
25	know the answer that's all right.

1	What if anything do you know about the legal
2	authority that the city would have to have a
3	different registration deadline from the rest of
4	the state or an automatic registration policy
5	just for the municipal elections or early voting
6	just for municipal offices?
7	MR. CLARKE: Unfortunately I don't know the
8	answer to that. But I can consult with our
9	program director and get back to you with an
10	answer.
11	MR. HO: No problem. Just as a practical
12	matter. Let's take early voting for example. I
13	think candidly as a policy matter, I'm in favor
14	of reformed early voting registration, automatic
15	registration. Those three in particular that you
16	mentioned. If we had early voting for municipal
17	elections, if someone came to vote early to cast
18	a ballot in municipal elections, would they have
19	to come back at I mean only for the municipal
20	elections. Not for state and federal, is that
21	your proposal?
22	MR. CLARKE: That's correct. That is our
23	proposal.
24	MR. SCISSURA: I'm Carlo Scissura. I just
25	wanted to clarify I didn't hear what you said

1	for your fourth point. Just the first line.
2	MR. CLARKE: That we believe that early
3	voting holds potential for increase in voter
4	participation.
5	MR. SCISSURA: I'm intrigued by the instant
6	runoff idea. Can you explain to me how a voter
7	would actually cast their ballot on an instant
8	runoff. Probably nobody in this room or some of
9	you may remember school board elections where you
10	go and you rank 1, 2, 3. I happen to run in one
11	of those, and I remember you were able to cast
12	your ballot once. You ranked an order of
13	preference and then you left. And you never had
14	to go back. So are you looking at a similar idea
15	for that?
16	MR. CLARKE: Yes. Precisely. When an
17	absentee voter would fill out the ballot for the
18	first time, they would rank in order of their
19	preference for the candidate. In an instance of
20	a runoff, their vote would automatically go to
21	their highest ranked candidate that's in the
22	runoff election.
23	MR. SCISSURA: So when we go to vote on the
24	machine, we would actually rank one John Smith,
25	two Mary Smith and three et cetera.

1	MR. HART: That's correct, sir.
2	MR. PERALES: That may be something within
3	our purview. I know that it's been discussed
4	many times. That it was actually something that
5	was raised with a prior commission. Preferential
6	voting is another way of describing it. Instant
7	runoff that is something that we are very
8	interested in talking about. Anyone else?
9	MS. FERNANDEZ: Angela Fernandez. In your
10	second point you mentioned automatic
11	registration. But I couldn't hear exactly where
12	that would happen or how that would happen? I'm
13	familiar with it at the state level, but at the
14	city level, how could that happen?
15	MR. CLARKE: Yeah, absolutely. It would
16	occur when a potential voter interacts with the
17	city agencies. For example, currently people
18	have the opportunity to register to vote in a
19	form of automatic voter registration when they
20	signup for a driver's license. Unfortunately not
21	a lot of people in the city drive and there are
22	actually 300,000 less female driver's license
23	holders in the states than there are men with
24	600,000 more women. So it does discriminate
25	against women in some forms as well.

1	MS. FERNANDEZ: I guess the followup
2	question is, what city agencies would you imagine
3	could be the place where one could go in and say
4	I'm going to do a particular function at a city
5	agency and I also want to register to vote.
6	MR. CLARKE: I don't have a specific answer
7	for you, but I can consult with our program
8	director and get back to you. But generally
9	anyone is available.
10	MR. PERALES: How about a marriage license?
11	You get married only if you register to vote.
12	Anyone else with a silly comment? Someone's
13	concerned what happens when you get divorced, do
14	you lose your right to vote? Thank you very
15	much.
16	MS. GARDNER: My name is Marjorie Gardner.
17	I've been fighting for 40 years in a community
18	that has practically been forgotten. I know my
19	City Council member does everything possible that
20	she can do to try to get the help to get a
21	community center built in Park Hill. We have
22	five owners of 15 buildings. 15 buildings
23	consist of 110 apartments, and one building
24	consist of 220 apartments. And we had nothing in
25	that community for the children, the young

1	people. And I've been promised since Dave
2	Dinkins was mayor, I'm coming to you to fight to
3	help provide a community center in Park Hill. We
4	have 500 new homeowners in celebration behind
5	Park Hill. And our City Councillor Debbie Rose
6	had to clean up behind Park Hill last year, and
7	we found city land back there that a community
8	center could be built. So we need the funds to
9	have that built. I was promised by one of the
10	owners a community center five years ago in one
11	of the buildings and that fell through. He
12	didn't come up with the money.
13	MR. PERALES: Una Clarke, do you have any
14	information?
15	MS. CLARKE: Una Clarke. I'm the former
16	member of the City Council. I see you are
17	wearing the T-shirt from your City Council
18	member.
19	I would encourage you to speak with her
20	about this as a special project for Staten
21	Island, because this is budget time for the city
22	and the City Council. So if this is an item she
23	wants to carry, I'm sure that she could get
24	support from among the colleagues. Our role as
25	commissioners is not to advocate for money, but

