

CRC Meeting

Moderated by Dr. Hazel Dukes

Monday, July 8, 2024

5:02 p.m.

Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture

515 Malcolm X Boulevard

New York, NY 10037

Reported by: Thea Popko

JOB NO.: 6762744

A P P E A R A N C E S

List of Attendees:

Greg Baggett, Public Participant

Kyle Bragg, Commissioner

Gale Brewer, Public Participant

Chinnor Campbell, Public Participant

Cordell Cleare, Senator, Presenter

Rev. Herbert Daughtry, Commissioner

Ruben Diaz, Commissioner

Inez Dickens, Assemblywoman, Presenter

John Dillard, Public Participant

Amaury Dujardin, Policy Manager, Citizens Union,
Presenter

Dolina Duzant, Public Participant (by videoconference)

Adrienne Felton, Community Affairs at NYC Public
Advocate, Presenter

Marilyn Galfin, Public Participant

Michael Garner, Chief Business Diversity Officer,
Presenter

Marie Gentine, Public Participant

Miles Grant, Public Participant

Lorraine Grillo, Commissioner

Sylvia Hunter, Public Participant

Christopher Lion Johnson, Public Participant
(by videoconference)

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

2 List of Attendees (Cont'd):

3 Garry Johnson, Chair of the New York State NAACP
4 Economic Development, Presenter

5 Ibrahim Xavier Johnson, Public Participant

6 Edward Kiernan, General Counsel

7 Andria Lamberton, Public Participant
8 (by videoconference)

9 Christopher Lynch, Commissioner

10 Alpheaus Marcus, Public Participant

11 Stephanie McGraw, Commissioner

12 Mr. Miles, Public Participant (by videoconference)

13 Keaton Morris, on Behalf of MWBE, Presenter

14 June Moses, Public Participant

15 Ken Ngai, Commissioner (by videoconference)

16 Jimmy Pan, New York City Racial Justice Commission,
17 Presenter

18 Everett Perry, Public Participant

19 Andrew Rein, Citizens Budget Commission, Presenter

20 Adam Roberts, Public Participant

21 Max Rose, Commissioner

22 Kai Rosenthal, Public Participant

23 Jackie Rowe-Adams, Commissioner

24 Kaya Royal, Public Participant

25 Diane Savino, Executive Director

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

List of Attendees (Cont'd):

Bishop Gerald Seabrooks, Commissioner

Carlo Scissura, Chair (by videoconference)

Michael Sisitzky, Public Participant

Rabbi Sean Stanwicz, Commissioner

Susan, Public Participant (by videoconference)

Julius Tajiddin, Public Participant

Marlene Taylor, Public Participant

Marsha Taylor, Public Participant

Pauline Toole, Commissioner, Department of Records and
Information Services, Presenter

Gladys Williams, Public Participant
(by videoconference)

Jordan J.G. Wright, Assemblyman Elect, Presenter

Keith L.T. Wright, Former Assemblymember, Presenter

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

2 VICE CHAIRMAN DUKES: -- public hearing
3 of the New York City Charter Revision Commission. I'm
4 Hazel Dukes, vice chair of the Commission. I will be
5 serving as your chair tonight. Our chair -- is
6 joining us tonight by a new Mr. Chairman. Forgive me.

7 I would like you recognize the
8 Commissioners in attendance today. Kyle Bragg;
9 Rev. Herbie Daughtry, and he's probably on his way;
10 the one and only, the former president of the Boogie
11 Down Bronx, Ruben Diaz; Lorraine Grillo, one of our
12 true public servants in the City of New York;
13 Christopher Lynch; Max Rose; Jackie Rowe-Adams,
14 Ms. Harlem herself; Stephanie McGraw, who's on her
15 way; Bishop Gerald Seabrooks; and Rabbi Sean Stanwicz.
16 They are on their way, and we will have a quorum in a
17 few seconds.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We do.

19 VICE CHAIRMAN DUKES: We have a quorum
20 now.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We do.

22 VICE CHAIR DUKES: I would like -- I
23 would like each Commissioner present and on Zoom to
24 briefly introduce yourself.

25 I'll start over with you, Lorraine.

1 MS. GRILLO: Sure -- my name is
2 Lorraine Grillo. I've been in public service for the
3 last 40 years. It's certainly an honor to be part of
4 this Commission and to hear from all of New Yorkers.
5 We've been, as we've said, to eight different hearings
6 so far. We have more to come. And we have heard some
7 really great suggestions, so I'm looking forward to
8 this evening.

9 MR. DIAZ: Good evening, everyone. I'm
10 Ruben Diaz, Jr. I'm the former Bronx Borough
11 president. Greetings from the Boogie Down Bronx.
12 It's good to be here in Harlem world.

13 Thank you, Chairman -- Mdm. Chairman,
14 Mama Dukes, for chairing this session here. To those
15 who are present and those who are listening via social
16 media or virtually, this is one of many different
17 hearings that we've had, and I appreciate the fact
18 that we've done them in the a.m., and now we're doing
19 them in the p.m. in every single borough so that
20 everyone can have their opportunity to advise us as to
21 what is it that we should take on in terms of
22 amendment in the City Charter -- you all.

23 VICE CHAIR DUKES: And you didn't tell
24 the real deal, that this is your second time taking on
25 this nonpaid task.

1 Jackie.

2 MS. ROWE-ADAMS: Good evening, Harlem.

3 MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Good evening.

4 MS. ROWE-ADAMS: Oh, I didn't hear you.

5 MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Good evening.

6 MS. ROWE-ADAMS: Okay. That's how
7 Harlem rocks. Now we've done been to five boroughs.

8 Come on, Harlem. Good evening, Harlem.

9 MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Good evening,
10 Jackie.

11 MS. ROWE-ADAMS: So let me just say I
12 am very, very proud of all of you for taking the time
13 coming out, because you feel and you know it is very
14 important for everyone citywide, communitywide to know
15 what's going on in their community. And I just want
16 to thank Mayor Adams for making sure that he give our
17 citizens, our community, and each borough a chance to
18 hear what's going on in their community.

19 And this is so important, these
20 hearings. We want you to continue to spread the word
21 that they are taking place, because that's the only
22 way we're going to get something done, by raising our
23 voices and letting our voices be heard.

24 So once again, I'm glad to be a part of
25 the Commission, and I thank my colleagues, my other

1 Commissioners for us just coming out and spending time
2 to hear what you have to say. And I'm very proud of
3 our chair, our chairperson tonight, Ms. Hazel Dukes.
4 Thank you.

5 MR. LYNCH: Good evening. Good
6 evening, Harlem. My name is Christopher Lynch. I'm
7 from the borough of Brooklyn, so I'm very happy,
8 super-excited to be here in Harlem to hear what the
9 Harlem residents have to say.

10 As we said, we've been throughout the
11 five boroughs, and we've heard a lot, learned a lot,
12 and we're super-excited to hear what Harlem has to
13 offer this evening.

14 MR. BRAGG: Good evening, all. I'm
15 Kyle Bragg, born in Brooklyn, raised in Queens, and
16 adopted by the Village of Harlem. It is an honor to
17 be here with the esteemed group of Commissioners to do
18 the work of New Yorkers by hearing from all the New
19 Yorkers around the five boroughs about what is
20 important to them and their communities.

21 The City Charter is our Constitution
22 and our bylaws, and we needed -- we're giving the
23 opportunity for New Yorkers to say, well, how does
24 this -- how does this Charter work for all New
25 Yorkers? And this is the opportunity for New Yorkers

1 to express themselves and give their thoughts and
2 opinions about the revisions that need to be made to
3 make sure that the Charter works for all of New
4 Yorkers in every borough. Thank you.

5 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Kyle, for the people
6 who have taken time to come out on this very
7 beautiful, hot day, I would like for them to know the
8 kind of service that you've given, not only as
9 president of 32BJ that protects our homes and our
10 apartments, but I would like for them to know that
11 this is your second or third time serving.

12 MR. BRAGG: Second time, 2018.

13 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Second time. And
14 when we tell you we've been to all five boroughs twice
15 already, we read every night 3 and 10 and 11 pages of
16 work that we have to do. So let's hear it for Kyle
17 Bragg.

18 MR. BRAGG: Oh, wow.

19 VICE CHAIR DUKES: And Ruben Diaz, you
20 have given your time to the City in many ways.

21 MR. ROSE: Hey, everybody. I'm --

22 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Mr. Max Rose from
23 Staten Island.

24 MR. ROSE: I'm Max Rose. I'm a former
25 member of Congress from Staten Island. It's wonderful

1 to see you all. I look forward to learning from each
2 and every one of you. Thank you for being here.

3 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Stephanie's in the
4 house.

5 MS. MCGRAW: Yes, I am. Hi, good
6 evening, everyone. I am so honored to be in the
7 Village, my Village of Harlem, you know. And with all
8 of the amazing -- you know, Harlem has just got -- and
9 I'm excited to be here, and I'm honored. I'd like to
10 thank Mayor Eric Adams for creating this amazing
11 Commission.

12 But I'm also here because we want to
13 hear from you. You are the people, you are the City,
14 you are the community. And we can't have any changes
15 without hearing from your voices. So we want to be
16 here to be the voice of the voiceless and to be able
17 to make change that affects everyone as a whole for
18 the betterment for this amazing, beautiful city.
19 Thank you.

20 VICE CHAIR DUKES: I understand that we
21 have our chairman on now and another member. Who's
22 the second person?

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Ken.

24 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Ken is on.

25 Will you guys introduce yourself to our

1 members -- to our communities.

2 We can't hear you.

3 CHAIRMAN SCISSURA: -- for a couple of
4 meetings -- police and all of you. Kyle -- we are
5 very excited about the past week and honestly about
6 what we are going to do in the short term with the
7 ballot for November, but hopefully also laying the
8 groundwork for future commissions to tackle many of
9 the complex issues that we've heard over the last
10 couple of months that we may not be able to get to
11 this year.

12 So thank you, our Chair Dukes for this
13 evening. Thank you to our executive director, our
14 general counsel, and the entire team. And I will turn
15 the microphone back to Mdm. Chair.

16 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you,
17 Mr. Chairman.

18 Can't hear you, Ken.

19 MR. NGAI: I'm here. Can you hear me?

20 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Yes, now we can.

21 MR. NGAI: Well, good evening,
22 everyone. Good evening, Harlem. I'm honored to be
23 here today to actively listen to the testimony of each
24 of the speakers that have joined us on Zoom and also
25 in person. I'm eager to hear your concerns and issues

1 and welcome any questions or thoughts that you may
2 have.

3 Let's get this thing started. And
4 without further ado, let's get going. Thank you.

5 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you. And I
6 didn't do credit to our chairman, who's away tonight,
7 but he has served twice. This will be his second time
8 serving on the Charter Revision. So you do have
9 people on this Charter Revision that has served our
10 City in so many different ways, and they care about
11 what you have to say tonight, and all the other
12 boroughs.

13 A quorum is present, and I make a
14 motion to approve the minutes of the meetings of the
15 Charter Revision Commission held on June 13th in
16 Manhattan, June 17th in the Bronx, June 20th in
17 Brooklyn, June 24th in Staten Island, June 26th in
18 Queens, and June 27th in Brooklyn.

19 Do I have a second?

20 MR. BRAGG: Second.

21 VICE CHAIR DUKES: All in favor?

22 MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Aye.

23 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Opposed?

24 Abstention? The minutes of our previous meetings have
25 been approved.

1 I would like to thank Joy Bivins,
2 Director of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black
3 Culture, for hosting us today.

4 We're here today to continue the
5 Charter Revision Commission citywide listening tour.
6 We have traveled to all five boroughs, most of them
7 multiple times so far, to hear suggestions from
8 members of the public and experts on how we, how we
9 can change our City Charter to improve the lives of
10 all New Yorkers.

11 Our Charter, which is like the
12 Constitution for the City, impacts our daily lives in
13 many ways, from public safety to sanitation and
14 everything in between. That is why it's so important
15 to hear from members of the public, elected officials,
16 and representatives of City agencies, as we consider
17 the recommendations to present to the voters at the
18 general election on November the 5th, 2024.

19 I encourage everyone here who has not
20 already done so to please look at the Commission
21 Preliminary Report that included a summary of what we
22 have heard over the last month, and staff
23 recommendations.

24 Not yet.

25 We look forward to hearing from

1 everyone here tonight, and we'll be considering new
2 suggestions until our final public hearing on July
3 22nd. Future hearing dates on our website,
4 www.nyc.gov/charter, and comments may be submitted in
5 writing to charterinfo@citycharter.nyc.gov between now
6 and 5 p.m. on July 12, 2024.

7 Who is our first presenter? Senator,
8 my senator, Cordell Cleare, the honorable senator of
9 this District that you're sitting in tonight, a woman
10 who not only as an elected official, but as a
11 community activist and a lover of Harlem. Our
12 senator.

13 MS. CLEARE: Thank you. Thank you. I
14 didn't expect to go first, but, you know, I'll go.

15 Thank you so much. Thank you,
16 everyone. Thank you, Commission, for bringing this
17 important event to our community. I'm going to try to
18 be as brief as I can.

19 I am State Senator Cordell Cleare, and
20 I'm blessed to represent the 30th District, the
21 communities of Harlem, East Harlem, what they're
22 calling West Harlem now, Morningside Heights, Hamilton
23 Heights, and the upper West Side.

24 One of the key things of the 2024
25 Charter Revision Commission is fiscal responsibility.

1 And in this regard, my number one priority that I hear
2 in my District and that of my constituents is to
3 provide truly and permanent affordable housing in our
4 District. Study after study has shown that the way we
5 build affordable housing is not only inefficient,
6 meaning it takes a long time and does not produce the
7 housing units to meet the actual need and demand, but
8 it is extraordinarily expensive and ultimately an
9 ineffective use of government resources, because the
10 crisis persists.

11 One of the greatest factors driving
12 increased housing costs in my District right now in
13 West Harlem, part of my District, is the acquisition
14 of land by a large private university. In a recent
15 report by the venerable Community Service Society
16 found that between 2010 and 2020, Community Board 9's
17 Black population declined by 14 percent.

18 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Speak up a
19 little -- sit closer --

20 MS. CLEARE: Okay, okay, okay.

21 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Get your loud voice
22 on.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, yeah.

24 MS. CLEARE: Okay, okay.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Your mad voice.

1 MS. CLEARE: So -- I don't
2 know -- where did I stop? Yeah, so one of the
3 greatest factors driving -- supports my District was
4 an acquisition of land by a large private university.
5 And a recent report by CSS found -- Community Service
6 Society -- that between 2010 and 2020 Community
7 Board 9's Black population declined by 14 percent, and
8 its Hispanic population by 10 percent.

9 In 2010 almost half of the household in
10 Board 9's household incomes were below \$50,000, and
11 only 8 percent had incomes above 200,000. By 2021 the
12 share of households of incomes below 50,000 has
13 declined by 10 percent, and the share of households at
14 the top with incomes above \$200,000 has more than
15 doubled to 19 percent.

16 Between 2010 -- I'm sorry. The share
17 of Board 9's private rental housing stock that is very
18 regulated slipped from approximately 65 percent in
19 2008, which is 22,500 units, to approximately
20 48 percent in 2022 down to 16,700 units, a loss of
21 nearly 6,000 rent-regulated units.

22 The reason I'm going through all of
23 that is because, in this case, while I have Senate
24 Bill 90288, on the state level that says to stop these
25 kinds of expansions, to stop what is going on in West

1 Harlem, but I'm urging the Charter Revision Commission
2 to adopt policies that restrict the open-ended
3 acquisition of land by private universities, which has
4 an direct nexus to increased rents, blackout
5 migration, and decreased levels of affordable housing.

6 I ask this body to take all necessary
7 actions to stop the extreme rent increases and
8 preserve our land for affordable housing development.

9 Yes, and particularly land marking and
10 other tools that we should be using to preserve the
11 affordable housing that we have. One of the things
12 that we're doing as we struggle to create new ways to
13 get affordability, we're also not looking at ways to
14 preserve the affordable housing that we already have.
15 So it doesn't make sense for us to create a thousand
16 new units and lose 500 new units. So that is what I'm
17 asking for.

18 And I did have one other comment I
19 wanted to make. The other issue that comes to me a
20 lot is that of Black-owned and Black- and Brown-owned
21 businesses in our community. And there is a
22 recommendation that I strongly support. It's
23 recommendation 1, and it would provide for
24 investigating measures to improve services provided to
25 and promote the utilization of MWBEs, including

1 studying the creation of a new agency dedicated to
2 this purpose. I believe that a new agency with
3 expanded powers is more than called for at this stage.

4 One of the ways to increase ability,
5 especially in the Black community, is to make sure
6 that we are able to open businesses in our community.
7 And I'm urging the City to create this, to promote it,
8 especially in my District, in Harlem, where we're not
9 doing -- we're doing poorly in terms of Black
10 ownership and even Black contracts getting awarded to
11 Blacks in this District, and that shouldn't be the
12 case.

13 So I thank you for listening to me. Do
14 you need anything else from me?

15 MR. DIAZ: Mme. Chair, I have a
16 question --

17 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Yeah, any
18 questions --

19 MR. DIAZ: Good evening, State Senator.

20 MS. CLEARE: Hi.

21 MR. DIAZ: Good to see you. Is there a
22 specific part of the Charter that you think that we
23 should be looking at to address this?

24 MS. CLEARE: I think when we deal with
25 upzoning and when we are giving privileges when it

1 comes to development that we have to exchange with
2 deep, deep and plenty affordability. I don't think
3 that these can be given out freely anymore, because we
4 are in a housing crisis at this point. And I think
5 that that's the part that needs to be changed.

6 MR. DIAZ: I'm looking forward to
7 examining your testimony, because you threw out a lot
8 of numbers there --

9 MS. CLEARE: Yes --

10 MR. DIAZ: -- and I really want to
11 digest them.

12 Do you have numbers as to -- so if this
13 University expanded, correct, and that means that
14 they're looking to expand on the student body. Do you
15 have any number as to whether or not the student body
16 that expanded, you know, what the numbers of Black and
17 Brown students were in that expansion?

18 MS. CLEARE: There is general -- well,
19 more -- well, Black and Brown expansion, but also
20 Black and Brown expansion from this community; right?
21 Because this is the impacted community; right? So we
22 can get Black and Brown numbers. But, no, I
23 don't -- they have not provided that in a way that it
24 can be verified. I get ZIP Codes.

25 MR. DIAZ: Okay. To the extent their

1 faculty, the staff, the support, do you know if there
2 was an expansion -- in that expansion how many were
3 Black and Brown or from the community?

4 MS. CLEARE: I do not know that number.

5 MR. DIAZ: Do you know in terms of all
6 the procurement that was due to that expansion, you
7 know, how much of it was MWBE from the local
8 community, Black and Brown in particular?

9 MS. CLEARE: So that's a part of the
10 problem, too, the reporting on that. Okay? We need
11 that reporting to come to our community, and I'm
12 asking for that as well.

13 MR. DIAZ: Thank you, Senator.

14 MS. CLEARE: Thank you.

15 MR. BRAGG: You made a point on
16 affordable housing, a point on affordable housing, and
17 I was wondering how -- what you're thinking is as to
18 how the calculus of AMIs play in that role,
19 particularly as income levels are shifting in this
20 community. You know, how do we deal with the AMIs to
21 make sure that affordable housing that is built is
22 affordable --

23 MS. CLEARE: Right, so -- no, thank you
24 for that question.

25 Number one, of course we have to

1 address the federal AMI, but we also have to create
2 neighbor AMIs. Okay? AMIs that are relative to the
3 neighborhoods that we're building in.

4 Across the state, the average income
5 for Blacks across the state is \$53,000 a year. In the
6 five boroughs it's even less than that, somewhere
7 around \$45,000 a year. If we have rents that are
8 costing people \$3,000 month -- what is that, \$36,000 a
9 year -- we're not even in the running.

10 We're not even -- and, you know, the
11 "New York Times" reported the outmigration of Blacks
12 from New York State, not just New York City, 200,000
13 Blacks left, and that number has increased since that
14 report was originally made. This is something that we
15 have to look at. We have to build housing for
16 workforce and for people that live in New York City
17 and in these neighborhoods. Otherwise we, are
18 building our own displacement.

19 MR. BRAGG: Thank you, Senator.

20 MR. DIAZ: Mme. Chairman, sorry. Just
21 for purposes -- and forgive me -- you want to
22 educate -- you said you want to -- you know, and I'm
23 not taking any positions here, even though I have my
24 own personal opinion and position. But for those that
25 are listening, AMI is the area median income.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

2 MR. DIAZ: And when the Senator sees
3 about addressing this at the federal level, those that
4 are listening or those who are reading the minutes
5 later on on this hearing should understand that the
6 federal dictates what that means. And for purposes of
7 New York City, the area that they take into
8 consideration with all of the incomes are like White
9 Plains; like Westchester, New York; and Long Island.
10 And so that's how they take into consideration what
11 the area median income is.

12 And so we don't -- you know, many
13 people will take umbrage or question as to whether or
14 not somebody's income should be taken into the same
15 consideration from the Bronx or from Harlem as someone
16 from Scarborough.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It should be --

18 MR. DIAZ: Yes, but, well, that's a
19 whole debate. I just want to educate whoever's
20 listening.

21 MS. CLEARE: Right. Thank you for
22 raising that, exactly it. It is the area median
23 income. It's a false and skewed one, and it's one
24 that should be fixed on federal level, and I want
25 everybody to please encourage our federal officials to

1 help do that. And I believe that Congresswoman Clark
2 has a bill, and we've got to support that. And, you
3 know, elections are coming up. Let's make sure we're
4 doing that, too.

5 But, you know, we as New York City and
6 as a state, we need to look at neighborhood median
7 income, because those numbers that I talked about
8 earlier, they're even lower in certain communities
9 when you talk about the Black community in Harlem,
10 what the median income is. And we do have to look at
11 the racial impact of much of what is going on in our
12 communities.

13 MS. MCGRAW: Thank you. I have a
14 question. Thank you, Sen. Cordell.

15 MS. CLEARE: Thank you.

16 MS. MCGRAW: Yes. You mentioned about
17 having this community supported on seeing more
18 minorities owning their businesses; right? I live
19 here in Harlem, so I can say that I don't see a lot of
20 minorities. So as Commissioners, how can we support
21 this effort to get more minority-owned businesses
22 here, or what kind of training program, or what kind
23 of -- what do they need to get themselves prepared?
24 Do they need to learn how to access getting loans or
25 what? Because it's concerning.

1 MS. CLEARE: Thank you. Thank you for
2 that question, Stephanie.

3 I saw in the recommendation -- in the
4 recommendations that were made that there should be a
5 study to create a new agency, and I fully support
6 that. Let's study why this stubborn problem of Blacks
7 not being able to own businesses, why does it persist,
8 and especially in a community like Harlem? So, you
9 know, I totally support that.

10 And also we have to promote this. We
11 have to make it that people want to come and do
12 business in Black communities with Black contractors
13 and others in our community. And that's something
14 that's been a really stubborn problem, so I totally
15 support and can't wait and hope that the Charter
16 Commission makes that recommendation, and I'd like to
17 see the Mayor including that.

18 MS. MCGRAW: Thank you, Senator.

19 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you so much,
20 Senator.

21 MS. ROWE-ADAMS: Thank you. Thank you.

22 VICE CHAIR DUKES: And as a former
23 member of Community Board 10, thank you, Borough
24 President, for bringing that and educating our
25 community, because many times we've had to fight our

1 congressman. Former Congressman Rangel, he would be
2 inundated with people, "Why can't we do it?" And he
3 had to explain, you know, about it. So thank you so
4 much for that.

5 Any more from our -- okay. Next we
6 will have Michael Garner.

7 MR. GARNER: I'm going to differ to my
8 assembly lady first.

9 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Well, she was next.
10 Well, we will have her now. The Queen of Harlem who
11 has served this community with such great distinction,
12 is retiring but bringing a wealth of information and
13 knowledge over the years where she's served in the
14 City Council as deputy speaker of our City Council,
15 and then in the assembly.

16 Welcome, Assemblywoman --

17 MS. DICKENS: Thank you so much --

18 VICE CHAIR DUKES: -- Inez Dickens.
19 Assemblywoman in our District.

20 MS. DICKENS: I want to thank first the
21 community. I wish this room was filled with the
22 voters and the residents of this community, because
23 this is a very important amendment that is being
24 considered.

25 I want to thank the panels that are

1 here. I want to thank Community Board 10 and of
2 course Mme. Dr. Hazel Dukes for hosting this, and of
3 course Schomburg Research Center for agreeing to allow
4 us the use of this space.

5 I want to recognize my colleague in
6 Albany, Sen. Cordell Cleare, and any other electeds
7 that I have omitted. Please forgive me, but know I
8 recognize you.

9 Good afternoon, and thank you very much
10 for having me to participate in this uniquely
11 important discussion on how the City can best
12 formulate compacts with its residents to keep New York
13 the center of the world.

14 With that being said, I would like to
15 thank the mayor, Eric Adams, for committing so much of
16 himself to the betterment of this City under the most
17 excruciating of circumstances. Not a single one of
18 anyone in prior administrations has faced such extreme
19 challenges while facing obstruction so vast. With so
20 many burdens being placed upon his shoulders when he
21 took the oath of office, his tasks were made more
22 weightier with the arrival of more than 2,000
23 migrants, asylum-seekers, and virtually no aid from
24 the federal government.

25 To find anyone as capable of stretching

1 out any measure of success, it would be difficult to
2 find. The Mayor understands that if the City is to
3 rebound from such difficulties, we need our businesses
4 to grow, particularly our MWBEs.

5 In the case, if many of you have not
6 heard, I am an MWBE and an elected that is
7 representing the Village of Harlem. What I feel is
8 fortunately in my favor as an MWBE and a public
9 servant is that I understand the difference between
10 the political rhetoric and an actual record of
11 accomplishments. I can tell who is spinning a web of
12 bamboozlement and who is constructing a format to
13 benefit people for the future.

14 I recognize the falsehoods -- those
15 partial information being regurgitated in a report
16 about the lackluster performance of MWBEs contracting
17 with the City of New York. New York City's
18 Comptroller's report is only 30 percent of New York
19 City contracts, the 30 percent that generates the
20 least amount of revenue to the City of New York.
21 Hence, this report covers the least amount of
22 contracts that could actually be generated to MWBEs
23 and others.

24 Let me explain for a moment. The City
25 has what is known as mayoral agencies which the Mayor

1 oversees, and non-mayoral agencies which the
2 controller oversees. In order for this report to be
3 written, it is only inclusive of those agencies in
4 which the controller's office oversees, and that is a
5 mere 30 percent of City operations. The Mayor
6 controls 70 percent. This means that the office of
7 the controller can only report on 30 percent of New
8 York City's total contracts.

9 The mayoral agencies include the School
10 Construction Authority, New York City Housing
11 Authority, Department of Education, Health and
12 Hospital Corporation, and the Economic Development
13 Corp. These are the five largest agencies and
14 economic drivers in the City of New York.

15 So let me tell you what Mayor Adams has
16 done to increase MWBEs and MBEs, and there is a
17 difference. The Mayor is pushing for a Charter
18 revision that would create an agency entirely
19 dedicated to MWBEs and MBEs. Its duties would be all-
20 encompassing of the what is his administration has
21 already overtaken -- undertaken and tried to
22 administer.

23 His administration proposed five bills
24 to the New York State Legislature to help advance the
25 abilities of state agency to contract with MWBEs and

1 MBEs and help the Mayor enforce those goals. All five
2 of these bills have been passed by the Assembly and
3 the Senate. Four have been signed by the governor,
4 and the fifth bill is on the desk of the governor
5 awaiting her signature.

6 These bills are as follows: New York
7 City's centralized mentoring programs for MWBEs and
8 MBEs, which was passed into law. This would be
9 targeted towards Black and Hispanic contractors so
10 that they will be up to date on what is allowed, what
11 is not allowed, and what they can do, and will enable
12 them to actually put in for contracts.

13 Bill 2 raises the discretionary
14 threshold for MWBEs to \$1.5 million. That was passed
15 into law.

16 The third bill that makes an e-bidding
17 process for MWBEs and MBEs more robust and helps
18 provide information on the City's procurement
19 performance, and which was also passed into law.

20 The fourth one is community workforce
21 hiring bill, where large companies have to hire, must
22 hire by law 30 percent of their workforce from the
23 community in which they are building. This bill also
24 includes an enforcement mechanism, because we know
25 that if the bill doesn't have teeth, it may not work.

1 But this mechanism for tracking the procurement
2 performance of the prime contractor with MWBEs ensures
3 that they meet the City's goals, and that was passed
4 into law.

5 The fifth one, MWBE's reciprocity bill.
6 If you are a certified MWBE by the City and the
7 State -- that's what it's going to be -- you would
8 also be certified by the State and vice versa. That's
9 very important, because oftentimes our MWBEs may be
10 registered with the City of New York and not the
11 State, and when they go for a State contract, they
12 don't qualify. This is absolutely necessary. But
13 that's the bill that awaits the governor's signature.

14 As successful as the MWBE programs have
15 been for communities outside of those like mine, the
16 Mayor has sought to encompass all communities by
17 seeking first those who have lagged in their
18 responses, that includes Black and Hispanics, to
19 become more active participants in the procurement
20 process. A policy of the like has never, ever been
21 accomplished by any other administration. This policy
22 is to be directed first and foremost to Black and
23 Hispanic registered MWBEs. After this has been
24 exhausted, then and only then will the process be
25 opened up to other MWBEs.

1 The responsibility of this goal will
2 fall on the individual agencies who have a listing of
3 registered MWBEs first to contact. And we know that
4 oftentimes that has failed. But in order to ensure
5 that the City agencies comply with this policy to
6 increase Black and Hispanic contracts, Michael Garner
7 has been mandating weekly MWBE contract meetings to
8 oversee agency's performance. Agencies are tasked on
9 their ability to conduct outreach, who they've
10 contacted, what was the result of those contacts.

11 These meetings are conducted by the
12 Mayor's chief business diversity officer, Michael
13 Garner, who has built an illustrious career in
14 promoting MWBE procurement across several City and
15 State agencies. True experience, successful
16 experience, true negotiating skills, all of which
17 mandates a successful policy change, which will
18 definitively increase Black and Hispanic contractual
19 participation.

20 These are facts that you will rarely
21 hear from anyone, whether we are talking about the
22 media competition or distracted conversation. Because
23 just like Donald Trump, oftentimes there is an
24 underlying reason to keep the voter ignorant. There
25 are no ignorant voters in Harlem. We will not be

1 bamboozled. We will not be fragile. We will not be
2 fooled. We will not be conned. We are educated
3 voters. In a city as massive as New York City is with
4 an old infrastructure for transportation, with a city
5 that was hit with COVID, shutting down our businesses
6 and schools for nearly two years, with an influx of so
7 many of our asylum-seekers with little federal help,
8 relying mostly on City government, it is extremely
9 difficult to match the City of New York. This is the
10 third year of the Mayor's first term, and I believe
11 that he is accomplishing much of what he committed to
12 doing.

13 We need this Charter amended. I'm
14 asking for the Community Board 10 and my voters in my
15 District to please read and understand the meaning and
16 the significance of changing this amendment, putting
17 this into the Charter, and what it will mean in the
18 Black and Hispanic communities. And you will vote in
19 our interest. Thank you and God bless.

20 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Any questions from
21 our Commissioners?

22 MS. DICKENS: I have no questions,
23 except that I ask you to keep your minds open, be
24 truthful to yourselves, understand that in a City as
25 great as New York, Black and Hispanic businesses has

1 been shortchanged in their ability to have contracts
2 with the City and, in fact, the federal government as
3 well. This is a step in the right direction, to
4 change that policy, to see to it that it is an
5 inclusive city and we claim it to be. Thank you.

6 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Any from our Zoom
7 members? Any questions?

8 MS. DICKENS: Any questions from anyone
9 for me? I'm happy to answer anyone's questions.

10 Thank you so much, and may you have a
11 wonderful blessed summer, and God bless this country
12 as we vote in November.

13 VICE CHAIR DUKES: As our former
14 borough president said, this meeting is about to
15 educate our communities. I know that you didn't know
16 many of the things that were said today, and as you
17 come and complain to your elected officials that
18 you're not getting contracts, you don't know what to
19 do, this was a lesson of education. Thank you,
20 Assemblywoman Inez Dickens. Thank you, our State
21 Senator Cordell Cleare. Thank both of you.

22 Do we have any -- is Al Tell [ph] in
23 the house?

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We have Jordan

1 Wright.

2 VICE CHAIR DUKES: We have Jordan
3 Wright here.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Assemblyman
5 elect.

6 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Jordan Wright, the
7 assemblyman elect. Yes.

8 MR. J. WRIGHT: Thank you so much.
9 Thank you so much for the Commission. Thank you.
10 Thank you, members of the Commission, for the
11 invitation, for doing this here in the Village of
12 Harlem. It's really important. It's really key. And
13 I think that the City is in great hands, you know,
14 with the people here today, so thank you once again.

15 My name is Jordan J.G. Wright, and I
16 recently won the Democratic Primary to represent the
17 Assembly District here in Harlem. As the Democratic
18 nominee, I look forward to fighting for my community's
19 vote in November, but that's not why we're here
20 today.

21 And that's it for my community. I am
22 firm of the belief that we need to support our local
23 businesses, for this community in particular. We need
24 stronger protection for MWBEs and affirmative action
25 programs, which are under attack at the federal level.

1 In fact, federal courts have been very unfriendly to
2 women- and minority-owned business programs, and we
3 need to keep a close watch on the presidential race,
4 because the outcome could make that situation even
5 worse.

6 Locally, there's plenty you can still
7 do. If we're to include the City Charter -- if we are
8 to include in the City Charter an agency responsible
9 for the safety, protection, and growth of MWBEs, it
10 would keep the program vibrant and help it to run. By
11 consolidating this power in the Charter, it will
12 enable the City to award contracts in a more inclusive
13 manner that includes ensuring that more jobs are
14 created in communities of color.

15 In addition, awarding more contracts to
16 Black and Hispanic businesses is key to the prosperity
17 for this City we call home. And by focusing on
18 traditionally underserved minority communities, we can
19 help lift people out of poverty and build positive
20 economic output where it's most needed in villages
21 like this, in Harlem.

22 It may be cliché, but a rising tide
23 really does lift all boats, and it would behoove us as
24 a city to beginning the process with economically
25 challenged communities that can really use the City's

1 support.

2 Finally, it is important that our
3 elected and soon-to-be-elected officials move forward
4 with minority- and women-owned businesses at the top
5 of our minds.

6 Thank you, and I'm happy to entertain
7 any questions, and I think we need to continue to have
8 a Harlem that is for the many and not just for the few
9 and a city that's for the many and not just for the
10 few. Thank you so much.

11 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you. Any
12 questions from our Commissioners? Those of you on
13 Zoom? No? Thank you so much, Assemblyman Elect.

14 MS. ROWE-ADAMS: I don't have any
15 questions. I just have a comment. I just want to say
16 as one in Commission and everything that's happened
17 here in our communities and our City, I just want to
18 thank you for being here along with so many others.
19 And when we talk about -- and I'm going to get it
20 right, Hazel -- when we talk about MWBEs, I am so glad
21 you're right on. And as the assemblyman elect, I'm
22 sure you're going to be working very closely with
23 Michael Garner. So I just want to thank you and say
24 congratulations to you again.

25 MR. J. WRIGHT: Thank you so much,

1 Jackie. Thank you to the whole Commission. I'm
2 here -- with you all right in front, so thank you so
3 much. Keep on doing the good work.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

5 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Michael Garner, do
6 you want to take your stand now?

7 MR. GARNER: Yes, good evening. And
8 you was trying to do me a favor by allowing me to
9 speak first. Well, it's going to be a hard charge
10 going after Assemblyman Inez Dickens and Jordan Wright
11 and Assemblywoman Cleare.

12 I'm here, and I'm happy -- this is my
13 third testimony. We went all around the City a couple
14 of weeks ago. We were in Brooklyn last week, and now
15 we're -- in Harlem.

16 And let me just say that the important
17 topic of creating MWBEs is long overdue. There's been
18 a lot of mayors that have talked about MWBE, but very
19 few, if any, have put their muscle and their resources
20 behind doing New York. And as our previous --
21 everything that candidate Eric Adams has said that he
22 was going to do with regards to MWBE he has done, and
23 even more.

24 I would say that Inez -- Assemblywoman
25 Dickens indicated that the Mayor was successful in

1 going to Albany and getting all of his MWBE bills
2 passed during one session. And now those bills are
3 being transformed into New York State laws and MWBE
4 programs.

5 And we know that access to contracting
6 equals job creation in communities of color who have
7 historically been shut out. It equals homeownership
8 opportunity for those prospective business owners, and
9 better educational opportunities and healthier options
10 for their respective families.

11 And it's a win-win. When you take
12 taxpayer-driven contracts and create wealth and drive
13 equity in those communities of color, it's a win-win
14 for everyone.

15 And so in moving forward, we want to
16 make sure that we are holding the agencies
17 accountable. As the State Assemblyperson Inez Dickens
18 indicated that there are mayoral agencies who
19 represent 30 percent spending and non-mayoral agencies
20 that represent 70 percent of spending. However, the
21 Mayor has the ability to appoint in leadership and
22 board members of these non-mayoral agencies. And for
23 the first time, the Mayor is holding them accountable
24 for their MWBE reporting in alignment with his vision
25 of complying with his 30 percent MWBE goals.

1 And so his mandate is simple. By the
2 year 2026, awarding not less than \$25 billion to New
3 York City-certified MWBE firms. And by the year 2030,
4 that number increased to 60 billion. And if last year
5 was any indication of the success that Mayor Adams has
6 had, we awarded \$6.3 billion to minority- and women-
7 owned firms last year, 6.3 billion. There is no other
8 government entity in this nation or private sector
9 corporation or company that has awarded 6.3 billion.

10 Are we satisfied? No, we're not,
11 because we need to do a more effective and better job
12 of eradicating what we call the disparity within the
13 disparity. Why is it that we have a difficult time in
14 awarding contracts to Black-owned and Hispanic-owned
15 businesses? We're changing that. Our numbers -- I'm
16 looking at numbers every week, and contract awards to
17 Black- and Hispanic-owned businesses are trending
18 upward.

19 And let me say that the Mayor often
20 says that he wants the City of New York to use
21 information technology in order to drive operating
22 efficiencies. And so the Mayor has taken \$5.8 million
23 and invested it into a new information technology
24 platform called B2G, which allows the City of New York
25 from a centralized perspective now of not only

1 monitoring how each agency is doing with regard to
2 awarding contracts to MWBE firms, but also looking at
3 the payments.

4 It is one thing to track awards, but
5 it's a different thing to track payments. And the
6 state employed this technology five years ago under
7 former Gov. Andrew Cuomo, and it has worked
8 successfully. And now Mayor Adams has invested once
9 again \$5.8 million investment in this technology. And
10 now we're going to have the ability to monitor
11 contracts, to ensure that our third-party contractors
12 and consultants are complying with their 30 percent
13 goals. And so the Mayor once again has done
14 everything that he said he was going to do with regard
15 to the MWBE program.

16 The centralized New York City agency
17 only focuses on MWBE is going to get us to be more
18 cost-effective, more transparency, accountability from
19 the City of New York, from City Hall in ensuring that
20 government contracts, taxpayer-driven contracts are
21 not only awarded in a cost-effective manner because
22 their taxpayer money is being spent, but in an
23 inclusive manner of making sure that we are awarding
24 our contracts in a more inclusive manner, including
25 increasing contract awards to Black- and Hispanic-

1 owned businesses.

2 And if there are any barriers to entry
3 for us to do that, then we will come up with changing
4 state laws, creating programming, and to make sure
5 that we are awarding contracts in a more inclusive
6 manner.

7 And so we need your support in the
8 creation of a New York City agency with a mission of
9 focusing on awarding contracts in a more cost-
10 effective but more inclusive manner, holding agencies
11 accountable for achieving or exceeding Mayor Adams'
12 30 percent MWBE goals. And, finally -- and we need to
13 make sure that the City of New York is awarding their
14 contracts in a more inclusive manner within the Black
15 and Hispanic business communities. Thank you.

16 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Any questions from
17 our Commissioners?

18 MR. LYNCH: I have a question in
19 regards to one of our presenters before had mentioned
20 about e-bid. So with this information technology
21 project bringing on board, will that help to boost up
22 e-bid for contracts, or was that in the plans, to
23 include that?

24 MR. GARNER: It's just aligned with the
25 Mayor's, once again, use of information technology in

1 driving operating efficiencies.

2 We're one of the last entities in this
3 region that did not have the ability to award
4 contracts via information technology. Everything was
5 being done manually, and that's not the way that the
6 City of New York should be awarding their contracts.

7 This new bill and new law which will
8 allow all City agencies now to award their contracts
9 via information technology platform.

10 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Any other questions?

11 MS. MCGRAW: Yes, thank you so much.
12 I've heard your testimony by the City, and thank you
13 for being the voice and bringing this very important
14 issue to the table. I, myself, have some experience
15 with bills, major late delays, so I'm just so happy to
16 hear that the Mayor really understands how critical
17 that is, especially when you have people that are
18 doing work to better this City and to keep this City
19 safe.

20 So this system will be put in place to
21 monitor, to track, and there'll be a system in place,
22 and not something manually.

23 MR. GARNER: Absolutely. The Mayor has
24 the uncanny ability to engage in conversation, listen,
25 and then implement. And so what he has heard on the

1 campaign trail he has transformed and implemented
2 solutions to problems. In this administration, the
3 get stuff done administration, which is exceptional,
4 because we're not blinded by problems. We focus on
5 solutions.

6 MS. MCGRAW: That's great. Thank you
7 so much.

8 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Any other questions?
9 From our Commissioners on Zoom? Thank you very much.
10 Thank you --

11 MR. GARNER: Thank you.

12 VICE CHAIR DUKES: -- Mr. Garner, for
13 your work.

14 We will now hear from Pauline Toole,
15 Commissioner, Department of Records and Information
16 Services.

17 Welcome.

18 MS. TOOLE: Thank you.

19 Good afternoon, Commissioners. Thank
20 you for the opportunity to testify today in this
21 public hearing on possible amendments to the New York
22 City Charter. I've submitted written testimony, but
23 in the interest of time, I'm going to summarize our
24 views on the proposal to combine two advisory boards
25 that was included in the preliminary staff report to

1 the Commission, and want to provide just a little bit
2 of background.

3 So this is going to seem somewhat
4 obscure compared to the hefty issues you've just been
5 hearing about, affordable housing and MWBE
6 program -- opportunity. But for us in the little tiny
7 City agency, this is going to make a big difference.

8 The Department of Records and
9 Information Services known as DORIS, is responsible
10 for three key governmental functions: establishing
11 and enforcing record practices and policies, providing
12 access to New York City Government information, and
13 preserving the historical records of City government.
14 We do this through our three divisions: the municipal
15 library, municipal archives, and municipal records
16 management, with the central support from information
17 technology, external affairs, and administration
18 units.