1	to see how we can better help the city to deepen
2	its understanding of the democracy of which we
3	are a part. So I will tell Debi Rose that you
4	came to testify. She knows me personally, so you
5	can say former councilor Clark member, since I
6	came over to Staten Island to get her elected. I
7	just want to make sure that she produces for you.
8	And I will take this to her. Thank you.
9	MR. PERALES: Thank you.
10	MS. HINKSON: Good evening every one,
11	commissioner and your team. I welcome you. This
12	is my first time ever attending a meeting like

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this. I humbly come before you. I am a parent of Stapleton community since 1991. Raised seven children in that community. I originally came from Queens. I've lived in Texas and Louisiana through my husband in the military. Came out here on a hardship. I raised my own children and I thank God for all the help that I have ever received from people out here in Staten Island raising my children. But now I am a chair of the advisory board of the Gerard Carter Center. also on the neighborhood advisory board. trying to give back to the community. I retired working for NYCHA. Because that was a job that

1	was going to pay for a single mother to pay the
2	rent and raise their children in that community.
3	My concerns are broad range, because I know about
4	the schools, the Gerard Carter Center, the
5	neighborhood. We have some in Stapleton Park
6	Hill and Clifton, that's the area Gerard Carter
7	Center is supposed to be servicing. And they're
8	doing a good job, but we want them to do an
9	excellent job. Right now they need a director, a
10	night director. They need more services so that
11	they can invite more people that want to offer
12	their services like dancing and other cultural
13	and art programs. We have children in our
14	neighborhood that are affected by lead poison.
15	I'm a mother with one child. And that is the
16	biggest challenge of my life raising that one
17	child. We need more support services for parents
18	with children with lead poisoning. And those
19	type of services, my suggestion would be arts and
20	crafts. Things that they can build with their
21	hands. We have a courthouse that's on a Targee
22	Street that's not being used right now. That
23	would be an excellent place to have skilled
24	trade. We need to teach our young people things
25	that they have lost contact with. They just

1	don't have anywhere to go. So they hangout and
2	they do things that are not good. But we offer
3	more services in those neighborhoods, starting
4	with the Gerard Carter Center, which in my
5	opinion we need four Gerard Carter Centers in our
6	neighborhood to help our youth. Another thing
7	I'm concerned about I'm a senior now. I actively
8	partake in the senior center in Stapleton. Over
9	the past ten years I have seen and heard that the
10	seniors have gone through when they become
11	displaced and moved out of their private homes in
12	the neighborhood and moved to places that they
13	really are not happy with. And there's a lot of
14	disability problems in the neighborhood with the
15	youth and with the seniors. I just implore
16	everybody to provide services for people with
17	disabilities, because they may have a disability
18	in one form as the world sees it, but they may
19	have a gift in another form. The only way that
20	we can help them is by providing different types
21	of services that will bring this creativity. We
22	have groups in my church at First Central Baptist
23	Church. They are doing an excellent job with the
24	young men in our community. Like I said we just
25	need more. We need more community centers. We

1	have a lot of housing. We need more affordable
2	housing and we need parks, recreation, because
3	that's the big thing in your country now being
4	healthy. So whatever you can help us with, I
5	would appreciate and thank you for your time.
6	MR. PERALES: I want to thank you for your
7	testimony. Do any of the commissioners have any
8	comment? Thank you very much.
9	Next panel, Gonzalo Mercardo I think is the
LO	name. Staff person from True 2 Life. There's
L1	one person per organization, right? Who is going
L2	to speak on True 2 Life?
L3	PERSON: We will both have different issues.
L4	MR. PERALES: So one you wait for the next
L5	panel. One panel. Then I got I think it's
L6	Harry Timberland.
L7	MR. TIMBERLAND: Here.
L8	MR. PERALES: Oh, that's you. So you are on
L9	this panel.
20	Mr. Mercardo, we will start with you.
21	MR. MERCARDO: Sure. Thank you. Thank you
22	for all of the commissioners for being here. I
23	really commend you for your first visit to Staten
24	Island. I think there is an old saying that
25	we're left all the time as the last people, the

1	last thought. By you being here as your first
2	meetings really means a lot for us. So thank you
3	for that.

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My name is Gonzalo Mercardo. I'm the executive director of Staten Island Community Job Center. We're an immigrant rights organization working with the immigrant community on Staten Island. I'm also a Staten Islander myself. I live and work in the north shore here on Staten Island. My reason for being here is to talk specifically about how can we open the democratic process to more residents of New York City. I have a few suggestions for you all. Like, for example, making an election day a municipal holiday. I think that would be a great opportunity for people especially working people who work long hours who may leave work 9, 10 o'clock. They don't have a chance to go and vote. They can't afford in many cases to take a day off to go and do that. I am originally from Chile and we vote there on Sundays. I know that might not work for a lot of people. But at least it's the day that most people stay at home. done for that purpose. The people have the free time to participate in the democracy. Another

1	suggestion that I have is also lowering the
2	voting age. We have a lot of young people who
3	are really, really engaged in the civic process.
4	We ourselves in La Colmena have a youth group
5	called the butterfly effect. It's a group of
6	young people from different backgrounds and also
7	from different immigration statuses. We have a
8	lot of people who are citizens, other youth that
9	document eligible people and other undocumented.
10	So they have become very, very interested in
11	being part of the political process. We've seen
12	it now in other parts of the country with the
13	tragic events in Florida. How all young people
14	are really we getting involved in the process.
15	So I think that would be a great thing for New
16	York that we can allow 16 year olds allowed to
17	vote. Another way I think we can enhance that
18	and open our democracy is having same day voter
19	registration. I think we have to find ways to
20	make it easier for all of us in our community to
21	participate in same day voter registration would
22	be a great opportunity for people that for
23	whatever reason haven't been able to register to
24	vote, they can do it on the same day. And then
25	also my last suggestion is the issue of

1	noncitizen voting. We have a lot of people here
2	in New York City who may not be citizens, but
3	they're surely contributing to our economy and
4	contributing not just to that, but also to our
5	culture and the vibrancy of our city. I think an
6	open democracy should have the opportunity to
7	everybody to participate. A great example of
8	this is participatory budgeting. The older
9	requirements for participatory budgeting are to
10	be of the age of 14 and live in the district.
11	And Councilor Debi Rose is the only Council
12	person in Staten Island who had opened that
13	process for a couple of years now, and has been a
14	great way that people can engage and make
15	decisions about the monies they're going to be
16	spending on the district. Thank you very much.
17	MR. PERALES: Let me start the questioning,
18	because I've gotten lots of phone calls from
19	folks when they heard that I was going to chair
20	this commission about noncitizen voting. My
21	immediate response, I'm certainly open to being
22	persuaded, was that I thought that the reason my
23	mother became a citizen, because she wanted to
24	vote. And that is currently and has been for
25	years an incentive to get people to be

1	naturalized.
2	What has been your experience with getting
3	people to naturalize, people that have their
4	permanent residencies and eligible to become
5	citizens? And do you think that voting is an
6	incentive to become a citizen?
7	MR. MERCARDO: So in terms of your first
8	question, we have been doing a lot of work to
9	make sure that every one who is eligible to vote
10	have the opportunity to do so. We've also worked
11	with youth. We were a part of the student
12	registration day last year. We registered a
13	thousand students to vote. I believe there are a
14	lot of areas why people don't become citizens
15	right away. One is the length of time that you
16	have to have as a permanent resident. But people
17	live in those communities and work in those
18	communities as permanent residents. They should
19	be able to be part of the discussion of the
20	decisions that are made of people here. I think
21	if anything this will encourage more people to
22	become involved in the political process.
23	They're able to vote in the municipal elections,
24	but not on state or federal. Maybe that's going
25	to be the steppingstone. You know what? I

1	better become a citizen right now to be able to
2	participate in all levels of the democracy. So I
3	think it will actually help encourage more
4	people. But also for people that are not allowed
5	for the length of the time that they usually have
6	to wait to become a citizen. In some cases it
7	could be four or five years before they can do
8	that. So I think all these opportunities that we
9	can have to encourage people can just be positive
10	to make sure that we open the process for
11	everybody.
12	MR. PERALES: Commissioner Clarke?
13	MS. CLARKE: Una Clarke, former member of
14	the City Council. I tried that when I was in the
15	City Council that anyone with a green card for
16	three years or more intend to become a citizen
17	should be able to work for the Sanitation
18	Department, Police Department or any of the
19	uniformed services that they're kept out of not
20	being citizens. I almost got my head handed to
21	me, but after that people looked at it and
22	figured that it would strengthen not only the
23	boroughs or the community, but that it would be
24	an encouragement. The same way that nurses had
25	to register in Albany in order to work in a