19 The agency's mission is to foster civic
20 life by preserving and providing access to the
21 historical and contemporary records of City
22 government, to ensure the City records are properly
23 maintained following a professional archive -- record
24 management practices, and to make our materials
25 available to the -- communities. In fact, we had a

1 conference here on a 1936 report on conditions in
2 Harlem a couple of years ago that was really quite
3 wonderful and pointed us to some good directions.

4 In the modernization section of the
5 preliminary report, Charter Commission staff included
6 the proposal made by DORIS to combine our two existing
7 advisory boards into a smaller board that would handle
8 the existing duties. One advisory board, the Archival
9 Records and Research Advisory Board, was established
10 in 1977 when the agency was created. At that time the
11 Board played an active role in shaping the new agency
12 and met almost monthly.

13 Now 47 years later, the Board largely
14 serves as a sounding board around the
15 agency's -- initiatives.

16 The second board, the Archival Review
17 Board, was established in 2003, after former Mayor
18 Rudy Giuliani removed the mayoral records from the
19 City's control to have them processed by outside
20 consultants. That same local law that established the
21 Board also created procedures that must be followed if
22 an outside entity is contracted to process historical
23 City records. The outsourcing can only occur if the
24 Commissioner certifies its necessity under
25 extraordinary circumstances.

1 The members of both Boards have
2 volunteered their time to suggest improvements, review
3 the agency's collection processing plans, and report
4 activities to the municipal archives and our external
5 affairs divisions. They are creative, thoughtful
6 people, and we very much appreciate their insight.

7 After reviewing existing Charter
8 mandates, the members of both Boards have recommended
9 consolidation. The joint proposal is appended to my
10 written testimony. Creating the combined nine-person
11 board with the mandate to advise the Commissioner and
12 evaluate the management of both archival and library
13 collections will improve efficiency for the agency.

14 If you have any questions, I would be
15 happy to answer them.

16 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Any question from
17 the Commissioners?

18 MR. LYNCH: Hi, good evening.

19 MS. TOOLE: Hi.

20 MR. LYNCH: Can you just clarify about
21 the process of outsourcing the documents or
22 outsourcing the archive of the documents?

23 MS. TOOLE: So in 2001 when Mayor
24 Giuliani's terms ended, he decided that it would be a
25 good idea to take all of the City's historical records

1 and have them processed by a private entity that would
2 be responsive to people he appointed.

3 This created a bit of an uproar, as you
4 could imagine, and there were restrictions placed on
5 that work so that it ended up being conducted by an
6 outside entity but under the direction of the
7 Department with a lot of oversight.

8 And then the Archival Review Board,
9 which is made up of four people and the Commissioner,
10 so five people, has the authority to review any
11 outside processing of collections, if that were to
12 happen again. If it were to happen again, I would
13 imagine it would be because the collection is vast.
14 It might be in a medium that we don't have the ability
15 to handle, like floppy disks, for example. If we
16 don't have the computers with the capacity to read
17 them, we might hire someone who did, but we would do
18 it under the procedures that are within the Charter
19 that set up a schedule, deliverables. Not everything
20 would be sent to the entity at one time, so that there
21 are real checks and balances in place in the Charter,
22 irrespective of the Board. And the Board would still
23 have the -- the smaller Board would still have the
24 ability to do oversight if that outsourcing happened.

25 MR. LYNCH: So at the present time,

1 it's not being outsourced anymore?

2 MS. TOOLE: No. The only collection
3 that's ever been processed that way is Giuliani
4 collection. Everything else is being processed
5 inside, including the David Dinkins collection, which
6 we are now processing and digitizing the photos from
7 that administration, which will be online soon.

8 MR. LYNCH: All right. Thank you.

9 MS. MCGRAW: Thank you --

10 MS. TOOLE: Okay.

11 MS. MCGRAW: Thank you so much for
12 educating me in this matter.

13 So I just want to be clear. So where
14 are the original records? Do they still exist, or
15 they have been destroyed? Because that would be very
16 helpful.

17 And if they were, how do we somehow
18 kind of retrieve information and records that may be
19 very vital to the City at some point?

20 MS. TOOLE: Thank you for asking that
21 question.

22 They're not destroyed. We have
23 original documents dating to the Colonial Period, so
24 1636, I think, is our earliest document, and they go
25 through the prior administration.

1 And periodically take in certain kinds
2 of records from the current administration, but most
3 aren't transferred until the end of the
4 administration.

5 And if you're referring specifically to
6 the Giuliani records, they all were returned to the
7 agency, and we have those.

8 MS. MCGRAW: Thank you.

9 MR. DIAZ: Has this been addressed
10 legislatively? If not -- can and has it been
11 addressed legislatively?

12 MS. TOOLE: Yes --

13 MR. DIAZ: Is this your last -- you
14 know, have you exhausted all your -- you know, all
15 your options?

16 MS. TOOLE: You know, this is part of
17 the Charter, and it would be a modernization for us,
18 certainly an efficiency move for us. We do have a
19 draft local law that hasn't been introduced. That
20 could happen. But we think this gives us the
21 opportunity to get it done when you work -- when you
22 advance your proposals to modernize City government.

23 MR. DIAZ: Fair enough. Thank you.

24 MS. TOOLE: Thank you.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

1 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Any questions from
2 our Commissioners on Zoom? Thank you so much.

3 MS. TOOLE: Thank you.

4 VICE CHAIR DUKES: We will now hear
5 from Mr. Andrew Rein, Citizens Budget Commission.

6 MR. REIN: Good evening, Dr. Dukes.

7 VICE CHAIR DUKES: I think we saw you
8 before, didn't we?

9 MR. REIN: I know. I thought it was
10 important to come in person again --

11 VICE CHAIR DUKES: -- we want you to --

12 MR. REIN: -- because we refined our --

13 VICE CHAIR DUKES: And thank you for
14 being here.

15 MR. REIN: -- we've refined our
16 proposals, and we wanted to, since it's so important,
17 come in person. Besides, I got to see all the
18 Commissioners and thank you for your service and be at
19 the Schomburg Center, so it's an honor and a privilege
20 and a pleasure.

21 Good evening, I'm Andrew Rein,
22 president of the Citizens Budget Commission, and I'm
23 here to give you the refinement of five of our seven
24 initial recommendations. We submitted testimony that
25 has all the Charter language that is hopefully helpful

1 for you as you draft up your proposals for the ballot.

2 We strongly feel that your Commission
3 should consider our first two proposals as a package
4 to improve the City's fiscal stability and integrity.
5 This year's budget debate has highlighted how critical
6 it is that the City's budget and policy decisions
7 consider and ultimately are based on accurate budget
8 estimates, whether they be revenues or spending for
9 current programs or expanding programs. We and others
10 have taken issue with the budget estimates, both from
11 the Mayor's side, but also how the Council in effect
12 budgeted by legislation when it passed the massive
13 housing voucher expansion that could annually cost
14 more than many City agencies, whether it be the health
15 department, ACS, fire, sanitation, DED. So improving
16 both the legislative fiscal impact statements and the
17 executive's financial plan estimates will enhance the
18 integrity, legitimacy, and outcomes of budget making
19 and help -- importantly, and help to ensure that the
20 public appropriately views this Charter Revision
21 Commission's work through the lens of substance and
22 not through politics.

23 So first, for legislative fiscal impact
24 statements, we recommend that the Council produce them
25 earlier so everyone can see them, that the independent

1 budget office produce an independent fiscal impact
2 statement or validate the Councils for programs that
3 will cost more than \$100 million in any given year,
4 that the fiscal impact statements disclose whether the
5 cost of these programs can actually be accommodated
6 within the budget of financial plan, and finally, that
7 high cost local laws take effect only once the funds
8 are modified into the budget or negotiated in budget
9 adoption. Doing this will align lawmaking as well as
10 the budgeting process and not have them at odds with
11 each other.

12 Second, a crucial companion to this is
13 to increase the accuracy and transparency of the
14 executive's financial plan with greater sunshine.
15 We're just asking for information here, so we can all
16 understand. Specifically, we're proposing that the
17 Charter require detailed explanation when -- of the
18 causes when tax revenues or spending program estimates
19 grow or fall by more than 10 percent in a given year.
20 What's really going on?

21 We also want the explanations when the
22 executive estimates vary more than 20 percent of the
23 estimates of either the state controller or the City
24 controller. That way all the people have the
25 information of what's really going on with the budget

1 and the programs.

2 So third, we are very pleased that the
3 preliminary report of your Commission included the
4 proposal for a City resident survey. Our draft
5 Charter language requires that the survey be done
6 every five years and that it be importantly
7 statistically significant at the neighborhood, race
8 ethnicity, and income base level.

9 Listen, in the Charter it should tell
10 the government they have to listen to its people. The
11 people of the Village of Harlem should know that
12 they're going to be listened to, and that's about the
13 statistical significance of doing the survey every
14 five years.

15 Our fourth proposal continues to
16 recommend that the Charter require a local law that
17 ensures the City's rainy day fund is both grown and
18 used for its intended purposes, to protect New Yorkers
19 from dramatic cuts during a recession or short-term
20 emergency. You know, we really want to commend the
21 Adams Administration, which, despite the calls to use
22 the rainy day fund for services to migrants, they
23 appropriately protected the fund, because they
24 realized this was an ongoing expense, not a rainy day
25 expense.

1 So we cannot always guarantee that
2 every administration will show such prudence. So our
3 proposed Charter change requiring the local law to
4 test mandatory deposits and appropriate withdrawal
5 rules will help ensure wise rainy day fund
6 stewardship, not only now but into the future.

7 Respectfully, I submit that more study
8 is not needed, since we and others have extensively
9 analyzed how best to structure a rainy day fund,
10 because -- so the time to start protecting New Yorkers
11 is now, not after the next crisis.

12 And our final proposal, more study also
13 is not required to ensure the City's long-term debt
14 doesn't start to crowd out other budget priorities by
15 limiting debt service to 15 percent of City tax
16 revenue. This change simply puts in the Charter what
17 has been in practice for decades and guarantees
18 a -- budget.

19 So thank you once again for the
20 opportunity to see you. Thank you -- good to see you,
21 Lorraine -- to see you all again, for the opportunity
22 to provide input into your important work. We are at
23 your service as you choose and then draft your final
24 recommendations. Thank you.

25 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you so much.

1 Any questions from our Commissioners?

2 MS. GRILLO: I'd just like to comment
3 just for a minute. Great to see you, Andrew. This is
4 a very thoughtful --

5 MR. REIN: Thanks.

6 MS. GRILLO: -- memo, and we will look
7 at it very, very closely. And always good to see you.

8 MR. REIN: And thanks, and thanks for
9 everything you've done for the City for a few decades.

10 MS. GRILLO: Few decades. Thank you.

11 VICE CHAIR DUKES: I want to thank you
12 for coming to Harlem to Schomburg, as you said --

13 MR. REIN: And the -- auditorium. I
14 know this. It was up there, so I was so glad -- I
15 just wanted to mention --

16 VICE CHAIR DUKES: -- well, you just
17 kindly give this information. As Assemblywoman Inez
18 said, this dedication for you -- they don't get a
19 chance to hear this kind from people who are experts
20 that do this work, so thank you so much.

21 MR. REIN: We're at your service and
22 the service of all New Yorkers.

23 MR. ROSE: Do you mind if I just ask --

24 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Yes. Mr. Rose.

25 MR. ROSE: I just have a little bit

1 more philosophical question for you, which is, if we
2 adopt all of this, is it just going to become
3 impossible to govern in this City, in the sense that,
4 you know, it's just control after control after
5 control. And eventually isn't that what elections are
6 for; right? Like if we elect fiscally irresponsible
7 people, don't then we kick them out of office?
8 Like --

9 MR. REIN: we will never be able to
10 regulate -- and if you try to regulate good culture of
11 government, you're going to fail, and people will try
12 to get around it. So I think it's a very important
13 point.

14 We've definitely focused in our
15 recommendations of doing it kind of targeted and
16 parsimoniously so that we can provide more
17 information, get it earlier in people's hands, whether
18 it be lawmakers or the public's hands, so they can use
19 it without gumming up the works. So seeing
20 the -- seeing the fiscal impact statements that will
21 be done anyway come earlier is not gumming up. It's
22 actually allowing it to be used.

23 And when we say that a new law can only
24 be -- not only be implemented once it's budgeted and
25 appropriated, we have \$100 million threshold. That's

1 very rarely hit. But if you're really -- you can't be
2 budgeting through legislation. So we really slice
3 that very targeted to make sure we're only doing the
4 biggest legislation.

5 I think frankly a resident survey every
6 five years would only help City government be more
7 responsive to its people, not gum up the works. So we
8 really tried to have that kind of look into making
9 sure that every requirement is targeted to have a
10 benefit and be as less -- as least intrusive as
11 possible.

12 MR. DIAZ: I wish I could hang out with
13 you, you know, because -- and I'm sure that we can
14 have offline conversation. Thank you for this.

15 MR. REIN: Do I get to come up to the
16 Bronx?

17 MR. DIAZ: If you want to.

18 MR. REIN: I'm there.

19 MR. DIAZ: You're always welcome to.
20 Come to the Boogie Down Bronx.

21 So what I'm trying to -- if you have
22 these surveys every five years, and you figure after
23 something was voted on and adopted and implemented is
24 over \$100 million to, you know, the taxpayer, the City
25 of New York, say the survey in the fifth year shows

1 that it's just ineffective. Who's the arbiter of
2 that, and what happens then?

3 MR. REIN: so what the survey
4 does -- so the City did a survey in 2008. CBC did one
5 in 2017, and we just did one in 2023, and I'll send
6 you a link to it. What the survey does is allow
7 government to be responsive and to really -- when you
8 do it right find out what people are thinking in
9 different parts of the City about different services
10 they're having.

11 MR. DIAZ: People tell us -- people
12 tell us all the time --

13 MR. REIN: Then, of course, the
14 government's job is to be responsive. What?

15 MR. DIAZ: People tell us all the
16 time -- the government all the time where they think
17 government is spending too much money; right?

18 MR. REIN: Well, guess what? Only
19 10 percent of New Yorkers think government is spending
20 the money wisely. It used to be 20 percent, which
21 wasn't very high, but it went in half. Here's the
22 challenge, which is -- listen. New Yorkers will
23 always tell you how they feel. You can stop on any
24 street corner. You could turn to the person next to
25 you in a restaurant, whatever it is, on the subway or

1 whatever. New Yorkers are always willing to talk.
2 But you don't necessarily get a representative sample
3 so you can hear from everyone. And you don't
4 necessarily know how different groups in different
5 parts of the City with different income levels know,
6 are feeling about a service, education, public safety.

7 You know, people's impression of public
8 safety, satisfaction in their neighborhood went from
9 50 percent down to, I think it was safety in the
10 neighborhood was 37 percent. It was no more than
11 20 percent almost any part of the southern and central
12 Bronx. You need that information, and you need to see
13 how it is relative. That's why doing the survey with
14 the statistical methods can give you the most accurate
15 information, because the City needs to respond not
16 just to anecdotes but the best information possible.

17 MR. DIAZ: Thank you.

18 MR. REIN: Thank you.

19 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Any questions from
20 the Commissioners on Zoom? Oh, I'm sorry.

21 MR. LYNCH: I just want to just add to
22 what we're saying -- just -- about the survey.

23 Conduct the survey, who's going to be responsible to
24 collect that information? The outcomes that you got
25 from those surveys, who's going to be responsible to

1 affect whatever the changes or outcomes that come out
2 of the surveys?

3 MR. REIN: So the idea -- it is the
4 government --

5 MR. LYNCH: And cost --

6 MR. REIN: -- it is the Mayor's
7 office --

8 MR. LYNCH: -- and cost to do it.

9 MR. REIN: -- and the -- it is the
10 Mayor's office and the Council to respond, because
11 that's what their job is, you know, and public
12 servants. This just gives them a tool.

13 Like, you know the Mayor's -- report
14 comes out twice a year, and so it measures how service
15 is done. We have some ideas on how to improve that,
16 but we're not getting the customers to tell us what's
17 going on. So if you combine that information, you
18 think certain things are going, but then you
19 also -- you think something is going well, but if
20 people are telling you it's not going well, you can
21 think about it.

22 That's why it provides just another
23 data source for the City leadership to be responsive
24 to, and maybe target services. Oh, that neighborhood
25 is doing worse than I thought it was. Oh, those

1 people like what we're doing here. That's good. It's
2 a piece of information that the City does not
3 regularly have right now, which is valid feedback from
4 New Yorkers.

5 MR. LYNCH: So that information will be
6 disseminated to whichever agency --

7 MR. REIN: Yes, yes. No, no. It --

8 MR. LYNCH: And they'll be --

9 MR. REIN: And, frankly, when we did it
10 in 2017, and we have now shared the 2023 data with the
11 City, the Mayor's Office of Operations are only being
12 looked at it and then told it, shared it with
13 agencies, who all has access, public, but shared the
14 deeper information with the agencies so they could be
15 more responsive.

16 MR. LYNCH: Got you. Thank you for
17 coming out again. I appreciate it.

18 MR. REIN: Thank you very much for your
19 time and your service.

20 MR. LYNCH: You're welcome.

21 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Amaury, and excuse
22 me for the pronouncing -- of your name. Are you here?
23 You're with the Citizens Union? I think we met you
24 before?

25 MR. DUJARDIN: Yes --

1 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you for coming
2 to Harlem.

3 MR. DUJARDIN: Thank you for having me.

4 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Yes.

5 MR. DUJARDIN: We're excited to be
6 here.

7 Members of the 2024 Charter Revision
8 Commission. My name is Amaury Dujardin, and I'm the
9 policy manager at Citizens Union. Thank you for
10 providing us with the opportunity to testify today.
11 We appreciated your preliminary report and took some
12 time to study your suggestions.

13 Citizens Union opposes the proposal to
14 add new requirements for public input and the New York
15 City Council before approval of any bill related to
16 public safety, including more time and at least one
17 extra public hearing.

18 First, we do not believe the proposal
19 is necessary. Citizens Union conducted an analysis of
20 all of the laws passed by the City Council in the last
21 decade to assess whether there is any difference
22 between the timelines of hearings and legislative
23 processes for bills passing for public safety-related
24 Council committees and other things, which could
25 justify creating separate rules for that subject

1 matter.

2 Our analysis of over 1,700 local laws
3 reveals that public safety legislation received
4 similar public input opportunities than other laws on
5 other issues. No major differences were found in the
6 time it takes for public safety bill to receive a
7 public hearing, the time it takes to be approved by a
8 committee, or the overall time it takes from
9 introduction to Council approval.

10 Public safety bills are passed under
11 the same timeframes as other bills. In fact, public
12 safety bills often receive more time for public input.
13 On average, public safety bills took 292 days from
14 introduction to Council overrule, compared to 280 days
15 for other bills.

16 63 percent of local laws passed by the
17 Committee on public safety waited more than three
18 months between public hearings and approval, compared
19 to only 52 percent of local laws passed in other
20 committees.

21 Put simply, public safety legislation
22 is not at a disadvantage compared with other issues
23 when it comes to the time given for public input.
24 Second, public safety is difficult to define, and any
25 Charter requirement that applies to legislation

1 pertaining to public safety could spur ongoing
2 litigation on what qualifies as public safety, further
3 complicating the legislative act.

4 Third, lawmaking and all policy matters
5 of citywide importance requires working with City
6 agencies, experts, labor unions, and impacted
7 communities, so any improvements in public input
8 opportunities should apply to all legislative matters.
9 Public safety should not be singled out of other
10 citywide policy matters such as education,
11 transportation, or the environment.

12 Citizens Union has been a strong
13 advocate for greater public input and transparency in
14 the legislative process and recommended reforms to the
15 City Council rules to advance those goals before every
16 new term. For example, we have urged the Council to
17 extend public notice of community meetings to at least
18 seven days before the meeting date instead of the
19 current 72 hours, making bill aging transparent and
20 revamping the e-mail notification systems.

21 To the extent that such general
22 improvements are needed, they should be made by
23 changing the rules of the City Council, which allows
24 more flexibility rather than in
25 trying -- constitution.

1 In regards to amending the Charter
2 requirements on physical impact assessments, Citizens
3 Union does not support the proposal to amend the City
4 Charter to require fiscal impact assessments to be
5 produced earlier in the legislative process and
6 involve additional agencies. We acknowledge that
7 there are problems with the way fiscal impact
8 assessments are produced. However, we believe
9 improvements to fiscal impact assessments should not
10 be made through the City Charter. Hereto, we
11 recommend that improvement to the process be made
12 through the rules of the Council which govern the
13 inner workings of the Council.

14 In addition, we are concerned about
15 involving outside agencies in an element of the
16 legislative task, because it could give veto power
17 over the process to executive agencies and lead to
18 more delays in lawmaking.

19 We take no position on the other
20 proposals in the Commission's preliminary report, and
21 we thank you all for the time today.

22 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Any questions from
23 our Commissioners?

24 MR. BRAGG: Yeah -- thank you for your
25 testimony. I am looking through your written

1 testimony here, and it states that there was -- maybe
2 I'm qualifying this wrong -- ample public interest for
3 some of the legislation that the Council had put
4 forth. Is that accurate?

5 MR. DUJARDIN: Yes, that's kind of
6 accurate.

7 MR. BRAGG: So my question is, how much
8 of the input came from those people responsible to
9 implement these laws, like correction officers, people
10 who are actually on the ground, in the field doing the
11 work? Have you heard from those professionals about
12 how that impacts their work and their lives, and
13 actually particularly with those people that are
14 responsive to the task?

15 MR. DUJARDIN: Sure, absolutely. So
16 our comment on the process of the Charter so far, this
17 Charter Revision Commission process, has been that it
18 is being a little bit too rushed to fully examine the
19 Charter, and we, therefore, didn't have the time to
20 look into that.

21 We, for example -- or not for
22 example -- just as a reminder, looked at over 1,700
23 bills that were enacted over a ten-year period. So if
24 we were given more time to really, really, really dive
25 in, in which case I imagine that would be a very

1 lengthy process -- that would take years to figure out
2 how many people testified at those hearings -- we
3 could maybe look into that. But we don't have that
4 timeframe right now.

5 MR. BRAGG: Okay. The reason I ask is
6 because I believe it was Staten -- or Brooklyn when we
7 had heard testimony from some of the unions who said
8 they were not included in some of those hearings, and
9 their voices were not heard.

10 And so I'm asking you if there was any
11 effort to include them in these hearings as you
12 were -- as they've been ready to produce this new
13 legislation that's already out and passed, by the way,
14 by the Council.

15 MR. DUJARDIN: Of course. Again, we
16 would be really interested in that information as
17 well, but we don't have the time to dive into it. And
18 we are assuredly open to other people diving into that
19 type of research as well.

20 MR. BRAGG: Okay. Thank you. Again,
21 my only concern is that the general public might not
22 have the same both experience or knowledge about, you
23 know, the impact as these professionals, and I think
24 their voices might -- and so I would just say that we
25 cannot skip, you know, that process.

1 MR. DUJARDIN: We're surely advocating
2 not to skip those voices.

3 MR. BRAGG: Thank you.

4 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Commissioner Adams.

5 MS. ROWE-ADAMS: Yes. Thank you for
6 coming. It's so important that we have these
7 hearings. But just for information, you know, myself
8 and my colleague, I think Stephanie, we went down to
9 public -- to testify at one of the public hearings
10 that the City Council had -- that -- we wanted to
11 testify. We heard that it was an open hearing, that
12 we could come in with the public. And we were told we
13 were not allowed to testify. So public was not
14 allowed.

15 And what is so important is we need all
16 our voices heard. And so I'm glad to see that you're
17 here to hear that you did not -- we should've been
18 able to testify. So I just want that for the record,
19 that you should know it was not open to the public.
20 So that's a very important thing to know.

21 So moving forward, hopefully the public
22 will be able to go downtown to these Council hearings,
23 to any hearings and be able to testify.

24 MR. DUJARDIN: Thank you for that
25 information. Regardless of what takes place during a

1 public hearing, the public can reach out, and they
2 have ample time to do so. The data shows that the
3 bills that were quoted as the reason behind the
4 proposal to add more public input to the public safety
5 bills, particularly the How Many Stops Act and the ban
6 on solitary confinement --

7 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Excuse me. I don't
8 want a debate. I asked the Commissioners to respond.
9 Commissioner Adams did respond on what was taking
10 place. And, again, I say I appreciate you taking the
11 time to come to Harlem to educate us today.

12 Any more questions from any
13 Commissioners? Any of the Commissioners on Zoom?

14 Thank you so much.

15 We have someone on Zoom?

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

17 VICE CHAIR DUKES: No. Okay. Thank
18 you so much.

19 MR. DUJARDIN: And apologies. I did
20 not mean to -- questions --

21 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you for
22 submitting this to us, because we -- as I said, I've
23 read your first one, and thank you so much.

24 MR. DUJARDIN: Thank you.

25 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Okay. It is

1 Harlem's own former assemblymember, Keith T.L. Wright.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: L.T.

3 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Hallelujah. Would
4 you come forth, Mr. Wright?

5 MR. K. WRIGHT: Coming, coming, coming,
6 coming.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Take your time.

8 VICE CHAIR DUKES: No, don't take his
9 time.

10 MR. K. WRIGHT: Good evening, everyone.

11 MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Good evening.

12 MR. K. WRIGHT: I would venture to say
13 I know that the assemblyperson elect testified
14 earlier, so this might be the only father and son
15 tandem to testify before the esteemed Charter Revision
16 Commission, ever.

17 So of course I know most of you due to
18 my work, my over 40 years of work in government and
19 politics. It's a pleasure to come before you to share
20 my thoughts on a proposal for nonpartisan elections
21 here in New York City.

22 I speak to you today in my capacity as
23 County leader of the Democratic Party in Manhattan, a
24 position I have held since 2009. I participated in
25 multiple elections over the years as a candidate and

1 as an administrator here in the City. As someone who
2 understands the process well, I would argue that the
3 current system should remain intact. While
4 imperfections certainly exist, there is room for
5 improvement, it is my firm belief that nonpartisan
6 elections are not the answer.

7 Political parties help organize the
8 electorate around a shared set of values. Individuals
9 trust the party they identify with to produce
10 candidates that will protect their interests once in
11 office.

12 Many ordinary New Yorkers don't follow
13 politics with the same fervor as those of us on the
14 inside. They look to their party leadership to help
15 them make informed choices. That gives voters who may
16 be reluctant to participate in an upcoming election
17 due to unfamiliarity a North Star when it comes to
18 cast their ballot. Voters trust the party they
19 identify with to vet candidates on their behalf.

20 In addition, nonpartisan elections
21 raise concerns about an overcrowded field, drowning
22 out the voices of the most qualified candidates to
23 serve. For example, it is my strong belief that
24 nonpartisan elections would increase the viability of
25 candidates with wealth and fame, and that may not be

1 the interest of the voter.

2 And while low voter turnout has been a
3 consistent problem here in the City, I do not believe
4 nonpartisan elections will improve participation. If
5 anything, it will encourage voters -- it will
6 encourage candidates to run, which will result in
7 discouraging voters who feel overwhelmed with trying
8 to differentiate what the different candidates stand
9 for.

10 In short, political parties make
11 sense -- in short, political parties help voters make
12 sense of the laws and policies people live by. They
13 trust the party, that the party they vote for will
14 choose candidates who set the right tone for them.
15 Without political parties, we risk having too many
16 individuals running for office with too many competing
17 agendas. That would end up discouraging voter
18 participation rather than enhancing it.

19 Finally, only recently adopted ranked
20 choice voting for local elections here in New York
21 City, which was approved by the voters in a
22 particularly low turnout election in 2019. While
23 reformers applaud the new system as a huge step
24 forward, it is my contention that we should have a few
25 more citywide elections under this new system in order

1 to determine whether it is the best methodology for
2 choosing our leadership.

3 Before we adopt yet another major
4 change on how to -- how elections are fought and won,
5 we should study more closely how ranked choice voting
6 did or did not further empower voters. Reform,
7 particularly of the progressive variety, should always
8 be entertained and considered, but we must also
9 evaluate the results to determine its level of success
10 before adopting additional reforms that have not yet
11 been tested in this City.

12 Thank you very much.

13 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you very much.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

15 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Kyle?

16 MR. BRAGG: I just wanted to make
17 sure -- but I just wanted to get your opinion again.
18 It's been testified before this Commission that
19 nonpartisan voting would increase voting turnout, and
20 you just testified that you don't assign to that
21 theory; is that accurate?

22 MR. K. WRIGHT: I do not. Yes, I want
23 to be perfectly clear. I do not think that
24 nonpartisan elections would enhance voter turnout.

25 MR. BRAGG: Thank you. And I also

1 heard you say that it would be good to understand the
2 impact of ranked choice voting --

3 MR. K. WRIGHT: Yeah.

4 MR. BRAGG: -- before we move on to
5 another change in the voting system.

6 MR. K. WRIGHT: Absolutely. I mean we
7 still -- the jury is still out on what ranked choice
8 votings are. Listen, right here in Harlem, we had an
9 election of a City Council person which, quite
10 frankly, was an accident. It was an accident. All
11 right? The incumbent ran and won on the first ballot.
12 But then with the ranked choice voting, we had -- I
13 think the person that was number three came in, and
14 that person won. And, quite frankly, it didn't seem
15 like it was the will of the people, but it was adhered
16 to.

17 MR. BRAGG: And I recall that -- I'm
18 sorry. Just real quick.

19 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Oh, I'm sorry.

20 MR. BRAGG: I recall also that it was
21 the same theory that ranked choice voting would
22 increase voter turnout, and I don't see that as --

23 MR. K. WRIGHT: I don't see it, either.
24 I don't see it, either. I don't see it, either.

25 MR. BRAGG: Okay. I just wanted to get

1 your opinion --

2 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Commissioner Rose?

3 MR. K. WRIGHT: No, no, that is my
4 opinion.

5 MR. ROSE: It's nice to see you, sir.
6 I'm a big fan. I guess I want to put you slightly on
7 the hot seat here.

8 MR. K. WRIGHT: I thought I was sitting
9 on it already.

10 MR. ROSE: You know, I think many of us
11 share your feeling about nonpartisan elections. But
12 the notion of first-past-the-post elections has become
13 a bit of a bad cause.

14 MR. K. WRIGHT: First pass the what?

15 MR. ROSE: First-past-the-post --

16 MR. K. WRIGHT: I don't know what that
17 is.

18 MR. ROSE: -- the notion of elections
19 where the top two winners in the primary, irrespective
20 of their party affiliation, would face off in the
21 general election. That's what's -- it currently
22 happens in California; i.e., let's make general
23 elections actually of significance in New York City.

24 And I wanted to gauge your thoughts on
25 that. Parties would still be of significance, but the

1 general electorate would actually become much more
2 significant in New York City.

3 MR. K. WRIGHT: And, Congressman, this
4 is the first I'm hearing about first-past-the-post.
5 And you said it's being done in California? It can
6 stay in California.

7 I do believe -- I do believe that they
8 do actually have -- they actually have nonpartisan
9 elections in San Francisco. It ain't working out
10 there, either, from what I've heard. So keep it in
11 California.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Keep everything
13 in California.

14 MR. K. WRIGHT: Keep it all in
15 California.

16 MR. ROSE: It's always fun to see up
17 close the accounts of a politician. That was a great
18 line. Thank you. Thank you, sir. It's wonderful to
19 see you.

20 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Any other comments?
21 What about the Commissioners on Zoom?

22 MS. MCGRAW: Yeah, yes --

23 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you,
24 Mr. Wright.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Wait, wait.

1 We've got one more.

2 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Oh, I'm sorry.

3 MS. MCGRAW: Yes. Hello, Mdm. Chair.

4 Thank you so much. It's just an honor
5 to hear your testimony. And I think, you know, it's
6 very important for our people to come out, because
7 that ranked choice voting was put in front of one of
8 these Charters, and it got on the ballot. And it got
9 on the ballot because we were not coming out and
10 getting information and turning over the ballot to
11 vote on what we thought was best.

12 So it is important that we come out and
13 get educated to get this information about this ranked
14 choice voting and some of the other things that was
15 brought up in your testimony. So thank you very much.

16 MR. K. WRIGHT: Thank you. I'm glad
17 you're having this at the Schomburg. I was told that
18 if I didn't make it out to Staten Island, I would miss
19 my opportunity.

20 VICE CHAIR DUKES: I wonder who told
21 you that?

22 MR. K. WRIGHT: Thank you very much.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you,
24 County Chair.

25 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Our next presenter

1 will be Garry Johnson, Chair of the New York State
2 NAACP Economic Development.

3 Mr. Johnson.

4 MR. G. JOHNSON: Good evening, Vice
5 Chair Dr. Dukes, Commissioners. It's always difficult
6 coming after the esteemed former Assemblyman Keith
7 L.T. Wright.

8 My name is Garry Johnson. I am
9 testifying today as the New York State Chair for
10 Economic Development in reference to the proposal to
11 have an MWBE agency.

12 The NAACP has 15 branches in the
13 metropolitan region, and we represent thousands of
14 members of all ethnicities, while specifically
15 focusing on the rights and opportunities of people of
16 color.

17 It's been over ten years since the
18 enactment of local law 1, which established the
19 Minority- and Women-Owned Business Enterprise Program
20 in New York City. According to the City's own data,
21 in 2023 the City awarded \$1.42 billion worth of MWBE
22 contracts, which represents 27.9 percent of contract
23 values subject to the local law.

24 However, in the same fiscal year, the
25 City procured over \$41.1 billion of goods and

1 services, which means the amount spent on MWBEs
2 compared to the total spend was less than 3.5 percent.
3 And note that the 1.42 billion is divided among women-
4 owned firms as well as Black, Latino, and Asian firms.

5 Looked at another way, \$39.7 billion
6 out of 41.1 billion was spent, according to the latest
7 census data, on our diversity, which is 31 percent
8 white, 29 percent Latino, 23 percent African-American,
9 and about 14 percent Asian. In simplest terms,
10 96.5 percent of contract awards went to group -- went
11 to a group that represents 31 percent of the City's
12 demographics.

13 While the Adams Administration has
14 taken tremendous steps to bring more equity and
15 opportunities for Black and Brown people then arguably
16 any previous administration, the City's onerous and
17 slow procurement process still creates considerable
18 delays that hinder the ability of its vendors and
19 specifically MWBEs to get paid on time.

20 Many of us here have heard repeated
21 stories of vendors who often wait months, six months,
22 a year or even more to get paid for services they have
23 provided on behalf of the City. While that has been
24 improving as of late, it still causes a tremendous
25 strain on many of these organizations, as they are

1 forced to borrow to cover cash flow or triage their
2 own expenses, and makes it extremely difficult to pay,
3 sustain, and grow their businesses.

4 The current mayoral and control
5 administrations created a capital reform task force in
6 2022 to develop critical reforms needed to address
7 components of capital contracting systems. Many
8 recommendations remain, including improving the
9 project pipeline, streamlining approvals, progressive
10 design build, and in terms of MWBE participation,
11 growing the number of New Yorkers who can participate.

12 That last point, growing the number of
13 New Yorkers who can participate, is, in my opinion, a
14 key feature that requires increased access to
15 information. Most New Yorkers do not know that the
16 City budget is \$112 billion. Never mind that
17 41 billion in contracts was spent last year. And I
18 think it would be -- I think most would be appalled to
19 know that only 3.5 percent in total went to minority-
20 and women-owned firms.

21 An MWBE agency may be a good idea, but
22 I believe the following elements are key to the
23 success of such an agency: awareness, information,
24 opportunity, payment reform, and
25 accountability/enforcement.

1 A public awareness campaign on
2 television and social media so that the general public
3 can know what we budget, what we spend, and how those
4 contracts have been historically distributed would be
5 important. If the public saw a pie chart of MWBE
6 contracts versus total contracting spend, I believe
7 they would be shocked and demand changes to the
8 system.

9 Awareness would lead to greater access
10 to information. As recommended by other task forces,
11 agencies need to do a better job of sharing
12 information regarding upcoming contract opportunities.
13 And I know there have been efforts made and are in
14 process to do so.

15 But next comes opportunity. We must
16 unshackle minority-owned firms and give them the
17 opportunities to obtain more contracts, demonstrating
18 their capabilities and thereby expanding their
19 capacities.

20 The payment reform is mandatory. It is
21 one thing to award a contract, but payments must be
22 made in a timely manner. Otherwise, it negatively
23 affects both the ability of the award need to perform
24 as well as their willingness to perform and
25 participate in the future.

1 Accountability and enforcement is the
2 final but arguably most important feature. Agencies
3 and agency staff must be held accountable for not
4 achieving their goals and not increasing opportunities
5 for MWBE firms.

6 In summation, I believe that while an
7 MWBE agency may have value, the ability to track
8 contract awards already exist through various systems.
9 An MWBE agency, should it be created, must be
10 provisioned with all the tools needed for measurable
11 success. It must be able to implement public
12 awareness, information, access to opportunity
13 campaigns, and implement payment reform, and be
14 empowered to demand real accountability and
15 enforcement for agencies that do not meet their
16 targets.

17 New York City's diverse population
18 deserves equity and government contracting, and its
19 public demands that. Thank you for this time.

20 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you. Any
21 questions from our Commissioners?

22 MR. BRAGG: Thank you. In our hearing
23 that we conducted in lower Manhattan at the firehouse,
24 we didn't even hear tonight Mr. Garner, but he did
25 make note that payment reform, expediting payment was

1 part of the mission of -- part of the mission of the
2 agency that would be created, which is extremely
3 important, as you had articulated, and all the reasons
4 why. And then agency oversight. He did testify to
5 that, and that being another very important factor as
6 to why an agency is -- an actual MWBE agency is
7 necessary. Because they sit in their silos, and
8 there's no oversight and no one that monitors how
9 these MWBE contracts are distributed.

10 And so I just wanted to make that
11 statement to you, because we did hear testimony from
12 that from Mr. Garner downtown.

13 MR. G. JOHNSON: Yeah, I thank you for
14 that. I am aware of that. The points I'm trying to
15 make are rather simple. We have some great folks in
16 government who are doing some really good things.
17 That having been said, this is 2024. We've been
18 having this conversation year over year over decade
19 over decade. And to look at a total spend as it is as
20 per the City's data, it is in my opinion and the
21 opinion of the folks that we represent that the City
22 must do more.

23 I think the City is committed to doing
24 more, but I think there has to be the public awareness
25 of what the levels are, because I do not think that

1 the public knows. Because frankly, if the public
2 knew, I don't think they would stand for it. And I
3 think that would give the impetus to our government
4 officials who are trying to do the right thing to give
5 them the accountability and enforcement provisions
6 they need to allow these agencies to be a little bit
7 more accepting, modify their procurement practices,
8 get the right people in there, whatever the case may
9 be. But it has to be a whole of government approach,
10 but the community has to be involved as well.

11 MR. BRAGG: Thank you.

12 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Any other questions?
13 From Commissioners on Zoom?

14 Thank you very much, Mr. Johnson, for
15 coming to Harlem and enlightening us on what it is by
16 giving statistic information. Thank you so much.

17 MR. G. JOHNSON: Thank you.

18 VICE CHAIR DUKES: We will now hear
19 from Mr. Keaton Morris.

20 MR. MORRIS: Good evening, Commission.

21 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Good evening.

22 MR. MORRIS: I just want to first say
23 thank you for the opportunity to come and testify.
24 I'm going to just speak very briefly. I'm not going to
25 be long. Just try to keep myself on track by just

1 writing these down.

2 So I'm testifying on behalf of the MWBE
3 agency. I want to first off by saying that the
4 initiative to centralize MWBE contracting
5 opportunities is a long time coming. As the product
6 of an MWBE firm started by my father in 1994, it's
7 encouraging to hear this proposed Commission change to
8 incorporate a centralized MWBE platform. I believe
9 this platform will give many MWBE firms the ability to
10 obtain government contracts and inevitably develop
11 their communities in the process.

12 While I'm running the firm that my
13 father started in 1994, I was able to start a mentor-
14 intern program to facilitate juniors and seniors in
15 high school who are interested in pursuing a career in
16 architecture, engineering, and construction
17 engineering.

18 I believe it's critical that the
19 centralized program be approved, because it allows for
20 so many opportunities for MWBE firms, their families,
21 and their communities to become financially
22 stabilized, thus resulting in positive impacts in
23 their community's development and infrastructure. I
24 believe a centralized program would create a more
25 stable, accountable agency that would make the process

1 of procurement transparent and efficient. The system
2 will force accountability and promote the growth of
3 more prosperous minority communities in the process.
4 This will also eliminate the underutilization of MWBE
5 firms.

6 Although we have made significant
7 strides over the last 20 years, we have only scratched
8 the surface. A new dedicated agency will help to
9 eliminate disparities between MWBE and non-MWBE
10 entities performing City contracts. And based on what
11 Mr. Johnson previously said, there is a huge
12 disparity, as you know it is, facts. And creating
13 this centralized agency will definitely allow for
14 better growth and prosperity of minority communities
15 and community as a whole.

16 Any questions?

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No. Thank you.

18 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Mr. Morris, you
19 didn't tell us your company. You said you and your
20 dad --

21 MR. MORRIS: Oh, I'm sorry. Sorry. My
22 company is KW Tech Corp. It was started in 1994 by my
23 father Samuel Watts, and that's a whole story in and
24 of itself. But we've been around for 30 years. We
25 work primarily with the New York City School

1 Construction Authority. Michael Garner was pretty
2 much the mastermind of the MWBE program there, and
3 we've taken, you know, a lot of things from that
4 program, and we were able to implement a lot of things
5 that we can help in, even in the communities that we
6 have our office in.

7 And, you know, just being able to
8 impact younger people, minorities, just wanting to do
9 the work in the contractor world, so thank you.

10 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you and
11 congratulations, yes, for staying the course and did
12 not let your dad's legacy die.

13 We will now hear from Mr. Jimmy Pan. I
14 hope I pronounced your name correctly. Thank you.

15 MR. PAN: Good evening,
16 Commissioners --

17 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Good evening.

18 MR. PAN: -- and all members of the
19 public. I'm Jimmy Pan -- I had the pleasure of
20 serving on the staff of the most recent Charter
21 Revision Commission, the 2021 New York City Racial
22 Justice Commission. I served as policy director and
23 special counsel. I played a leading role in the
24 research and design of three ballot measures that
25 embedded justice and equity in the central structure

1 of City government, synthesizing thousands of ideas
2 that I've heard from the public, much like we are all
3 doing now.

4 Voters overwhelmingly approve these
5 measures, and I returned to the Mayor's office for a
6 year to stand up these amendments. And before that I
7 served in City Hall for many years in a legal
8 capacity.

9 I'm here independently. I'm not
10 speaking on behalf of any affiliated body. And I'm
11 honored to share my experience in Charter change and
12 City governance with you all tonight. I have two
13 brief suggestions and two significant warnings.