1	hospital to show that they're nurses and that
2	they would become citizens. They had a paper
3	called intent to become a citizen. I tried that.
4	It didn't work. It may well be because of the
5	time in which we are now living that people may
6	think twice about that. But I am in agreement
7	with you. And I would work with any other group.
8	Myself as you would probably hear that my accent
9	didn't go anywhere. Didn't come from Chile, but
10	it came from someplace otherwise. I know that
11	the energy and the incentive to get people to
12	become citizens are almost always there.
13	MR. MERCARDO: I just want to add that the
14	money is another barrier. It cost almost \$1,000
15	to become a citizen. For people who cannot come
16	up with that money, they're eligible, but they
17	just don't have the funds to actually apply for
18	it.
19	MR. PERALES: You're next.
20	MS. WEISER: Thank you. Wendy Weiser. One
21	of the last panelists recommended early voting as
22	a reform. I was wondering what you thought about
23	and whether that would address some of the other
24	concerns you raised when you were recommending
25	election making election day a holiday. And

1	sort of providing a range of days and evening
2	hours and weekend hours for the people to vote.
3	MR. MERCARDO: I'll be in agreement with
4	that. Again, I think our thought behind all of
5	these accommodations is to make an open process
6	for people to participate in democracy. So any
7	initiative, any ideas that are going towards that
8	to make sure that we can get more people to
9	participate in early voting that would be great.
10	Same day voter registration and making an
11	election day a holiday also is going to help. So
12	I would be in agreement with that as well as
13	another way of getting more people to become
14	involved in the process.
15	MR. HO: This is Dale Ho. I was just
16	wondering if you could just speak a little bit
17	more about your personal experience working in
18	immigrant communities how of a desire there is
19	amongst noncitizens to have their voices heard in
20	local elections?
21	MR. MERCARDO: Yes. So a lot of our members
22	are people who work in the service industry, are
23	people who work as landscapers, domestic workers,
24	construction workers. They have been here for,
25	you know, maybe 20, 25 years. They have been

1	long term members of our community. They shop in
2	our community. They send their kids to school.
3	So they are very, very important members in terms
4	in engaging in their own communities. Now voting
5	in the municipal elections may be it's something
6	that right now has not been allowed for them to
7	do so. There are issues that we mentioned
8	before, but they are contributing members.
9	They're paying their taxes. They're not only the
10	income tax, but when they go shopping or local
11	stores, they pay a sales tax. So they're really
12	contributing. Not just with the labor, but also
13	with their where they're spending their money.
14	I think they are a lot of background of why we
15	should extend and make sure that people that
16	already a part of this community can have a way
17	of becoming more involved in the decisions that
18	they're making about the districts.
19	MR. HO: I was wondering if you might want
20	to say a little about if there are particular
21	issues of interest amongst noncitizens in terms
22	of local issues that you think would benefit to
23	get the perspective of noncitizens?
24	MR. MERCARDO: I would say they're not very
25	different than citizens. Our communities care

1	about having better schools. They care about
2	better public transportation. Like here in
3	Staten Island a lot of folks can't afford to have
4	a car. So they have to rely on buses and the one
5	line of train that we have here in Staten Island.
6	So we have people here, for example, that live in
7	Port Richmond and they have to travel to
8	Tottenville the next day to work and it takes an
9	hour and a half. So there are a lot of reasons
10	why I believe people are invested, but they're
11	not that different than the other people who are
12	voting right now. It's really about better jobs,
13	it's really about better schools, better
14	transportation. All of those local issues that
15	people care about.
16	MR. HO: If noncitizens could vote in local
17	elections, do you have any concerns about the
18	possibility that folks could be confused about
19	whether or not they could be eligible to vote in
20	state and federal elections? Because I think the
21	last thing anyone would want would be for someone
22	to inadvertently register or vote for elections
23	or in elections for which they're not eligible
24	and then have to face some kind of sanctions as a
25	result of that. I mean I think the last thing we

1	would be for someone to render themselves
2	ineligible for naturalization or removable,
3	because they voted in the federal election when
4	they're not eligible. Is that a concern or do
5	you feel like that's something that's manageable?
6	MR. MERCARDO: I think as long as we have a
7	very thorough public education campaign about if
8	we were to have this, what does it look like?
9	Partnership with community organization, with
10	churches and places where immigrant communities,
11	for example, go to would be key to make sure that
12	people understand exactly what they're eligible
13	for. I haven't heard personally for examples,
14	but I see your concern.
15	MR. HO: Just one last question. In your
16	opinion, should we open voting to all noncitizens
17	or only a subset of noncitizens. Like say green
18	cardholders or people who are here legally or
19	just any noncitizen?
20	MR. MERCARDO: I will leave that to you all
21	to discuss.
22	MR. HO: Personal opinion.
23	MR. MERCARDO: I am of my personal opinion
24	that anyone who lives in the district, you know,
25	for at least six months or so and is working and