14 My first suggestion: Honor the
15 preamble of the Charter. You all should read closely
16 the preamble of the New York City Charter. And then
17 as you contemplate what proposed amendments to put
18 before voters, you should measure those proposed
19 amendments against the values of the City preamble.
20 It's the very first page of the New York City
21 Constitution. It provides broad and visionary
22 guidance to City government so that it can truly serve
23 the interest of New Yorkers, especially those
24 communities that have been historically marginalized
25 and oppressed.

1 The City's Preamble represents three
2 foundational values, and all government policies and
3 programs should be designed to advance one of those
4 foundational values, at least. First, justly value
5 all talents and contributions. Second, ensure the
6 conditions are thriving for every person in New York
7 City. Thirdly, embrace vigilance, remedy, and
8 reconstruction.

9 Soon you all will need to discern which
10 potential amendments are worthy of the time and study
11 of New York City voters, and you should use this
12 preamble and these values as a rubric. Voters have
13 already stated that they want their government to
14 uphold these values by voting overwhelmingly for this
15 preamble, so please let it serve as your guide.

16 Second suggestion is bolster
17 accountability bodies in the Charter. You all should
18 amend the City Charter to strengthen the many
19 independent accountability bodies. New Yorkers voted
20 these bodies into law to provide oversight on their
21 behalf. Mayor Eric Adams recently said as part of a
22 separate fight with City Council that people should
23 know who they blame. And it's these oversight
24 agencies that actually allow New Yorkers to know who
25 to blame for what.

1 This present Commission has declared an
2 overarching goal of transparency. But the most
3 important source of transparency in our Charter is
4 these oversight agencies, including the IBO,
5 Independent Budget Office; the Equal Employment
6 Practices Commission, EEPC; the City Commission on
7 Human Rights, CCHR; and the newly voted in Commission
8 on Racial Equity, CORE.

9 I reviewed the interim report and
10 suggest that the Commission should do much more to
11 take seriously its mission of transparency. During
12 the 2021 Charter Revision Commission, I spoke with
13 every oversight body in the City, and they all had the
14 same structural issues. Their funding is unstable and
15 insufficient. Their staffing is not guaranteed. And
16 they need to fight for the very data from those same
17 agencies they're supposed to oversee. If we believe
18 in genuine structural transparency, we need to solve
19 these problems in the City Charter.

20 In our final report, we made several
21 recommendations. Given this Commission's stated
22 commitment to transparency, I strongly recommend you
23 all and your very able staff review those
24 recommendations.

25 So I hope these two suggestions are

1 helpful, and I hope my next two warnings are taken
2 seriously. I do believe this Commission is in danger
3 of potentially repeating detrimental legal and
4 structural history.

5 So my first warning, do not shackle
6 government. The interim report contemplates requiring
7 completion of financial and economic impact analysis
8 before the Council can pass major legislation. And I
9 would say this is an old idea that is on the wrong
10 side of democratic governance. It is a subtle danger.

11 In the 1970s and '80s, Presidents Nixon
12 and Reagan championed legislative financial analysis
13 as a checkpoint on policymaking. They knew the
14 practice looked like common sense but that they could
15 nevertheless use it to halt government. As you all
16 know, government was beginning to protect Americans
17 from pollution, environmental hazards, industrial
18 accidents, corporate excess, and other dangers. And
19 these presidents need to gut government's ability to
20 regulate without the public fully seeing how.

21 Decades later we are finally getting a
22 fuller picture of how they neutered government. The
23 Supreme Court of the United States has been working
24 steadily in recent years to decimate government's
25 ability to protect us. The Roberts Court has tried to

1 hide its handiwork, but the public will come to
2 understand that the Court's work, such as demolishing
3 the Chevron doctrine and the creation of the so-called
4 Major Questions Doctrine, these are going to
5 jeopardize the futures of communities and families.

6 These far right judges have used the
7 New York Constitutional Law to finish the work of the
8 Nixon and Reagan administrations. They are shackling
9 the ability of government, and we will feel those
10 effects for generations.

11 So esteemed Commissioners, I urge you
12 all to not even tiptoe on that side of history. See
13 with clear eyes the tides of concerted effort moving
14 to enfeeble government. We need government to get
15 more things done than ever before. There's no reason
16 this Commission and these esteemed Commissioners
17 should want their legacy to be part of an anti-
18 regulatory history.

19 The modern day thinking is that
20 government should instead be measuring how its
21 policies and its spending impact the people. Are
22 these services distributed fairly? How do their
23 budgets help close the long-standing gaps that were
24 created by centuries of unjust policy? These are
25 really the prime questions of today and the questions

1 that we tried to resolve at the Racial Justice
2 Commission.

3 New Yorkers do want transparency into
4 how their government is helping or harming
5 communities. Most New Yorkers are living day-to-day
6 in the failure of government to create the conditions
7 of true economic stability and dignity. What we do
8 not need is an additional layer of bureaucracy,
9 especially not one that mainly hinders government from
10 responding quickly.

11 Financial analysis does not make
12 decisions more fair or just. It does not answer the
13 question of how we empower disempowered communities.
14 And most of the time, it does not even stop
15 decisionmakers from eventually advancing whichever
16 policies it is they want to advance. Its primary
17 function in the course of American history has been to
18 create a bottleneck, and it would be even worse of an
19 imposture of prior agreement from the Mayor, the
20 Council, and the Independent Budget Office, three
21 bodies with divergent priorities.

22 In governing, we should not frontload
23 too many requirements and barriers. We can and should
24 study policies after the fact to determine which ones
25 are unjust in practice or financially unsound in

1 reality. But in 2021, I and the Commission did not
2 hear New Yorkers asking us to encumber government, nor
3 do I hear calls for that now.

4 My second warning, and I'll be
5 quick -- I implore you all not to disturb the balance
6 of powers in City government. As Mayor Adams has
7 recognized, we already have a strong mayor system in
8 New York City. I believe this Commission should not
9 propose changes that hamper the power of counsel in
10 its fundamental lawmaking duties, whether in public
11 safety or to any other area.

12 On June 4th, Deputy Mayor Torres-
13 Springer stated, "There's a careful balance
14 constructed between the powers of the legislative and
15 executive branch. The reason is that we need to
16 ensure the delivery of services for New Yorkers, that
17 there's clarity, that there's accountability, and that
18 there's smooth functioning of government. Because
19 fundamentally, that is what this is about."

20 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Mr. Pan, we are over
21 your time. And can you wrap up now?

22 MR. PAN: I'll wrap up quickly.

23 Because her visions are a tremendous
24 and sacred opportunity for New Yorkers, I do not think
25 this Commission should so easily drag New Yorkers into

1 the balance of powers disputes. New Yorkers want to
2 see big changes to the trajectory of our lives, and we
3 want to know that government is securing the future
4 for our children and for our grandchildren. And if we
5 say that inner branch circles are the most vital issue
6 before voters, we're eroding their trust in the weight
7 of Charter Revision Commissions and eroding their
8 trust in the seriousness of government.

9 We already see many power grabs
10 happening at the national level, and they shock the
11 conscience.

12 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Mr. Pan --

13 MR. PAN: You should review --

14 VICE CHAIR DUKES: -- do you have a
15 written statement?

16 MR. PAN: I'll be glad to send it to
17 you all.

18 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Will you give it to
19 our staff, please --

20 MR. PAN: Absolutely.

21 VICE CHAIR DUKES: -- so we can
22 thoroughly read it? But your time is up.

23 MR. PAN: Absolutely. Okay.

24 MR. DIAZ: I have a question.

25 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Okay.

1 MR. DIAZ: You say for us -- you want
2 for us to be sure that we don't upset the balance of
3 power.

4 MR. PAN: Yes.

5 MR. DIAZ: Do you believe that if the
6 City Council is one's consent --

7 MR. PAN: Yes.

8 MR. DIAZ: -- does that disturb the
9 balance of power?

10 MR. PAN: Yes. And in the 2019
11 Commission that was created by the City Council, that
12 Commissions sought to do that. I disagreed with them.
13 I helped push back the -- ultimately they drew it
14 back, which I think was a great decision. But, yes, I
15 would oppose it on this side or that side.

16 MR. DIAZ: Thank you.

17 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Any other questions?
18 Commissioners on Zoom? Very interesting. Would you
19 please give staff your written statement so we can all
20 get it?

21 MR. PAN: Absolutely. Thank you all
22 for your time.

23 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you.

24 Ms. Adrienne Felton.

25 MS. FELTON: Mme. Chair and fellow

1 Commissioners, good evening. I want to thank you all
2 for being here, and thank you for allowing me to
3 speak.

4 I join the voices of those who have
5 beseeched you to support the creation of an MWBE
6 agency in New York City. The reasons have been well-
7 stated by Assemblymember and Commission Garner.

8 I would ask that there is a push, you
9 know, not just for the new contracts but the current
10 contracts with this new system to be audited
11 thoroughly and reviewed to ensure that they are true
12 MWBEs and not in the name of the wives or someone else
13 who may be running it.

14 I'm sure you guys followed that.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We got you.

16 MS. FELTON: Okay. And that the
17 services are truly being provided. Although previous
18 administrations have the support of MWBEs, the small
19 contractors have been lost out, and the larger
20 contractors usually take over. And a good example of
21 that would be in childcare. You will have what we
22 call "the big boys" who will get all the contract for
23 the children, and the small person, like maybe those
24 persons who are running houses of worship and have
25 childcare within their facilities, their contracts

1 were not renewed under the previous administration.
2 And I don't know what, if anything, could happen, but
3 I really would like for that somehow to be a part of
4 this agency to vet those situations, to make sure that
5 the little guy has a space and a place, and not just
6 these larger, larger contractors taking over the hubs.
7 And most of them are not even people who look like us,
8 you know, caring for our children.

9 Lastly, I wanted to support what
10 Senator Cleare was saying about affordable housing.
11 Here's my whole stack of -- we have a functioning
12 lottery system. I don't know whatever you guys could
13 do about that. But the current lottery system is
14 laughable.

15 And I know that the AMI situation is a
16 federal one, but, you know, we have poverty pockets
17 here, especially in communities like ours where you'll
18 have a larger amount of people making this money, but
19 those poverty pockets, they are not being recognized
20 when these balance of what's affordable is at play.
21 So if there could be some type of exegesis in terms of
22 what is really being made in those areas, so when the
23 affordable housing is being built, it's reflective of
24 those persons who are here.

25 Quite frankly, I think that this was

1 arbitrary, because you guys know this. All these
2 storage facilities came out in our neighborhoods, them
3 knowing that you're going to get kicked out, and
4 you're going to need some place to put your stuff. So
5 this was not from my vantage point anything that
6 happened by chance.

7 Thank you.

8 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you. Do we
9 have a written -- do you have a written report for us?

10 MS. FELTON: -- I'll e-mail it. I'll
11 e-mail it to you.

12 VICE CHAIR DUKES: E-mail it to us.

13 Let me say in the interest of time, my
14 time, I will get you a little sign over here that it's
15 going over. But I must adhere to it now, because we
16 want to hear from everyone and just taking the time to
17 come out. So we ask you to adhere to three minutes.

18 And if you do not have your report
19 tonight that you gave it to Sam, please, because all
20 of you are raising very, very important issues before
21 us. And we have much more work to do.

22 We will be back in other boroughs,
23 Staten Island tomorrow. And we have a lot of reading
24 to do.

25 MR. DIAZ: And the Bronx --

1 VICE CHAIR DUKES: And the Bronx.
2 We'll get down to the Bronx -- I think I've been to
3 boogie down three times already. Had to fight to get
4 here.

5 But those of you who are going to
6 testify, will you give us your written report, because
7 we've got to stick to the three minutes now. Thank
8 you so much.

9 Ms. Marily Galfin. I hope I said your
10 name correctly.

11 MS. GALFIN: Yes, that's right. That's
12 correct.

13 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you.

14 MS. GALFIN: Thank you.

15 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Have you been with
16 us before?

17 MS. GALFIN: No, my first time. I'm a
18 newbie.

19 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Okay. Wonderful.
20 Thank you.

21 MS. GALFIN: Good to see you all.
22 Thank you. Good evening, Commission. My name is
23 Marilyn Galfin, founder of Voices for Shelter Animals.
24 I am advocating for the creation of a Department of
25 Animal Welfare to replace the Department of Health

1 from overseeing the New York City Animal Care Centers.
2 The DOH is not concerned with the welfare of shelter
3 animals. They're only concerned with people's health
4 and only intervene if an animal is a threat to them.
5 The division overseeing the ACC is the Bureau of
6 Veterinary and Pest Control Services, whose name
7 reflects their view on animals.

8 In 2013 then-controller Scott Stringer
9 and the legislative court said, "The root of the
10 problem is structural. ACC is overseen by the
11 Department of Mental Health and Hygiene, an agency
12 whose mission and expertise has not sufficiently
13 focused on animal welfare."

14 Right now there's an unprecedented
15 homeless animal crisis. The DOH and the City are not
16 handling it as such. This is a state of emergency.
17 Shelters are over capacity. These animals need
18 overflow space and money and humane care.

19 Rescues, advocates, shelters workers
20 are overwhelmed and burned out. There are pop-up
21 crates in the hallways. Dogs sit in cages all day and
22 hardly get walked. If they get kennel stress and
23 start to injure themselves, they're put on the at-risk
24 list, which is basically a kill list. This is not
25 fair or just. Animals come into the shelters healthy

1 and are getting deathly ill. Then the burden is put
2 on the rescue partners to save them.

3 Rescues cannot afford to keep paying
4 high vet costs for the animals that the shelter got
5 sick in the first place. The Manhattan shelter is not
6 fit to house animals humanely. There's still no
7 state-of-the-art shelters in all five boroughs under
8 the DOH control.

9 ACC still uses behavior assistance
10 proven by experts in veterinary behavior are
11 ineffective, making animals appear as dangerous or not
12 adoptable, simply because the animals are traumatized
13 and not adapting to their horrific environment. It's
14 not the animals' fault or problem. It's the shelter.
15 And animals shouldn't pay with their lives, including
16 12-month-old adoptable puppies being killed.

17 Some animals are getting what is
18 believed to be too high doses of stress-reducing
19 drugs. The DOH is not concerned. Under DOH oversight
20 there's no transparency or accountability of the ACC.
21 They continue to shortchange shelter, and the ACC over
22 the years has had orders citing inhumane care and
23 received -- report with similar deficiencies in the
24 last two controller reports.

25 In 2019 the DOH gave ACC an

1 unprecedented 34 -- \$1.4 billion contract for the
2 Queens shelter, limiting public input and no chance
3 for open bidding.

4 The DOH is not effective in their
5 enforcement of dog licensing mandates, costing
6 millions of dollars of potential revenue that could
7 subsidize spaying, neutering, and other lifesaving
8 services.

9 The people and the animals of the City
10 need and deserve a Department of Animal Welfare whose
11 only focus is on animal issues; an entity with
12 enforcement powers, experience in animal welfare, and
13 vested interest in ensuring humane care and a
14 progressive vision to do away with the accepted status
15 quo of killing for population control, but instead
16 adhere to no kill policies.

17 Companion animals provide unconditional
18 love and are vital to many people's lives. This
19 department could focus on solutions to help people
20 keep their pets out of the kill shelters by funding
21 more pet food pantries, affordable space --

22 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Ms. Galfin -- your
23 time is done.

24 MS. GALFIN: Yeah. okay. The
25 department could combat backyard breeding, address

1 animal abandonment, and has spiraled out of control
2 with people leaving helpless animals to fend for
3 themselves, and address community cat crises, cruel
4 carriage laws industry, wet markets, dogfighting,
5 humane --

6 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Can you give us this
7 now in --

8 MS. GALFIN: Yeah, and this is the last
9 sentence. Killing adoptable animals is a social
10 justice issue. It's time the City protects the
11 shelter animals.

12 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you. Thank
13 you. You must wrap it up and give it to the staff in
14 writing.

15 MS. GALFIN: Yes. And I have
16 supporting testimonies. It is time that the City
17 looks at animals as the sentient beings they are. And
18 they're probably the only person that's going to be
19 speaking up for this, but this is critical, as animals
20 play an important role of many New Yorkers who are
21 being senselessly killed don't have to be killed --

22 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you so much.

23 MS. GALFIN: Thank you so much for
24 giving me the opportunity. I appreciate it. Thank
25 you.

1 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Is there anyone
2 else?

3 MS. BREWER: Yes, and -- going to --

4 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you. The
5 woman that I have the privilege to serve under, the
6 former borough president of Manhattan, City
7 councilmember Gayle Brewer. All the time in
8 Manhattan --

9 MS. BREWER: Thank you very much,
10 Mme. Community Board Member and many other things. I
11 know that you -- nobody else is Hazel Dukes.

12 So I'm Gale Brewer, representing the
13 Upper West side, parts of Clinton, and all of Central
14 Park in the Council. I want to start by saying that I
15 have some experience with Charter Commissions with
16 Letitia James when she was -- and I was the borough
17 president. In 2018 and 2019 we put together what I
18 would say is a more diverse, because it was
19 representative of the people who were president,
20 mayor, council, controller, public advocate. And that
21 was the Commission that came out with, you'll think
22 ironically, that the advice and consent for the
23 corporation counsel, and it had both consensus from
24 Staten Island representative and the borough president
25 of Brooklyn, Eric Adams. He was represented by Sal

1 Albanese.

2 So there is a better system for doing,
3 in my opinion, than two months to make these really
4 important decisions, which is what Mayor Adams is
5 doing today. But I will say Mayor de Blasio did the
6 same thing. Right after we came up with this -- and I
7 will send this to you; it's a much longer
8 version -- Commission, Mayor Adams came up with his
9 own Commission. Same idea -- I mean Mayor de Blasio.
10 And all that came out of that was the Civic Engagement
11 Commission. I know it exists. I know there are
12 people who work there. But I must admit, I think it's
13 a waste of money. So do other people. I tried to
14 keep it off the ballot, but I lost. So these
15 Commissions need to have more diversity, in my
16 opinion.

17 I do think it's bit of a power grab,
18 taking -- trying to take from the City Council this
19 Commission and what it's doing. There is a lot
20 of -- there are a lot of issues. One of them is
21 public safety. And I know that the Mayor doesn't like
22 the intro local law 43, which talks about reporting on
23 common and low level accounting. But I went out with
24 the police, and the biggest issue was the amount of
25 paperwork they have to fill out, not that they have to

1 fill it out. So public safety is important, but I do
2 think that it should not be discussed in this type of
3 a forum.

4 As the Mayor has said, the public is
5 not safe if they don't perceive themselves to be safe.
6 And TCRB, that came out of a 1989 -- excellent
7 suggestion from the 1989 Commission. But their
8 recommendations are being ignored by the police
9 commissioner more now than in the past. That is a
10 breach that undermines public safety as well as faith
11 in government. So that's a bigger issue, I think,
12 than what you're discussing today.

13 Second, you talk about fiscal impact
14 statements. Again, in my opinion, trying to take
15 information from the City Council and make it
16 something that's not just the purview of the City
17 Council. But guess what? There's something called
18 unit of appropriation. That's basically what is in
19 the budget program. And what you need to do is to
20 have very big breakdowns. They don't always exist.

21 The corporation counsel has only two.
22 One is PS, which is basically staff, and the other is
23 OTPS. That's it. Those are the only two. You have
24 no idea the programs. And the same thing with
25 Landmarks Preservation Commission.

1 And police has the same thing. They
2 have one for operations. It's called appropriations
3 001 operation. It's millions of dollars with no
4 breakdown. That's what we should be focused on, in my
5 opinion.

6 I want to talk about some things
7 quickly that I'd like to see dealt with:
8 implementation of local laws, revenue estimates,
9 funding formulas for oversight agencies, transparency
10 at health and hospitals because now they're dealing
11 with migrants. The stretching of landmark buildings
12 should go back to the City Council, not -- they were
13 landmark with the Council. They should go back to
14 that area.

15 Mayoral appointments and boards and
16 panels, I think should be more representative of other
17 individuals in government. Law department
18 representation and settlements, review the unit of
19 appropriations structure, which I just discussed, make
20 the land use process more representative of community
21 perspectives. Those are some of the issues, as well
22 as the ones that you sort of do in you cleanup. I see
23 Diane Savino all over those good ideas at the end.

24 But you've got to think in two months
25 you shouldn't, in my opinion, sort of throw the baby

1 out with the bathwater and talk about things that
2 could be inconsistent with good government. Thank you
3 very much.

4 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Any questions? Any
5 questions from the Commissioners?

6 MR. BRAGG: Thank you --

7 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you,
8 councilwoman/former borough president of Manhattan.
9 Do you have a written report for us?

10 MS. BREWER: I'm going to send it to
11 you.

12 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you.

13 Next we have Mr. Adam Roberts.

14 MR. ROBERTS: Thank you, Commissioners,
15 for holding this hearing today, and to the Mayor for
16 convening this Commission. I'm Adam Roberts, policy
17 director for the Community Hazard Improvement Program,
18 also known as CHIP. We represent New York's housing
19 providers, including apartment building owners and
20 management.

21 We're here to recommend Charter
22 revisions that would benefit the one million units of
23 rent-stabilized housing in New York City, which makes
24 up 40 percent of rental housing, and the vast majority
25 of affordable housing.

1 First, we support the proposed changes
2 to the fiscal impact statements. Furthermore, the
3 scope of the fiscal impact statement should be
4 expanded. Currently a fiscal impact statement only
5 evaluates the impasse of legislation on the revenues
6 and expenditures of the City, to quote the Charter.
7 Rather, a fiscal impact statement should also be
8 required to set the financial impasse outside of
9 government.