1	is having a family there, should have the
2	opportunity to become involved in the decisions
3	that are made, whether they're working and
4	they're paying taxes regardless of their
5	citizenship, immigration status or none at all.
6	MR. HO: Thanks. Those are the only
7	questions I have.
8	MR. BRAGG: Kyle Bragg. So I hear you and I
9	agree that the undocumented population in our
10	city contributes richly to our city and our
11	communities. One of the concerns is a lot
12	dialogue about whether undocumented workers
13	undocumented residents should have the ability to
14	vote is whether or not that invites ICE (sic)
15	then to set up camps at these polling sites and
16	then further intimidate these undocumented
17	workers. I would like to hear your opinion on
18	that. And second in regards to the lowering of
19	the age for voters, I would be interested in
20	knowing the statics of participatory budgeting
21	process, because I know they opened that up to 14
22	and older. I'll be interested in knowing how
23	much they've engaged in that process to see
24	whether or not there is any means, if there's any
25	work in pursuing opening up the general

1	elections
	0_000_010

2	MR. MERCARDO: So in terms of your first
3	question it would be very difficult I think to
4	assess if they're actually going to show up to
5	places where people are trying to vote. I think
6	it would be a great responsibility from the city
7	to make sure that these places are safe for every
8	one. To be able to go in without fearing that
9	anybody is going to be outside arresting them.
10	Like it's happening right now on Staten Island.
11	Just yesterday we had an arrest of a person at
12	the criminal court, which is a block away from
13	here, a person who went in with an assault case
14	and it was dismissed at the courthouse. He
15	walked out and got picked up by immigration. So
16	I know that is a very real problem right now that
17	needs to be fixed. And I totally hear your
18	concerns about it. I love to work more. I
19	actually was with Governor Cuomo announcing the
20	seriousness of a measure that he's got to do to
21	make sure that ICE complies with basic rules of
22	due process and warrants and things like that.
23	In terms of your second question, I think it
24	has been incredible the amount of young people
25	that have been able to participate in the

1	participatory budgeting. Because it's not just
2	about voting on something, it's about providing
3	the ideas first. Ideas about how can you spend,
4	in this case, say a million dollars in your
5	community. So they were not just able to just go
6	out and vote, they were actually able to
7	participate in the idea what can we do with this
8	money. So it's really, really engaging. I think
9	a lot of young people, especially the people that
10	we work with, have had a great experience to
11	start becoming civically engaged at a very young
12	age even before leaving high school.
13	MS. SEECHARRAN: Annetta Seecharran. So I
14	was interested in this issue of including
15	undocumented individuals in the noncitizen voting
16	recommendation, but I think my colleagues have
17	covered the nuances about that. But I was also
18	wondering if you can speak about your knowledge
19	of the experiences of other municipalities across
20	the country that have noncitizen voting and what
21	impact that has had on the policy making or on
22	those localities.
23	MR. MERCARDO: I have examples for I believe
24	(inaudible) is one of them. I don't have the
25	other ones with me. But I have not heard of any

1	first effects of any of these examples. I can
2	furnish you all with the statistics about
3	specific municipalities who have done this. It's
4	just another way of where people can be a part of
5	the political process. I think not just the
6	resources that come to where you are, but make
7	sure that people themselves are the ones who are
8	driving the conversations. I was in concert of
9	elected officials who are the ones that are
10	charge of making policies. It's really important
11	that place is not a closed door. But we can open
12	it up to more people not just in terms of
13	immigration status, but I will be happy to
14	provide you with information about other
15	municipalities.
16	MS. FERNANDEZ: Angela Fernandez. I'm glad
17	that the commissioner brought that up. My
18	understanding is that there are 11 cities around
19	the country that have noncitizen voting. I
20	wanted to speak ask you a question around the
21	intersection of criminal law and immigration law
22	and how that impacts specifically legal permanent
23	residents, and how that could be a barrier for
24	them to become citizens. Even when a legal
25	permanent resident has one misdemeanor and that

1	makes them inadmissible. That makes them unable
2	to become a citizen. I would like to know if you
3	are familiar with that and if you can share any
4	thoughts on that.
5	MR. MERCARDO: Yeah, I think a lot of these
6	issues have happened communities where may be
7	overly policed or for whatever reason they start
8	getting criminal records. Especially for very,
9	very minor violations like being in the park
10	after dark or you know other things, right, that
11	are very minimal. But then become that obstacle
12	for people to become citizens, because of having
13	those. So I would say it's very important that
14	we also look at that issue where our communities
15	that being over policed for very very low
16	violations where we go to other ones, and I don't
17	want to name names here on Staten Island where
18	people are doing the same things and we do see
19	that type of enforcement in it. So you know the
20	intersection of communities with the criminal
21	justice system specifically for minor violations
22	is really, really an obstacle for people that are
23	going to become citizen.
24	MR. PERALES: I want to thank you. We've
25	taken up an awful lot of your time. We

1	appreciate it. I like to have the next speaker
2	to have the opportunity.
3	MR. TIMBERLAND: Harry Timberland from True
4	2 Life. Our work with True 2 Life is the antigun
5	violence initiative. We work with the public on
6	mediating conflicts and wrap around services for
7	mental help, schooling, employment. One of the
8	issues I want to talk about is a very big, big
9	issue with this. Nobody speaks about it. It's
10	housing. From 28 years in and younger,
11	97 percent of males do not have their own place
12	to stay. And a lot of males are coming home,
13	maybe coming home from prison and they cannot go
14	back to their housing projects because they're
15	banned and have nowhere to go. And they're
16	incarcerated from Richmond County which is Staten
17	Island. They're forced to go into Bellevue which
18	is in Brooklyn, a homeless shelter that the
19	conditions are terrible. So a 24, 22 year old
20	unlikely is not going to stay in that shelter.
21	When a female gets pregnant or a female is
22	battered, they have all sorts of programs and
23	it's good. They get vouchers to get placed into
24	the state. The men, nothing. If you make
25	\$50,000 a year without no criminal record, it's

1	hard for you to get an apartment then with the
2	credit checks and the first month, second month
3	security. And if there's a broker fees, forget
4	about it. Forget about it. So for the young
5	males, they have nowhere to go. On parole.
6	Where parole just sends them wherever they can
7	send them. Staten Island has no shelters. They
8	have project hospitality which they stuff them in
9	a church somewhere and make them get up very
10	early. So the work that we do is trying to
11	assist them from prison reform and reentry. It's
12	very difficult to tell somebody I can't help you.
13	You can't come in my house. Where do they go?
14	This is very important. So we need something
15	done. We need some housing. Not just the people
16	coming home from prison. In general there's no
17	responsibility. 22, 23 years old in New York
18	State, 98 percent do not have their own place.
19	That's it.
20	MR. PERALES: We hear the issue of housing
21	all the time. I want to thank you. You have
22	been very eloquent and I think articulated in
23	communicating to us how desperate the situation
24	has become.
25	Give the other gentleman an opportunity to

1 speak. Thank
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MR. PERRY: Good afternoon everybody. My

name is Mike Perry. I'm the program manager of

the antigun violence organization called True 2

Life. We are part of the crisis management

system. The mayor backs this initiative and so

does our amazing councilwoman Debi Rose.

I just want to speak about advocating for more cure violence programs on Staten Island. Ιf you look at the numbers where these sites are located, these cure violence antigun violence initiative sites, you'll see that the numbers of shootings, the percentage of shootings in homicide are down at an amazing number. We need more sites on Staten Island. We have two current sites right now. One in Stapleton and Park Hill area, which the numbers have been phenomenal. We are looking at almost 400 days without a homicide in a specific area where we're from, and that's definitely due to the men and woman who are working those streets working with our people that we know that we identify with. In terms of changing their mentality, changing their mindsets, changing what's called a community norm. So I'm a life long Staten Islander. First

1	let me welcome you guys to our borough, right?
2	Welcome every one. We want to welcome you to our
3	borough. Me and my staff are lifelong Staten
4	Islanders. So we just need to speak about more
5	cure violence and antigun violence initiative
6	programs here on Staten Island. We need backup.
7	We need help with things like recidivism
8	programs, right. Because we can't do it alone.
9	Like my brother poppa said he spoke about we have
10	wrap around services. One of our wrap around
11	services on Staten Island is mental health.
12	These are organizations where the youth that we
13	deal that are dealing with this trauma that
14	they've been dealing with since youth, right.
15	Staten Island Mental Health is an organization
16	that we refer them to. Day Top also for
17	substance abuse. New York City Interpersonal
18	Development for conflict mediation and stuff like
19	that. Although we are the mastic conflict
20	mediators. This is why these numbers these
21	shootings, these homicides are down in these
22	areas. So we do have help with some of our wrap
23	around services, but I think we would benefit
24	immensely from the recidivism program on Staten
25	Island. And lastly, again, I'm also a life long