10 This is critical as City laws are
11 responsible for the enormous cost for rent-stabilized
12 housing, which cannot legally be recouped, such as
13 local law 11, local law 97, local law 1, and others.

14 Another important Charter revision
15 would be the creation of Diversion program for New
16 York City Housing Board. For years there's been a
17 massive backlog in Housing Board that has not abated.
18 This forces tenants to spend at least a year in
19 Housing Board, all while accruing increasingly sizable
20 arrears. These arrears are usually paid for by the
21 City through one-shot deals. Unfortunately, there are
22 no options to access these emergency rental arrears
23 grants without having gone through the Housing Board
24 process and being on the verge of eviction.

25 Spurred by the Biden Administration,

1 many cities and states have adopted Housing Board
2 diversion programs, which attempt to intervene the
3 landlord-tenant relationship before the court process
4 starts. By providing resources upfront such as
5 prescreening parental assistance, case analysis,
6 mediation specialty, financial counseling, and other
7 benefits, cases can be resolved without draining the
8 court's resources.

9 These programs are succeeding
10 throughout the country. Nearly every major city has a
11 diversion program except for New York City. From
12 Philadelphia to Chicago, these programs have
13 dramatically improved the experience for tenants and
14 owners who are dealing with rent arrears.
15 Furthermore, these programs reduce the significant
16 staffing and financial burdens placed on the courts
17 and local governments to deal with rent arrears.

18 Lastly, while the City is in the early
19 stages of re-examining its Facade Inspection Program,
20 we recommend that the Commission spur this process
21 along faster. Local law 11 is overly burdensome and
22 unpopular with the public. The Commission should
23 examine leaks to the Facade Inspection Program, in
24 particular, the period between inspections of
25 buildings with facade being safe should be greater

1 than five years, and drones should be allowed to
2 evaluate facade conditions between mandated
3 inspections.

4 These changes would save New Yorkers
5 countless dollars while making the City far more
6 attractive and friendly to pedestrians. It would also
7 reduce a significant burden on the Department of
8 Building staff so that they could focus enforcement on
9 buildings with unsafe facades.

10 We hope you strongly consider these
11 revisions. Again, thank you for holding this hearing
12 today.

13 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you. Any
14 questions? Do we have any questions on Zoom? Any
15 Commissioners on Zoom have any questions? Hearing
16 none.

17 Everett Perry.

18 MR. PERRY: Hi, everybody. Hi. How
19 are you? I'm going to be so fast right now. You guys
20 are going to love me.

21 Okay. So I'm here to advocate for the
22 MWBE agency. I am a -- I'm the president of a Black-
23 owned company called Urban Ecospaces. We're a Black-
24 owned business. We are bonded by contractor, and we
25 are the result of the SCA mentor program that is -- as

1 well as the MTA mentor program that Michael Garner
2 ran.

3 My wife and I own this business, and we
4 starting in 2016. We started with four of us, and we
5 have been as many as 130 employees between here and
6 Puerto Rico. We started with \$50,000 in gross
7 revenue, and within three years we were doing eight to
8 nine million dollars. This is, again, as a direct
9 result of these MWBE programs and the School
10 Construction Authority and MTA.

11 Currently, we are developing an
12 affordable housing project in Staten Island, one of
13 the only, and you might think the only program, the
14 only affordable housing program in Staten Island in
15 the last 20 years. We're developing one- and two-
16 family affordable homes for as low as \$300,000 in
17 2024. So this is going to break records.

18 Most of the contractors will be from
19 Staten Island, and we're going to hire locally, and
20 the MWBE participation is going to be as high as
21 90 percent. So the point of all this is that these
22 programs work. Some people tell you they don't, but
23 they absolutely do.

24 One of the things that some of the
25 people brought up that's really important is the

1 payments. So, for example, when we were in Puerto
2 Rico, the company we were working for said, "Well,
3 what can you do?"

4 And we said, "If it pays weekly, we can
5 do whatever you need." And we did over 600 homes in
6 nine months in Puerto Rico. And we were working
7 between -- I was flying back and forth.

8 So if you all were to vote on this or
9 if you were to -- you know, I say that I'm a product.
10 This program absolutely works. And if you continue
11 with putting this together, all the City agencies
12 under one program, I think it's going to be massively
13 successful. So I'd encourage everyone to support the
14 program. Thank you very much.

15 Any questions?

16 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you.

17 MR. PERRY: Thank you.

18 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Any questions from
19 the Commissioners?

20 Do you have a written statement? If
21 not, just --

22 MR. PERRY: I don't. I don't. I don't
23 have a written statement.

24 VICE CHAIR DUKES: You could submit
25 it --

1 MR. PERRY: But I could submit
2 something, yes.

3 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Okay.

4 MR. PERRY: Okay. Thank you.

5 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you.

6 Any questions from our Commissioners on
7 Zoom? Hearing none.

8 Our next speaker is Michael Sisitzky.

9 MR. SISITZKY: Close.

10 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Was I close?

11 MR. SISITZKY: You were close, yeah.

12 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Oh, okay.

13 MR. SISITZKY: Thank you, and good
14 evening. My name is Michael Sisitzky, Assistant
15 Policy Director for the New York Civil Liberties
16 Union.

17 The NYCLU is deeply concerned with the
18 rushed nature of this Commission, among the shortest
19 in the City's history. The Charter is the City's
20 constitution. It provides the framework for local
21 government, establishes their system of checks and
22 balances. It's the basis for how democracy operates
23 at the local level, and it should be treated with
24 care.

25 I want to respond to suggestions in the

1 preliminary report that there is somehow not enough
2 process when the City Council enacts laws on public
3 safety. I've been involved in legislative advocacy
4 for the Council for a decade, and let me tell you, it
5 moves slowly.

6 Take the How Many Stops Act, said the
7 new report, as one of the majors that supposedly moved
8 too fast without sufficient input. That bill was
9 first introduced in December 2021. It was
10 reintroduced in July 2022 and had a nearly five-hour
11 hearing in March 2023, in which the NYPD testified at
12 length, along with members of the public. And it was
13 only voted on in December 2023 after months of
14 negotiations between the Council and the NYPD, who,
15 contrary to assertions that public safety agencies
16 aren't consulted, have a lot of say in how that bill
17 turned out.

18 They still disagreed with the final
19 bill, but this was the bill that went through a full
20 two years from its first introduction to passage, and
21 whose genesis was actually in community feedback in
22 the years-long joint remedial process that arose in
23 the 2013 stop-and-frisk ruling. To pretend that it
24 was somehow rushed and lacking in input is not
25 accurate.

1 Today, stop-and-frisk is at its highest
2 reported level since 2015, with racial disparities as
3 bad as they've ever been, and with an unacceptably
4 high number of unconstitutional stops from the NYPD's
5 revived anti-crime movements.

6 Complaints of police misconduct into
7 the CCRB are at their highest level since 2012. This
8 is not the time to be weakening the already-too-weak
9 mechanisms for police oversight and accountability.
10 And there's no justification for getting special
11 treatment in public safety legislation separate and
12 apart from all the other issues that Council
13 addresses, unless the only purpose is to further
14 insulate agencies like the NYPD from basic
15 transparency and oversight.

16 But those changes are on the table
17 because the Mayor had a policy agreement with the
18 Council, and because the Council exercised its power
19 as the coequal branch of government to override
20 vetoes.

21 What kind of message does that send to
22 New Yorkers when administration doesn't get its way
23 through the normal democratic process, simply rewrite
24 the rulebook to change the rules in your favor. That
25 is a dangerous precedent to set.

1 We're talking about fundamental changes
2 to the way that the legislative process works in New
3 York City, and we're talking about those changes on a
4 much more compressed timeline than pretty much any
5 public safety bill that has moved through counsel.
6 There's no good reason to be entertaining proposals
7 that fundamentally alters our system of checks and
8 balances and that weaken the legislature's ability to
9 hold City agencies accountable.

10 We urge the Commission to not advance
11 any measures that would do so on this fall's ballot.
12 Thank you.

13 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you. Any
14 questions from the Commissioners? Any questions from
15 any Commissioners on Zoom? Hearing none --

16 MR. SISITZKY: And I'll be sending in
17 written comments as well. Thank you.

18 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Excuse me?

19 MR. SISITZKY: I'll be sending in
20 written testimony as well.

21 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Okay, please. Thank
22 you.

23 Our next speaker is Kai Rosenthal.

24 MS. ROSENTHAL: Good evening. Thank
25 you. I am Kai Rosenthal, copresident of the League of

1 Women Voters of New York City, and I'd like to
2 reinforce the staff report's recommendation not to
3 alter ranked choice voting.

4 As a nonpartisan organization of over a
5 hundred years, the League of Women Voters of New York
6 City encourages informed and active citizen
7 participation in government, and influences public
8 policy through advocacy and education. On behalf of
9 the League, I appreciate the opportunity to testify
10 tonight.

11 Given the successful initial
12 implementation of ranked choice voting in New York
13 City elections, I encourage the Commission not to
14 bring any new adjustment to our electoral system to
15 the ballot this fall. Since 2021 RCV has largely
16 succeeded in achieving the benefits proposed by our
17 past testimony before the 2019 Charter Revision
18 Commission. At the time we argued that RCV would
19 allow voters to more fully express their preferences
20 on the ballot, prevent expensive low turnout primary
21 runoff elections, and increase confidence in the
22 electoral system.

23 Over the past two local election
24 cycles, we have seen promising evidence in each of
25 these areas. First, voters have embraced the

1 opportunity to have more choices, which resulted in
2 higher participation. In 2021 mayoral primary race
3 reached a turnout of 26.5 percent, representing a
4 recent high for local IGR elections. In this
5 election, 89.3 percent of Democrats and 56.6 percent
6 of Republicans ranked more than one choice for at
7 least one office, indicating a widespread
8 understanding of the system.

9 Second, New York City taxpayers have
10 already benefited from avoiding the need for extensive
11 citywide runoff elections. In 2021 no candidate
12 reached a 40 percent benchmark during the first round
13 of the Democratic Mayoral Primary, so we were able to
14 use RCV's instant runoff system to determine a winner.

15 By contrast, the 2013 Public Advocate
16 Primary Runoff Election cost the City \$13 million.

17 Third, the change in winners as a
18 result of RCV are favorable to increasing voter
19 confidence in our electoral system. Studies cited
20 CUNY Center for Urban Research indicated the
21 candidates understood that RCV required them to talk
22 to more voters in case they could become a voter's
23 second or third choice in a crowded field.

24 As a matter of good governance, we
25 strongly oppose reversing reforms to our electoral

1 system after only a few years. Thank you for giving
2 me the opportunity to testify and for your leadership
3 for New York City.

4 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Any comments,
5 questions? Zoom members?

6 Thank you very much.

7 We will now have Mr. Xavier Johnson.

8 MR. X. JOHNSON: Thank you. Yes, my
9 name is Ibrahim Xavier Johnson. I live here in
10 Harlem.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We can't hear
12 you.

13 MR. X. JOHNSON: My name's Ibrahim
14 Xavier Johnson. I live here in Harlem. And the
15 politicians you heard reflect my wishes. And I heard
16 a lot of testimony here today, but I want to say
17 specifically to this Commission that what you're doing
18 having this public hearing, allowing us to speak, is
19 very important. So any revision or any change that
20 you make that would increase public input, I'm all for
21 that.

22 I just want to say one more thing about
23 written testimony. You receive written testimony from
24 our elected official, especially our state senator.
25 She pretty much reflect my wishes, and that is how it

1 works here for me. So if a politician doesn't do what
2 I want, I vote them out. So everybody you see that's
3 testified, they do what I want them to do. And
4 they're in touch with the people, they listen to the
5 people, and that's what makes this community work.
6 And I encourage you to keep doing what you're doing,
7 and I want to say thank you.

8 And, by the way, Mr. Diaz, we took a
9 class together at Lehman College back in the day,
10 political science, yeah, in the Bronx.

11 So we have good people. You guys are
12 good people.

13 I know your father as well, Mr. Diaz,
14 Sr.

15 MR. DIAZ: You told him -- somebody
16 tell him I'm on a hearing committee.

17 MR. X. JOHNSON: Yeah. So keep doing
18 what you're doing. After a lot of no, no, no, don't
19 do that, keep doing what you're doing. That's all
20 I've got to say.

21 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you.

22 MS. MCGRAW: I have a question.

23 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Question?

24 MS. MCGRAW: Yes. Hi, how are you
25 doing?

1 MR. X. JOHNSON: Question. Absolutely.

2 MS. MCGRAW: Thank you so much --

3 MR. X. JOHNSON: Yes.

4 MS. MCGRAW: -- for coming and
5 testifying. Can you just be a little clearer on what
6 your wishes are?

7 MR. X. JOHNSON: My wishes are for you
8 to keep doing public hearings, and specifically if
9 you're going to revise the Charter, increase the power
10 of public hearing, increase the power of the public,
11 however you choose to do that. So my wish is very
12 broad. And I'd like to see more public hearings, more
13 power to the Community Boards, things like that.
14 There's already a section in the Charter called
15 Community Board. I'd like to see more enforcement of
16 that.

17 MS. MCGRAW: Okay. Thank you.

18 MR. X. JOHNSON: And it seems like
19 you're doing that, so that's what I see.

20 MS. MCGRAW: Thank you so much.

21 MR. X. JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you.

22 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Do you have a
23 written report for us? You going to send it in?

24 MR. X. JOHNSON: If the senator sent
25 her report, that's my report, too.

1 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Okay. Thank you.
2 We have Mr. Miles Grant. Graunt? Or
3 is that Grant?

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Grant.

5 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Grant.

6 MR. GRANT: Hi, everyone.

7 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Hi.

8 MR. GRANT: My name is Miles Grant.
9 I'm actually from Queens, but I just came over the
10 bridge. I'm here as an individual. I don't represent
11 any group. But I think, if I heard, there are so few
12 individuals here speaks to a lot of, you know, things
13 that we've heard during the night of people not having
14 a lot of faith in these sorts of -- these sorts of
15 sessions and of our electoral system in general.

16 Voter participation is down, trust in
17 democracy is down, and I think there's a widespread
18 sort of perception of corruption and backdoor deals
19 and sort of government not working for them. And when
20 I go to these sorts of events and I try to bring
21 others with me, try to get them just be civically
22 engaged, the response that I always get is, "Oh,
23 everyone's just corrupt. There's nothing that the
24 public can actually do."

25 That is the perception, especially with

1 young people. And that's not good. But luckily there
2 is a solution, and that is sortition. Can I get a
3 show of hands on how many of you have heard this
4 phrase before or have any idea what it is?

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: What is it? Say
6 that again?

7 MR. GRANT: Sortition.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- in regards to
9 what?

10 MR. GRANT: So -- okay. Zero people.

11 MR. DIAZ: You asked for a show of
12 hands to what?

13 MR. GRANT: Sortition as an alternative
14 to sort of decision making. And I think when you're
15 modifying the Charter, this is an excellent
16 opportunity to bring this sort of system in.

17 So as a brief sort of description of
18 what it is, it is essentially a jury, a random
19 selection of citizens for decision making; in this
20 case, you know, demographically balanced. In my
21 dreams obviously, our entire control system is
22 replaced by this, but I'm not delusional. There are
23 many opportunities that you can do in the process of
24 Charter reform to bring in more of this type of random
25 citizen participation and citizen decision making.

1 There are studies, there's research,
2 and there's effective examples within New York City,
3 specifically Asian Commission -- worked and has
4 created a sortition counsel through the People's Money
5 Program, and has effectively produced ideas and
6 decision making using this method.

7 I think realistically it is possible
8 for you in this Commission to reform existing agency
9 and Commissions to operate this way. But given the
10 fact that you are intending on creating a new agency,
11 this could be an excellent opportunity to bring in
12 this type of decision making in a small-scale way.
13 I'm not asking for everything overnight, but I am sort
14 of asking for changes that can be made to make people
15 my age, to make the next generation believe in civics
16 again and believe in the power of public democracy as
17 a concept, because right now that does not exist.
18 Thank you.

19 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you.

20 MR. DIAZ: Now I've got a question.

21 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Yes.

22 MR. DIAZ: So who would create these
23 committees, or what is it called again? I'm sorry.

24 MR. GRANT: So the term is "sortition."
25 It's been around for thousands of years, as sort of an

1 alternative to either, you know, an agency or an
2 elected official placing candidates or members on a
3 panel or an agency. They are instead randomly
4 selected from the citizens as --

5 MR. DIAZ: By whom, though, sir?

6 MR. GRANT: I mean by an independent
7 board, by an independent body that's designed to do
8 that, which the New York City Government already has
9 experience in doing. Again, the People's Money
10 Program has been proven effective for creating such a
11 body.

12 MR. DIAZ: Do you see that in Community
13 Boards? Do you see that already in -- encounters? Do
14 you see that already --

15 MR. GRANT: Those are people who are
16 interested in joining this and are interested in
17 power. True sortition is randomly selected, like jury
18 duty.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Could you spell
20 it?

21 MR. GRANT: Spell it like a spelling
22 bee? S-O-R-T-I-T-I-O-N.

23 Thank you.

24 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Any more questions
25 from Commissioners? Commissioners on Zoom?

1 MS. ROWE-ADAMS: I do have a question.
2 I have a question.

3 MR. GRANT: Yeah.

4 MS. ROWE-ADAMS: I heard you say
5 something that someone was corrupt.

6 MR. GRANT: A lot of people are
7 corrupt. Again, it's about perception. I'm not
8 saying anything. It's perception. It's perception,
9 widespread perception.

10 MS. ROWE-ADAMS: Okay. Thank you so
11 much.

12 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you,
13 Mr. Grant.

14 MR. GRANT: No one on Zoom? Oh,
15 there's like seven hands up.

16 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Greg Baggett.
17 No, I'm calling our next one gentleman.
18 He was from Queens. Am I right?

19 MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Yes.

20 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Okay.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Why are you
22 looking at me?

23 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Mr. Baggett.
24 Mr. Baggett from Harlem.

25 MR. BAGGETT: So good evening, and

1 thank you very much, Commissioners, and special thanks
2 to Dr. Dukes and to Commissioner Adams and Stephanie
3 as well. Thank you very much.

4 So I wanted to speak on an issue that
5 was in the last review about Community Boards. We had
6 passed a provision, an amendment that allowed for the
7 term limits to exist with Community Boards. And I
8 think before this set of amendments are passed, the
9 implementation of the term limits will happen. And I
10 just wanted to say, I thought that the amendment was
11 somewhat incomplete.

12 There was a lot of pros and cons. Some
13 of the pros was that long-term experience on the
14 Community Board benefited the Board with people who
15 had sets of skills. And then people who were against
16 it was concerned about issues of careerism.

17 And so I wanted to propose a compromise
18 where board members convert to honorary members after
19 a stated number of years, and the honorary membership
20 confers the following rights: to serve on all
21 committees of the Board with full membership rights,
22 including to vote -- that is at the committee level --
23 and to attend board general meetings with the right to
24 speak but not to vote in the general meeting voting
25 items. And also to give those honorary members access

1 to other rights as board members may have, in terms of
2 access to the minutes and other documents that come
3 before the various board.

4 Let me just say that in many ways, this
5 can be implemented at the level of the bylaws. But if
6 it's actually in the Charter, then the borough
7 president would have the enforcement power to actually
8 make it happen at all boards and not happen at some
9 boards. They have what's called public members or
10 legacy members or advisory members, and then there are
11 other boards that don't.

12 One other issue on the Community Board
13 that don't really have a lot to say about it other
14 than in terms of experience, I do think that there
15 should be some amendment that calls for the
16 diversification of boards to the extent that boards
17 represent the people who actually live in communities.

18 Actually, our president actually had
19 some really good examples. When you were in office
20 there were boards in your District that had dwindling
21 Euro-American representation, growing Latino
22 representation, and a steady population of Black
23 constituents. And you were actually able to create
24 very equitable representation in those boards.

25 I think in terms of Manhattan holding

1 Community Board 10 hostage to be the sole
2 representation of Black leadership within the District
3 of Manhattan is appalling. And I think when I'm
4 asking for diversification, I'm not only asking for
5 diversification of Community Board 10, but all of the
6 other boards in Manhattan and throughout the borough
7 as well.

8 I won't say much about -- I had
9 something to say about public safety, but all I'll
10 simply say is that I think that this is a real
11 opportunity, and we have in office, in the executive
12 office a former police officer who was also committed
13 to social activism --

14 VICE CHAIR DUKES: You're over your two
15 minutes, Mr. Baggett.

16 MR. BAGGETT: Okay. I'm going to wrap
17 it up.

18 Social activism around police. And so
19 it would be a good opportunity to try to engage at
20 that level. And --

21 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Do you have a
22 written report for us?

23 MR. BAGGETT: I'm going to e-mail my
24 comments to you on the public safety stuff.

25 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Please do. Okay.

1 MR. BAGGETT: So thank you very much.

2 VICE CHAIR DUKES: You're over your two
3 minutes, but any questions?

4 MR. BRAGG: No. Thank you.

5 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Any questions? Any
6 questions from the ones on Zoom?

7 Thank you so much. Please submit that.
8 It's important that we hear and consider.

9 Marsha Taylor.

10 MS. MARSHA TAYLOR: Good evening,
11 esteemed counsel.

12 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Good evening.

13 MS. MARSHA TAYLOR: Thank you for
14 allowing me a few minutes to speak. I came here at
15 the behest and invitation of my beloved Ms. Jackie
16 Rowe-Adams, and I thank you for inviting me here. I
17 wasn't really sure what to expect, and I'm so glad
18 that I'm here, because I've been educated. I've
19 learned a lot, and I'm certainly going to leave here
20 and going to do a lot more research on the Commission,
21 on the Charter of New York City. And I think that you
22 all have such a huge opportunity to make a difference
23 in the City.

24 From what I have been listening to and
25 my concerns, I'm a lifelong, born and raised resident

1 of Harlem. And the first thing that comes to mind,
2 because I don't have any prepared remarks, this is
3 from the heart, because I love my community. I was
4 born in 1969 at St. Luke's Women's Hospital on
5 Amsterdam Avenue. My grandparents were here. My
6 parents were here. I've gone to school here. I'm
7 raising my children here. I love Harlem.

8 And my biggest thing, the first thing,
9 I would love to see a more robust grassroots effort so
10 that people like myself and my neighbors will know
11 more about this Commission and just how important it
12 is. I would have loved to have seen this room filled
13 with my neighbors and with people, younger people and
14 young adults and businessowners and people who care
15 about this community the same way that I do. But I
16 didn't know about this until Jackie told me. And I
17 will pass along the word, but it takes -- whether it's
18 social media, whether it's marketing or campaigning,
19 whatever it is to get into the communities, to get
20 into the streets so that people will show up.

21 I will also say that I would love to
22 see whatever you can do in terms of getting on that
23 ballot more accountability, more transparency for the
24 oversight agencies, whether it's for businesses,
25 whether it is for politicians. Whatever it is within

1 your power to get on that ballot so that there is more
2 accountability for people who are overseeing what
3 happens in our community, I implore you to do that.

4 I would love to see programs that are
5 created for -- I know people spoke about small
6 businesses. It behooves me to see so many businesses
7 in my neighborhood that are run by people who don't
8 look like me. Some of them don't even speak English.
9 I know that they didn't come here with an 800 credit
10 score and a big bag of money. I'm wondering how they
11 get the small storefronts. Point me to that program,
12 because I'm lost when I'm looking to get into a
13 business or a storefront.

14 So I'd like to know a little bit more
15 about what programs and what opportunities. You know,
16 we're speaking about, you know, minority women in
17 business enterprise. I want to hear more about
18 programs that are available for people in our
19 community.

20 And, again, I'm not going to take up a
21 lot of time. I'm just happy to be here. And, again,
22 whatever you can do to get on that ballot the
23 transparency, the accountability, higher qualified
24 people, and whatever I can do to participate, count me
25 in. Thank you.

1 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you. I will
2 recommend to you - I just retired after 27 years on
3 Community Board 10. I would recommend that's where
4 you learn to start, with Community Board and with your
5 school. If you have children in the school system, I
6 don't know -- do you live in this area, which is
7 District 5?

8 MS. MARSHA TAYLOR: I do, in Esplanade
9 Gardens.

10 VICE CHAIR DUKES: We need parents'
11 voices. But 10 takes care, sanitation, parks, all of
12 that is discussed there. So if you can get your
13 community to go to Community Board 10, and it's listed
14 every day of every meeting.

15 I worked seven days a week. And so if
16 you want to do something, start there.

17 MS. MARSHA TAYLOR: Thank you. I
18 certainly will. Thank you.

19 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Mr. Marcus? Is
20 there Mr. Marcus? Mr. Marcus. Okay. He's here.

21 MR. MARCUS: Good evening.

22 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Good evening.

23 MR. MARCUS: I'm here because it was
24 brought to my attention in regards to --

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Could you speak

1 a little bit closer --

2 MR. MARCUS: All right. It was brought
3 to my attention about this here forum in regards to
4 how public safety is addressed, especially within
5 NYPD. I think that some of the issues that has been
6 addressed, far as the new laws, because it doesn't
7 really encompass accountability. And from speaking
8 with City councilmembers, it was brought to my
9 attention that the Charter -- I don't know how they
10 figured that when they're lawmakers -- are the ones
11 that put together proposals to be enforced so that our
12 communities have more of -- how can I say it? -- more
13 confidence in the way that our elected officials and
14 the police department interacts with our communities.

15 I help a lot of families, high-profile
16 cases where I help families who need justice from
17 shootings as well as other certain crimes. But I get
18 a lot of backlash when it comes down to supporting why
19 communities need the police in their communities as
20 well as why the police are not held accountable when
21 they do something in regards -- for transgression
22 purposes within our communities.

23 I would like to see some rules be put
24 in place that holds accountability in regards to the
25 matter of the disciplinary hearings when it comes down

1 to the NYPD. Because as it stands, and I cite this
2 just from a case back in 2016 with Deborah Danner's,
3 officer who violated the codes of professional conduct
4 within NYPD and when they're dealing with EEP's. As
5 you see it's continuously being done. And it just
6 opens up the door for the wrong rhetoric; right?

7 You have those that champion social
8 workers, not realizing that you have programs within
9 NYPD where you have a division that specializes in
10 dealing with EEPs that's not being effectuated; right?
11 So what ends up taking place is we get the shooting;
12 right? We get these people to champion us here. We
13 get some of these misguided elected officials on board
14 with this here, and it creates -- it creates like
15 chaos. And then there's no trust within the community
16 that really needs the police to come into the
17 community but are afraid to call.

18 So what's needed, I think, is the
19 disciplinary hearings, because that How Many Stops
20 Act, all it is is regurgitation of information that
21 they already know. They're not building discipline
22 the way they should be for violating the same rules.
23 And that's what needs to be done in order for us to
24 stop these misguided rules and misleading the people
25 for votes.

1 So I would like to know exactly how
2 does that go about in putting together a term
3 limitation on hearings, disciplinary proceedings,
4 especially where it's been -- how can I say
5 it? -- adjournments for no good cause.

6 So if I can help out with that there,
7 you know, I could present the information and the data
8 and everything else that you may need. This way we
9 can, you know, expedite this and, you know, re-give it
10 confidence.

11 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Now, do you have a
12 written report for us, or will you give us one?

13 MR. MARCUS: I can give it to you.

14 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Because the points
15 that you're bringing up, we need to see them --

16 MR. MARCUS: Oh, I can give it to you.

17 VICE CHAIR DUKES: -- digest them.

18 Any other --

19 MR. LYNCH: -- thoughts? I agree with
20 you.

21 MR. MARCUS: I'll give it to you.

22 Just --

23 MR. LYNCH: You make some great points,
24 but it having it on paper, it'll help us more to
25 dissect it and --

1 MR. MARCUS: Oh, I have it. I just
2 need to know where to send it.

3 MR. LYNCH: Okay.

4 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Okay. Did your
5 staff have it? Okay. Thank you.

6 MS. SAVINO: Can you give him
7 the -- can you give him the Charter info e-mail?

8 MR. KIERNAN: E-mail is the charter
9 info at --

10 MR. MARCUS: Charter info?

11 MR. KIERNAN: -- at City Charter --

12 MR. MARCUS: Charter info at --

13 MR. KIERNAN: -- at City charter --

14 MR. MARCUS: -- at City charter --

15 MR. KIERNAN: -- dot NYC, dot gov.

16 MR. TAJIDDIN: It's on a report, like
17 your PDF.

18 MR. MARCUS: Thank you. All right.

19 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Get it into us as
20 soon as possible.

21 MR. MARCUS: Oh, I'll have it to you by
22 Thursday.

23 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you. Thank
24 you so much, and thank you for coming.

25 Julius -- my Harlem constant friend.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Historian.

2 VICE CHAIR DUKES: The historian of
3 Harlem.

4 MR. TAJIDDIN: Good evening,
5 Commissioners, Mme. Vice Chair, and Mr. Chair. Thank
6 you for this opportunity.

7 I read the report that you've so far
8 put out. And so my testimony is going to be regarding
9 primarily addressing the fiscal responsibility and
10 public safety. In particular, I raise an idea how the
11 City can raise revenue. We can do more in the tax
12 department such as sales tax and/or other tax. We can
13 do something like the 16th amendment. In other words,
14 it doesn't matter where the source of your income or
15 how it's made, nor does it -- nor does it make what
16 you're doing legal if it's not legal, nor change your
17 immigration status. You're going to collect a City
18 sales tax or pay a City tax for as long as you're
19 making monkey money.

20 Examples of such income, money from
21 vendors. I'm putting together right now a solution to
22 the vending problem, and that can come after this
23 amendment.

24 Now as I said, what you're doing may
25 not be legal, and you may still be accountable for

1 such conduct. But you're going to pay your taxes.
2 Example, Al Capone, 15 years, and by the way, you owe
3 us \$15 million in taxes.

4 Further, the City can also have in the
5 Charter the allowance of citizens to come up with
6 innovative ways to earn City money, but such income
7 must entitle them to a fair commission.

8 Public Safety. Back in 2013 I drafted
9 a community policing program that was renamed the NCL
10 program. A lot of that draft is in the new Clergy
11 Coalition Council initiative. However, I'm
12 particularly at this moment suggesting that the role
13 of the Community Boards be more strengthened.

14 Right now the Charter allows the
15 Community Boards to appoint public members to their
16 committees, but it's not mandated. However, it should
17 be. CB-10 used to have public members, but because it
18 wasn't mandated under the City Charter, politics got
19 in the way.

20 Now, the Boards can decide how that's
21 done, but having public members on committees can
22 increase new ideas more quickly in areas that could
23 enhance public safety and the public welfare. For
24 example, protecting the public and maintaining public
25 confidence in law enforcement. Law enforcement is not

1 just with NYPD. It's school safety officers,
2 sanitation, ACS, probation officers, et cetera. And
3 perhaps the City Charter can expand on the various
4 City departments who have police powers and spell out
5 their duties.

6 Also, Community Boards need to be
7 informed on all intros and when such hearings are to
8 take place. In return, Community Boards must post all
9 such information on their websites.

10 Community Boards should also be
11 notified of all pending construction jobs in their
12 respective Districts, whether they are as a right or
13 at the passage of -- due to unlawful construction
14 constantly going on.

15 Community Boards should also be
16 notified 30 days before a contract goes into effect of
17 all arm's-length transactions pertaining to the
18 transfer of real property when senior citizens are
19 allegedly selling or transferring their real property
20 to another party before such transactions can be
21 legal. Too many of our seniors are having their
22 property stolen from them, and that should be of
23 concern to people talking about public safety and
24 public welfare. In other words, the more eyes on
25 something reinforces. You see something, you say

1 something.

2 Other areas of concern that was in the
3 report, minority- and women-owned businesses. The
4 definition for MWBE should spell out the people
5 considered minority and should be separate from women.
6 In other words, a white woman shouldn't qualify as a
7 minority.

8 City Charter gives DSNY Commissioner
9 the power to adopt regulations controlling the use of
10 sidewalks and gutters by abutting owners and occupants
11 with respect to sweepings, garbage, refuse, or
12 rubbish, et cetera. So I support exploring updates to
13 chapter 31 of the Charter to clarify and expand DSNY
14 responsibilities to facilitate cleaner streets,
15 sidewalks, and City-owned property. I'll submit my
16 comments on that topic in writing.

17 And agency recommendations. Any
18 suggestion that recommends removing a public hearing
19 requirement for anything should not be entertained.
20 The Mayor's Office of Contract Services recommended
21 removing public hearings for contracts, and it seems
22 that it pertained to procurement contracts. But it
23 seems like it could go beyond the same. In any event,
24 I don't support removing the public's voice on
25 anything. If anything, it should be more expanded.

1 And I'm going to submit my opinion on consent on
2 Commissioners, the AMI, ranked choice voting, and I'll
3 put it all in writing for you anyway, but I will add
4 those other things.

5 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Because you're over
6 your time. You have your written reports? Because
7 you're over the time.

8 MR. TAJIDDIN: No, I'm going to submit
9 it by the e-mail.

10 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Okay.

11 MR. TAJIDDIN: All right.

12 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you.

13 MR. TAJIDDIN: Thank you.

14 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Any questions from
15 our Commissioners?

16 MR. BRAGG: No. Thank you.

17 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you so much.
18 Did you submit it?

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He's going to.

20 MR. TAJIDDIN: No, I'm going to.

21 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Okay. Thank you.

22 MR. TAJIDDIN: It'll be there before
23 the deadline.

24 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Okay.

25 Mr. Moses. I'm sorry. It is in June

1 Moses?

2 MS. MOSES: Yeah, I'm a girl.

3 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you. I've got
4 to stick to my three minutes.

5 MS. MOSES: I got it, 90 seconds.

6 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you.

7 MS. MOSES: Thank you all so much,
8 esteemed folks on this panel. My name is June like
9 the month, Moses like the Bible. I'm the Tenant
10 Association for those ten buildings right next door
11 here between Lenox and Seven. And I only have two
12 requests.

13 First, while you're in these rooms and
14 you're putting together these things, please don't
15 forget those of us that are 40 percent below the AMI.
16 It seems as though everything that is being done is
17 being done around us, and nothing is being really
18 truly done for us. When even the City of Yes starts
19 at 40 percent AMI, you're leaving out a thousand
20 people who live in those ten buildings right next
21 door.

22 So I just say, as you're moving forward
23 with these things, please consider those of us who
24 aren't in this room, because it's been discussed that
25 the information isn't trickling down to the people who

1 really need to be here. This is their fight
2 information for a lot of people.

3 MS. ROWE-ADAMS: That's not true.
4 That's not true.

5 MS. MOSES: But there are a lot of
6 people who they're not here. They're -- I don't know
7 how we get to them, but how do we get this to trickle
8 down to those folks so we're not the ones who are put
9 out? I don't see how we do a one Harlem or we do
10 anything when most of those people who helped hold
11 this place up through crack and through everything
12 else are visibly being pushed out because there is no
13 consideration for us at all?

14 I just ask for the consideration,
15 because we're not being included in any thought
16 process. If you really break it down, we're not
17 there. The poor folks ain't there. And that's all I
18 have to say. Please consider us. Thank you.

19 MS. ROWE-ADAMS: I have a question.

20 Hi.

21 MS. MOSES: Hey. I love you, Jackie
22 Rowe-Adams. I love you --

23 MS. ROWE-ADAMS: Good. Come right back
24 here.

25 MS. MOSES: Yes, ma'am.

1 MS. ROWE-ADAMS: So I just want to say,
2 because, see, I know that you're active, you know.
3 But we the Commission did an outreach at the site for
4 Harlem. And I'm glad you said that, because you have
5 more work to do. You do a lot of work already, but
6 you've got more to do. Because this room should have
7 been packed.

8 We have witnesses. We put literature.
9 We call the world. We went to the churches. Well,
10 you see NAACP, you know all of them. The information
11 was out. You've got more work to do, girl. Don't let
12 them go. Tell them they should pack -- you know,
13 people complain, and I hear you. I'm glad you said
14 it.

15 MS. MOSES: Pardon me. That was not a
16 complaint. It was an ask for a consideration. That
17 was not a complaint. Thank you.

18 MS. ROWE-ADAMS: No, you're not
19 complaining. You're saying what people need to hear,
20 and this is why I'm glad that you came, because, you
21 know, we're looking at that, and this is why we ask
22 people to tell the next one, whether it's Harlem, all
23 the boroughs. We went to all five boroughs twice, and
24 we're going back. So if you know anyone in any of
25 the -- for any people who can come from Harlem to

1 Brooklyn to Staten Island, because this is important.
2 So that --

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And Queens.

4 MS. ROWE-ADAMS: And Queens. And let
5 me -- and Bronx. And let me say this. I'm glad you
6 brought up on Zoom, because everybody needs to know
7 what's going on in their communities. What's going on
8 in this City? And this is the reason the Mayor put
9 this together, because we're all left out, not only
10 you. We're all left out, and enough is enough. And
11 you're going to help us put this all back together.
12 Because I know you're a great leader.

13 So I just wanted to say that. Thank
14 you.

15 MS. MOSES: Thank you very much. I
16 thought she was getting ready to come for my neck
17 there, so I didn't know which way we was going.

18 Thank you -- thank y'all so much for
19 your consideration. God bless you.

20 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Any other comments?
21 We will have Mrs. Renee -- Regina Johnson, Ms. Regina
22 Johnson. Ms. Regina Johnson.

23 Mrs. Linda Adams McGlory?

24 Tinesha Grant?

25 Sylvia Hunter?

1 MS. HUNTER: Good evening, everyone.
2 Good evening, everyone.

3 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Good evening.

4 MS. HUNTER: I really just heard about
5 this meeting yesterday through Jackie Rowe-Adams, and
6 I told her I would be here today. I am an advocate
7 for my seniors, and I'm a senior.

8 I don't think you're doing enough for
9 the seniors. I guess in Harlem alone, do we have five
10 or six seniors centers? Am I correct? I have seen no
11 one come and talk about this hearing, at all. Because
12 the seniors will come if you let us know. A lot of
13 them, after lunch they go home. So if you could have
14 somebody there, say one o'clock, and give out
15 paperwork or whatever, the seniors will come out.

16 Number two, I don't see any
17 representation out there for the young peoples. They
18 need to be heard and seen also. I don't -- and I was
19 disappointed when I walked in here to see how empty
20 this place is. So I personally want to know, how was
21 this hearing posted or put out to our community?

22 Another thing, when buildings are built
23 or whatever, we're the last people born and raised in
24 Harlem who heard about the lottery. I could actually
25 have been involved in some of these lotteries. I'm

1 born and raised here. It seems like -- which people
2 of non-color that get into these big buildings. And I
3 would like y'all to address that also.

4 That's all I have to say. Thank you.

5 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you very much,
6 and I'm sorry that -- our duty was to hear from all
7 people, whether it was the seniors, youth, whatever.
8 It was all-inclusive. And it's been advertised. It's
9 on TV. It's everywhere. So thank you for taking your
10 time out to come.

11 MS. HUNTER: Thank you.

12 VICE CHAIR DUKES: And I'm a senior, so
13 I am for seniors. Thank you.

14 Marie Gentine. Marie Gentine. Or
15 maybe it was -- oh, I'm sorry. Who was that?

16 MS. GENTINE: Hi. Good evening. My
17 name is Marie Gentine.

18 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Oh -- okay.

19 MS. GENTINE: Yes. I'm here just to
20 talk about the local law 18. This is the law that
21 people use to call and are calling Airbnb law. So I
22 just wanted to say that this local law 18 is impacting
23 very negatively the ecosystem of neighborhoods in
24 Manhattan and in other boroughs.

25 And I was wondering if someone at the

1 City would just listen to those homeowners, homeowner
2 occupied, one- and two-family buildings, to explain
3 that the loss of income for businesses that are living
4 with income from tourism and as homeowners who really
5 need those extra income to maintain the buildings we
6 are living in to just afford living in Manhattan when
7 you are family.

8 The fact that the City is overreaching
9 what we can do with our home, knowing that those home
10 that we have are not on the market, is really -- is
11 very impacting negatively New York City.

12 So all the people that I used to host
13 are now going to New Jersey. So New Jersey like made
14 a jump of 80 percent for their booking for short-term
15 rentals. And still those kind of rentals are very
16 necessary for people who are coming for -- for
17 instance, Harlem Hospital to be close to family
18 members, because like someone is sick. They want to
19 stay two, three weeks. We cannot host them.

20 And what I want to say is that
21 guesthouse used to be there before hotel. You go to
22 Greece. There is no hotel on some island. You just
23 go to like someone's house because they're kind enough
24 to host you. It's something that is very meaningful
25 for us homeowners of only two or one and family house,

1 because we understand that this law is amazing and has
2 to be like big measure, needs to be like done.

3 But I think you should carve out the
4 very small guy who like are not big business, just
5 trying to make a living, and -- Harlem is the only
6 place that we can afford when you are family with
7 three children, because you have bigger spaces,
8 cheaper like rent --

9 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you so much.

10 MS. GENTINE: -- and just something I
11 wanted to bring --

12 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Do you have a
13 written report, or will you submit in writing --

14 MS. GENTINE: I will put it through e-
15 mail.

16 VICE CHAIR DUKES: -- e-mail to the
17 staff.

18 MS. GENTINE: Thank you.

19 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you so much.

20 I'm not sure, but the last name is
21 Campbell. Do we have anyone by the name of Campbell
22 here?

23 MR. DIAZ: Mme. Chair, just for -- the
24 purposes of -- opening Airbnb --

25 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Mr. John Dillard.

1 Mr. Campbell is here?

2 MR. CAMPBELL: I'm right here.

3 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Sorry.

4 MR. CAMPBELL: Okay. Good afternoon,
5 everyone. My name is Chinnor Campbell. I am a
6 student at the University of Mount St. Vincent, and
7 I'm also the younger brother of Ramarley Graham, who
8 was killed in front of me and my grandmother in our
9 home by the NYPD in 2012 when I was just six years
10 old.

11 I'm here today because even though lots
12 of people don't want to vote, next year is the
13 election year for the mayor seat, and I want to bring
14 that to light, because using the undemocratic Charter
15 revision process to expand the NYPD's power instead of
16 focusing on the protecting the people who are elected
17 to represent -- using -- I'm sorry -- using a last-
18 minute process as a way to silence the people and
19 their voices, and my statement to everyone is if the
20 person who is supposed to represent us is not doing
21 that, then we need to vote to represent ourselves.

22 When my brother was murdered, stop-and-
23 frisk was at an all-time high. Now under Mayor Adams
24 stop-and-frisk is on the rise again, and it's the
25 highest it's been in almost a decade.

1 These days I see more and more officers
2 harassing people in the neighborhood. There are more
3 cops in the subways, which is not making us feel safe.
4 None of this really helps to increase safety for
5 community members.

6 This is why I've joined 27 other family
7 members of the New Yorkers killed by NYPD who endorse
8 the How Many Stops Act. I'm also -- sorry. It's also
9 why I'm urging Commission members not to use this
10 process to be a part of the New Yorkers to
11 pass -- it's already been -- to pass anything that
12 touches on police transparency and accountability,
13 because NYPD has already had too much power over the
14 legislative process in -- affairs.