1	Staten Islander, so I do want to advocate for
2	we are already deemed the forgotten borough. We
3	want to make sure you guys don't forget about us.
4	I want to advocate for affordable housing. Also
5	me being a lifelong Staten Islander and community
6	record centers. Thank you.
7	MR. PERALES: Any of our commissioners have
8	a comment?
9	MR. BRAGG: Kyle Bragg. I agree, again,
10	that we have a long way to go with criminal
11	justice reform in the city, state and country. I
12	agree that everything that you've said that we
13	have to deal with the recidivism that's taking
14	place. So whatever it takes we're very
15	interested in hearing what you guys are doing and
16	recommendations. How we address the recidivism
17	problems. If we don't address it then we do our
18	city an injustice. Thank you.
19	MR. PERALES: Anyone else? Thank you all
20	very, very much. That is our last panel.
21	I just want to reiterate my own personal
22	commitment to the process in which we are getting
23	all these comments from people in the community
24	and the interest that they've shown. Let me
25	throw the floor open to my fellow commissioners

1	to react to what we've heard today and to the
2	process of engaging. Every one is smiling. Is
3	that an affirmation of my comment?
4	MS. ANGELO: Larian Angelo. As a former
5	budget person, I believe I've heard the
6	participatory budgeting two or three times
7	tonight. And I think it's one of the most
8	interesting and remarkable changes in city
9	government happening very quietly. It's not only
10	allows people to allocate capital within their
11	own district. I suspect the changes how they
12	look at government. Because they get to in
13	effect be the government. So I'm glad it's
14	happening here in Debi Rose's district. Again,
15	it's a great reform.
16	MR. PERALES: Yes. Any other thoughts?
17	MS. SEECHARRAN: This is Annetta Seecharran.
18	I appreciate hearing some very concrete
19	recommendations today that we can consider. I
20	have to admit that I'm sitting here feeling very
21	heartbroken about some of the needs that have
22	been expressed around social services,
23	particularly housing and feeling like sort of
24	racking my brain thinking what can this
25	commission going to do about that. So that's

1	just sort of expressing hearing these
2	testimonies.
3	MS. FERNANDEZ: Angela Fernandez. I was
4	surprised by the diversity of issues that were
5	presented. And especially around on this last
6	one on gun violence and what role does the
7	commission may or can play in terms of the
8	charter. What areas of the charter we may never
9	have considered before. Especially on this
10	particular issue gun violence. It would be very
11	interesting to see. And of course I think that a
12	conversation around who can vote in city
13	government is a worthwhile conversation to have.
14	MR. PERALES: It sounds almost if we're
15	getting a charge to staff. One of the things I'm
16	interested in obviously, the limitations that
17	we have if what we're doing is trying to amend
18	the situation which is obviously our charge. The
19	city charter doesn't provide money for anybody.
20	Doesn't fund any programs. Can't do anything
21	about violence. But there are some things that
22	we can do and I'm intrigued. I like the staff to
23	clarify for us the limits of what we can do when
24	it comes to election law in changing election
25	laws and where we can push the boundaries

Τ	vis-a-vis the registration process. Obviously we
2	can't do early voting, because that's clearly
3	state law. But there must be some things that we
4	can do to facilitate registration and facilitate
5	voting. I ask you to try as hard as you can to
6	come up with ways of things that we can pursue
7	that would push the envelope as they say to make
8	things in New York City a little easier to vote,
9	to participate in democracy.
LO	Does the commission agree that that's the
L1	charge?
L2	PERSON: Yes.
L3	MS. CLARKE: Una Clarke. I wanted to say as
L4	a product of a charter revision when the city
L5	decided that 32 members were not enough, and that
L6	some were elected and others weren't appointed,
L7	and the charter was then reviewed. That
L8	increased the numbers of members on the City

and the charter was then reviewed. That
increased the numbers of members on the City

Council advocating the first ever immigrant woman
from anywhere to have been elected and that's
because we were able to educate the community
which I was a part of. That it was time that we
step up to the table and take responsibility for
ourselves in the way that we lived in the City of

New York. So I am very conscious of the issues

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1	that come before us that somebody may say it's
2	not workable. Once we educate communities about
3	the benefits, I'm sure that we will be able to
4	work together to make it a home that all New
5	Yorkers can be proud of, because I'm proud of my
6	ten years in the New York City Council. And the
7	fact that I left the Council with a good name and
8	a good reputation. So much so that I could be on
9	this commission to be able to take another deep
10	dive into what we do to continue to make our city
11	a place where New Yorkers feel that this is their
12	home and they can participate in the life of the
13	communities of which we were all apart of.
14	MR. PERALES: Seems like that's a good note
15	to end on unless you have a comment to make.
16	MS. WEISER: This is Wendy Weiser. I do
17	very much enjoy all of the testimony and the
18	recommendations and the diverse issues that were
19	presented.
20	A number of people raised recommendations on
21	topics that there's also pending legislation in
22	this City Council in reference to that. I think
23	it would be helpful to look at to compare what's
24	in the charter and what are the legislative
25	proposals on the topics relating to voting and

Τ	money and politics and some of the other issues
2	that came up today. So I would be very
3	interested in seeing a list of those pending
4	legislations so we could see what other things
5	could be considered elsewhere.
6	MR. PERALES: The one caution I would cite
7	is that there are many times in which legislation
8	is considered and then again considered and years
9	go by. I think we have this unique opportunity
10	to take it immediately to the voters in November.
11	I think it's a good idea to find out what the
12	City Council may be considering if only to make
13	some excellent ideas. But some of them may not
14	be adopted.
15	MS. WEISER: To be clear, I think the
16	purpose of getting additional ideas for the
17	commission from the City Council members as well
18	not to suggest that we shouldn't look at it.
19	MR. PERALES: Mr. Ho?
20	MR. HO: I just wanted to echo Chairman
21	Perales request from staff that we get whatever
22	information you can in the time that you can
23	about our legal about the city's legal
24	authority to have different eligibility
25	requirements for voting in municipal elections

1	and then different election procedures from the
2	state in terms of methods of registration, timing
3	of registration up to some methods of
4	registration including, automatic registration,
5	timing registration up until election day and
6	time voting including early voting, because it's
7	not something that, despite the fact that I
8	practice in collection law, that I actually know
9	in terms of New York City's independent
10	authorities separate from the states as set those
11	requirements differently.
12	MR. SIEGAL: John Siegel. I would just add
13	to the list that Dale Ho outlined also the day on
14	which election day is held, I know that there is
15	a definition of election day in the state
16	election law, but whether the city has any
17	flexibility to do it on a different day, because
18	the suggestion of Sunday which is non-elsewhere
19	is a very significant idea. If there's any room
20	to change the date of a municipal election, I
21	like to know that.
22	MS. FERNANDEZ: I like to respond to that
23	Angela Fernandez. I think that instead of moving
24	it to a weekend day, potentially exploring the
25	day that is already the election day, and at the

1	municipal	level	making	it	a hol:	idav.

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Is there any room or space where it's a municipal holiday on that Tuesday, whether it be primaries or the general election, because that does happen in other countries in the world.

Where if the election is always on a Tuesday, they just shut down that Tuesday. Just explore to see if any possibility of that.

MR. SCISSURA: I'm just going to speak as a veteran on charter commissions. Carlo Scissura. We're going to get excited at every meeting about things we hear. I would just urge, just from my experience, that we don't talk issues or debate issues right now until we at least get through one round of hearings. Because you'll see every borough will have similar things and then every borough will have unique issues and ideas. although I agree that the staff should look at the election law things, because I think that's going to come up. But my recommendation would be get through the five hearings and then have a meeting to literally and the staff to give us, you know 30, 40, issues and then we can decide which expert panels and things should go with them.

Τ	MR. PERALES: This is the chair speaking. I
2	got my own views similar to that. We're going to
3	end up with a preliminary report. But I do think
4	that certainly on these voting issues where we
5	were appointed because of all us share an
6	interest in democratizing our elections that we
7	really get a better feel of what it is that we
8	can do. I just don't want us to go through all
9	five boroughs talking about setting a new
10	election day when we can't do it. Or early
11	voting when that's beyond our power. So I like
12	to find out as soon as possible what is it that
13	we could entertain so that we keep that in the
14	front of our minds when we hear testimony in the
15	other boroughs.
16	Did anybody else want to say something?
17	MS. GREENBERGER: It's Sharon Greenberger.
18	I just wanted to say I was struck by the fact
19	that many of the comments here tonight were about
20	resources ultimately and the allocation of
21	resources. And in some ways some of those
22	resources are depended on how we as New Yorkers
23	are going to be counted in the upcoming census.
24	So there is a question about participation.
25	We're encouraging participation and voting is a

1	form of participating in that democracy so is
2	being counted. So I think there's going to be
3	some interesting overlap in some of those issues.
4	MR. PERALES: Point well taken. I will now
5	entertain a motion. I heard a motion to adjourn.
6	I heard it second. All in favor. Any opposed.
7	Meeting is adjourned.
8	(Whereupon, at 8:18 P.M., the above matter
9	concluded.)
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1	CERTIFICATE
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3	STATE OF NEW YORK )
4	: SS.: COUNTY OF RICHMOND )
5	
6	I, CHRISTINE CUTRONE, a Notary Public for and
7	within the State of New York, do hereby certify:
8	That the above is a correct transcription of my
9	stenographic notes.
10	I further certify that I am not related to any
11	of the parties to this action by blood or by marriage and
12	that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this
13	matter.
14	IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand
15	this 4th day of May 2018.
16	
17	Christene Cutione
18	CHRISTINE CUTRONE
19	CINTELLINE COLLONE
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