15 The How Many Stops Act went through a
16 rigorous democratic process in which there was
17 significant public input, and bills were even held up
18 to spend time in negotiation with the communities.
19 The Council and administration included NYPD. In
20 contrast, this Charter revision process is rushed and
21 politically motivated to block the Council's advice
22 and consent law from -- this process for this Charter
23 revision is being rushed into just seven weeks from
24 when you held the first hearing until the
25 Commission -- oh, sorry -- until when the Commission

1 will vote on what will be on the November ballot.

2 We are scheduled to vote in two weeks,
3 but you still haven't shared the final language with
4 the public. There -- sorry. There is no need for
5 that kind of rush unless this is a biased or
6 rigorous -- rigged process. In fact, I heard that at
7 a hearing last week when two other family members of
8 New Yorkers who were killed by the NYPD got muted
9 because the -- revision team -- sorry -- got muted
10 before they could finish their sentences.

11 It seemed like this happened because
12 they were raising concerns when people were
13 just -- embarrassed that NYPD -- all of this seems
14 that this process is about the Mayor trying to grab
15 even more power when it should be about -- New
16 Yorkers.

17 I'm encouraging the Commission to
18 recognize this and not let any so-called public safety
19 measures or any other measures on the November
20 ballot -- thank you.

21 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you. Any
22 questions?

23 MR. DIAZ: Mr. Campbell -- you bring
24 opinion -- positive society. I just want to say that
25 I appreciate you being here. My condolences. And

1 when so much is focused on -- focused on -- doing
2 things that we're not too proud of. The fact that
3 you're here today and returning your community's
4 purpose, I appreciate you being here --

5 MR. CAMPBELL: Thank you.

6 MR. BRAGG: Thank you so much for
7 appearing. If you could submit that testimony to the
8 Commission so that we can digest those points that you
9 made, because this is the purpose of this Commission,
10 too, is to hear from more citizens and take those
11 points back and see what we can do to put it back in
12 front of the citizens of New York. So thank you.

13 MR. CAMPBELL: Yeah, I'll e-mail it to
14 you. Thank you.

15 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Okay. Be sure that
16 we get it, please.

17 Mr. John Dillon -- Dillard?

18 MR. DILLARD: Dillard, D-I-L-L-A-R-D.

19 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Dillard. Okay.

20 MR. DILLARD: Good evening,
21 Mme. Chairman and all of the Commissioners of the City
22 before me. I'm very delighted to be here. I live in
23 Harlem. And I think that all of you are doing an
24 incredulous job.

25 Now, I would like to know, because I

1 missed a point, the City has 112 billion budget?

2 MR. DIAZ: Billion dollars --

3 MR. DILLARD: Billion dollars,
4 12 billion. The other thing is, I would like to get
5 in the NAACP. I'm openly saying this, if I could get
6 in, Dr. Dukes.

7 The other thing is I would like to get
8 involved in politics. I'm a confidential
9 investigator. I retired from the New York City
10 Department of Corrections 30 years. I'm giving you my
11 background. I graduated Bethune-Cookman University
12 down in Florida, Daytona. I have a degree in
13 sociology, and I also have a degree in paralegal
14 studies. I'm an ordained and licensed minister.

15 And so I have no -- I guess this is my
16 testimony. I want to get in politics, and I want to
17 be involved in the community to help people in
18 general. That's basically what I want to do. And if
19 there's anything that you could do by giving me
20 information whereby I could do that, it would greatly
21 be appreciated.

22 And God bless each and every one of you
23 as well as your families.

24 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you. Thank
25 you so much.

1 MR. DIAZ: Mr. Dillard.

2 MR. DILLARD: Yes, sir.

3 MR. DIAZ: -- our Community Board --

4 MR. DILLARD: Yes, sir.

5 MR. DIAZ: -- if you want to get
6 involved in politics. Now, that's in governing laws
7 and -- but you can go to your local -- or some
8 campaign, some local campaign office and start getting
9 involved there. I'm sure that there are many
10 candidates that are running this year who can use your
11 support, who can use, you know, you as a volunteer.
12 But you can go to your local Community Board or the
13 Tenant Association or their -- council meeting and
14 start from there.

15 MR. DILLARD: Okay. Thank you very
16 much.

17 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Any other comment?
18 Members on the Zoom? Hearing none.

19 I'm not sure who's giving me this
20 writing here, and I don't know who this -- so Mr. or
21 Ms. Kaya Royal. That's the last --

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Kaya.

23 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Kaya Royal. Excuse
24 me if I mispronounced.

25 Oh, we have one of our young persons

1 coming, too. Wonderful.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I love it.

3 MR. ROYAL: Good evening.

4 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Good evening.

5 MR. ROYAL: Good evening,
6 Commissioner -- oh, hi, Ms. Jackie Rowe. I'm here.
7 I'll be quite succinct with my time. I am an MWBE
8 vendor. I'm a father. I was motivated to become a
9 vendor, thanks to my daughter that attends PS-175
10 right here in District 5. I am not a minority. I'm
11 not a person of color. I'm speaking as a Black man.
12 They're not synonymous with one another.

13 There has been many initiatives that
14 have been put forth to increase the revenue flow of
15 vendors, but it has not been enough. We have gotten
16 much obfuscating, no clear answers regarding the
17 procurement, the \$25,000 that is allowed per vendor
18 per school. We were told that that amount was going
19 up to 50,000 for non-contracted vendors. It hasn't
20 happened yet. And I'm here to ask and request an
21 answer as to why it hasn't happened. I was told that
22 it was held up in the comptroller's office. I was
23 told that the legislation was passed in City Council.
24 But it has not gone through.

25 Raising that amount to \$50,000 for non-

1 contracted vendors would be a step in the right
2 direction as moving the needle to allow vendors to get
3 more capital and grow their business. Hopefully I can
4 send you in information. I can e-mail you afterwards
5 and just get a clear answer without obfuscating, is
6 the amount going to raise from 25,000 to 50,000 the
7 MWBE non-contracted vendors, or is it not going to
8 happen? That's all.

9 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Let me just say to
10 you, unfortunately -- before me, but we're not
11 Commissioned to do that. We were Commissioned to look
12 at the Charter as it is, and that was not included.
13 This is in the education department, DOE, the vendors?

14 MR. ROYAL: Well, yeah. I am a vendor.
15 I work primarily in the Department of Education. We
16 were told that that -- raising the procurement was
17 from the comptroller. And we never received a clear
18 answer as to whether or not -- whether or not the
19 amounts were going to go up.

20 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Well, we can't give
21 you a clear -- we can't give you an answer at all.

22 MR. ROYAL: Okay.

23 MR. BRAGG: But I think what we can do,
24 though, is find the agency that you can speak with and
25 get that answer. And so before you leave, we'll have

1 someone from the staff speak with you and point you in
2 the direction you need to get that answer, because
3 that is an important question. Although it's not in
4 our charge to deliver the answer, we can help you find
5 the answer. So we'll find someone here who'll help
6 you get to the right agency or the person or agency to
7 get an answer.

8 MR. ROYAL: Thank you. I appreciate
9 it. Thank you.

10 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you for
11 coming.

12 Ms. Denise Sergeant. Denise Sergeant.

13 Ms. Marlene Taylor. Marlene Taylor.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Here she is.

15 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Oh, she is? Okay.

16 MS. MARLENE TAYLOR: Good evening,
17 everyone. Good evening, Commissioner.

18 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Good evening.

19 MS. MARLENE TAYLOR: My name is Marlene
20 Taylor. I have been practicing medicine in the Harlem
21 community for over two decades. Formally practiced at
22 North General Hospital before it closed. And I'm here
23 to make some suggestions around various areas in
24 healthcare. I'm not sure if there's a specific area
25 in the Charter that speaks to improving the quality

1 and health in the Harlem community.

2 I was raised in Harlem. As I mentioned
3 I practiced at North General for over a decade. I'm
4 currently practicing at the Harlem Ryan Clinics.
5 There are two in Harlem, the Ryan Adair Clinic and the
6 Harlem Frederick Douglass on 128th Street, right
7 around the corner from Harlem Mothers S.A.V.E.
8 Basically, I grew up in the -- ground houses.

9 The Ryan Clinics are a federally
10 qualified health center. And in addition to
11 addressing disparities, treating uncontrolled
12 hypertension, diabetes, HIV, which I'm a specialist
13 in, there's no surprise that mental illness has become
14 at an all-time high. And my concerns around that
15 impacting the community is why I'm here this evening.

16 Post-COVID -- even though we're
17 approaching another -- well, hopefully not another
18 epidemic -- but approaching this time where in
19 addition to the social determinants of health like
20 homelessness, poverty, food insecurity, mental illness
21 is something that -- even walking from the clinic on
22 128th to 125th Street, I pass at least five to ten
23 patients who are not only clearly acutely mentally
24 ill, but just sitting there in various ways that it's
25 clear that they need to be treated.

1 The way that we approached this
2 historically is at some point when it escalates,
3 someone will call 9-1-1, and then they'll be taken to
4 the closest E.R. But before that happens, who shows
5 up are police officers, fire department, or an EMS.
6 Sometimes they don't look -- they don't reflect the
7 community. And there's a circle that the patient
8 winds up back in the community.

9 What I'm advocating for is that with
10 the increase in clinics -- like Mount Sinai has a new
11 clinic on 124th Street -- with the increased
12 visibility of Columbia University, we have academic
13 agencies and institutions who are in our backyards;
14 however, those students don't always come back to the
15 community in a way that's really needed.

16 I was trained at Harlem Hospital,
17 again, back in the early eighties/late seventies. And
18 our goal for going into medicine had to do with giving
19 back to our community. Unfortunately, I sit here 40
20 years later and see similar disparities worsen, and to
21 see institutions like Columbia, Mount Sinai, which is
22 now, you know, Morningside --

23 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Your time is up.

24 MS. MARLENE TAYLOR: I'm so sorry.

25 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Will you wrap it up?

1 MS. MARLENE TAYLOR: So I want to
2 advocate for --

3 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Do you have a
4 written report for us?

5 MS. MARLENE TAYLOR: Yes, I do.

6 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you.

7 MS. MARLENE TAYLOR: A collaboration
8 with these institutions, and those students who are
9 studying not only medicine but social work and
10 psychiatry to improve the quality of life of these
11 patients who are really impacting our everyday lives
12 in Harlem --

13 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you so much.

14 MS. MARLENE TAYLOR: Thank you.

15 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Would you give us
16 that written report? Thank you.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you,
18 Marlene.

19 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Any questions from
20 the -- any questions?

21 Thank you. Thanks to those of you
22 who've been on the Zoom awaiting to have your time.
23 It is now your time.

24 We will have, I think it's Adrian
25 Lamberton. Mrs. Adrian Lamberton?

1 MS. LAMBERTON: Andria Lamberton.

2 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Okay. Andria
3 Lamberton. Thank you for your patience.

4 MS. LAMBERTON: Thank you for hearing
5 my testimony. I appreciate it. Can you hear me okay?

6 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Yes.

7 MS. LAMBERTON: Good evening. I'm
8 Andria Lamberton, a resident of Manhattan and
9 professional sign language interpreter. I do not work
10 for an organization. I have spent my own time
11 researching and preparing testimony for you. After
12 waiting for three and half hours, I'm here to bring
13 your attention to a greatly overlook population, the
14 deaf community.

15 There are approximately 30,000 people
16 in New York City who are a linguistic minority, who
17 are not hearing-impaired but are deaf, whose primary
18 language is ASL. They require interpreting and
19 translating services in every facet of daily life.

20 New York City's 30,000-plus deaf
21 community needs greater access to ASL interpretation
22 and ASL translation. The community also needs a
23 Commission for the deaf to coordinate and enforce
24 citywide services. But none of these can happen
25 without recognizing the Americans With Disabilities

1 Act in the New York City Charter. It is widely known
2 that the ADA is the law that provides for ASL
3 interpretation and a reasonable accommodation,
4 allowing access for people who are deaf, and that
5 deafness is one of the federally recognized
6 disabilities.

7 I have read through the chapters of the
8 New York City Charter, and nowhere does it explicitly
9 reference the ADA. Even though I see the words
10 "disability" and "language access" trickled here and
11 there, I know as a citizen of New York, I'd feel
12 better if the law recognized me in every section that
13 pertains to disability or to language translation.

14 I have also read the City Charter's
15 preamble, and I testified that our deaf population are
16 neglected on all points due to abandoned ASL
17 interpretation and translation.

18 The deaf community is wide and varied,
19 reflecting all races, religions, countries of origin,
20 gender, and socioeconomic class. Naturally, there are
21 a large percentage of deaf New Yorkers who are
22 thriving, who are college educated, who are parents,
23 professionals, and Broadway performers that require
24 ASL interpreters in all facets of life simply because
25 they cannot hear. But there is a large deaf

1 population that also needs ASL translation.

2 According to the New York City Language
3 Access webpage, "interpretation" is the facilitation
4 of spoken communication between users of different
5 languages. "Translation" is the transferring of
6 written information from one language to another. If
7 you look at any New York City website for any
8 department or agency, you'll find no ASL translation
9 in the form of video clips.

10 American Sign Language has no written
11 form, and most people outside of our small community
12 do not know that ASL is not simply English in the air.
13 City government does not realize that many deaf,
14 especially due to high numbers of deaf immigrants in
15 New York City, are functionally illiterate in English
16 or in any written language. CDC local law 30
17 recognizes ten citywide languages that must be
18 translated --

19 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you so much.
20 Your time is up -- three minutes.

21 MS. LAMBERTON: -- deaf person for
22 ASL -- translation from English to ASL is completely
23 overlooked. I propose that ASL be added --

24 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Can you submit
25 your --

1 MS. LAMBERTON: -- local law 30 --

2 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Hello?

3 MS. LAMBERTON: -- an
4 opportunity -- ma'am, I'll just be --

5 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Hello, hello?
6 Ma'am, can you hear me? Your time is up.

7 MS. LAMBERTON: It is not up.

8 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Excuse me. Your
9 time is up. Three minutes for each of our persons
10 that are presenting. Thank you so much.

11 Any reports from the -- no. Thank you
12 so much.

13 Mr. Miles. I don't have a first name.
14 The last name I have here is Miles. Do we have
15 Mr. Miles on Zoom?

16 MR. MILES: Yes, I'm here. Can you
17 hear me?

18 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Yes. Three minutes,
19 please.

20 MR. MILES: Yes, ma'am. This won't
21 even take that long.

22 I'm in favor of repealing the Sanctuary
23 City status and in favor of the Charter revision. And
24 thank you for Councilwoman Paladino for telling us
25 about this. Otherwise, I would not have known.

1 As a -- New Yorker, I make my
2 suggestion to the rest of the Commission on what
3 future meetings to go out on some of the media a
4 little bit more. I only heard about it a few days
5 ago.

6 But I'm in favor of repealing Sanctuary
7 City status. And, again, thank you all for your time.
8 Have a good night.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

10 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you. Any
11 questions?

12 MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: No.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Move on.

14 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Mr. Williams? I
15 have -- Williams. Mr. Williams. Are you there?

16 You're muted.

17 MS. WILLIAMS: I'm sorry, hi. Could
18 you hear me?

19 MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Yes.

20 MS. WILLIAMS: Hi, my name is Gladys
21 Williams, and my son Antonio Williams was killed by
22 NYPD and took out -- he was -- in the street in the
23 Bronx waiting for a cab when a plain-clothed officer
24 had jumped out of a vehicle, beat him, shot him, and
25 killed him, and also shot into the air where -- and

1 also shooting one of their own.

2 I testified before the Charter
3 Commission not to place anything on the November 24,
4 2024, ballot. I was shocked to learn about the
5 Commission, their rushed timeline, and point that the
6 How Many Stops Act -- this Commission was created.

7 I'm speaking as a mother and as one who
8 fought for the How Many Stops Act before the NYPD
9 murdered my son Antonio. It was because they
10 illegally escalated what had just been a level I stop.
11 I was trying to -- the How Many Stops Act and speak at
12 rallies to elected officials and the hearings, but
13 this was also a way to fight for my son.

14 It took a long time before the City
15 Council passed the legislation, and it wasn't -- or a
16 rushed or a hidden process the way this Commission
17 seems to be. In fact, part of why it took so long to
18 pass the legislation was that the NYPD has so much
19 power, and the legislation related to them, whether
20 it's the City or the State level, they help with the
21 passage -- massive misinformation campaign with the
22 press after, and their money for public relations.

23 I was proud of the City
24 Council -- especially after the huge -- of bullying by
25 the NYPD -- the first time -- seemed like a rigged

1 process. It's not that I'm for -- or put anything on
2 the ballot in November 2024. It's outrageous to think
3 that you rushed hearings through for a month, only
4 since June 5th, and you're scheduled to vote on final
5 ballot language on July 25th, even though you haven't
6 told New Yorkers what the final ballot language will
7 be.

8 There's no good reason to
9 rush -- changes through in less than two months. This
10 is -- to democracy, this is a sham -- to put
11 in -- Commission on November 2024 ballot. I'm
12 speaking for the families that lost loved ones from
13 the NYPD. I'm fighting for this How Many Stops Act,
14 because I believe that New Yorkers have the right to
15 have -- just think about New Yorkers who are people
16 who are also trying to speak out. Thank you.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

18 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you. Thank
19 you so much. And I hear you, and we hear you, and
20 that's why we're here. But I also want to say this.
21 I hear your concern, but I know you just said, you
22 know, you had tragedy.

23 I'm a mother who lost two kids to gun
24 violence. And I want people to know that when we talk
25 about the police, we need to help each other stop some

1 of this gun violence that we're killing each other,
2 and I just need to say that. That is so important,
3 and a lot of emphasis is now going on every day -- we
4 are killing each other, to take the community, to take
5 back the kids and take back the community and trying
6 to put these guns in our kids' hands that's killing
7 each other. I just want to say that.

8 But thank you for your testimony.

9 Mr. Christopher Johnson.

10 MR. C. JOHNSON: Hey, hello? Can you
11 hear me?

12 MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Yes.

13 MR. C. JOHNSON: Hey, my name is
14 Christopher Lion Johnson. I'm on the -- at home. But
15 I want to make this clear to the justice committee.
16 You guys have enough blackballing. You guys own the
17 public advocate. You've got all the City Council
18 hearings and -- why are you guys complaining on the
19 chat about how this meeting is going.

20 And another thing about Antonio
21 Williams. Why won't the family of Antonio Williams
22 bring up Brian Mulkeen, who was killed in that same
23 situation with Antonio Williams. Now, of course
24 nobody deserves to die, but we need to start giving
25 respect to the cops that can killed on the job, too,

1 rather than, you know, the alleged criminal, too.
2 Because at the end of the day -- now, I want to make
3 this clear. All right? I want to make this clear.
4 Cop killed the two -- but Antonio killed the cop, too,
5 so it's just that as an aside. But let's go forward.

6 And I want to make this clear. All
7 right? What we need to do is for November is support
8 How Many Stops Act -- to repeal it, because it was an
9 illegal way that they put this on the bill. They did
10 it a lot of unethical tactics to get this bill passed,
11 with the help of the public advocate, the speaker, and
12 the justice committee.

13 And another thing we need to do on the
14 ballot is repeal the Sanctuary City laws. Because
15 another thing that's happening in the City -- like I
16 say, I'm not against a migrants. I love a migrant.
17 But what the big issue here in the City is, is that
18 we've got criminals that are migrants that are
19 committing a lot of crimes. And Sanctuary City laws
20 in New York City are protecting these guys on that.
21 So this needs to be repealed.

22 There's two things to deal with on the
23 ballot. And one more thing is we need to stop the
24 influence of lobbyists on Community Boards and the
25 cops on Community Boards -- on open plans and make

1 for -- impact our Community Boards. So there's a few
2 things that need to stop in this City by repealing the
3 sanctuary laws and repeal the How Many Stops Act.

4 The people that complain about this
5 Charters revision, I appreciate -- this chart. That's
6 on the Board, including Diane Savino. But people that
7 complain are the nonprofits like the justice committee
8 that takes over the City Council, they won the City
9 Council, and they think that you guys on the Board by
10 sitting there -- you get to bully and threaten. So
11 that's the truth.

12 Like I said, like the cop -- like Brian
13 Mulkeen, he didn't deserve to die. I know he was
14 doing his job, and this guy -- negligence and
15 ignorance.

16 So thank you to the Charter Commission.
17 Like, don't be bullied by the corrupt nonprofits when
18 we're here tomorrow and the next days coming up -- so
19 shout out to the Commission. So thank you.

20 MR. BRAGG: Thank you.

21 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

23 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Any questions?

24 MR. BRAGG: No.

25 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you.

1 Susan. We don't have a last name. It
2 says Susan. Is Susan on? There's not a last name.
3 Susan.

4 SUSAN: Yes, I'm here --

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, she's
6 here.

7 SUSAN: -- I'm sorry --

8 VICE CHAIR DUKES: We can't hear you.
9 Are you muted?

10 MR. BRAGG: No, she's not muted.

11 SUSAN: No, I'm not muted. You can't
12 hear me?

13 MR. BRAGG: No, we can hear you.

14 VICE CHAIR DUKES: We can't hear you.

15 SUSAN: Hello?

16 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Yeah, we can hear
17 you.

18 SUSAN: Okay. I'm trying -- I can't
19 undo my video -- I don't know why.

20 MR. BRAGG: It's okay. We can hear
21 you.

22 VICE CHAIR DUKES: We can hear you.

23 SUSAN: Okay. So I'll just speak.
24 Give me one second. Thank you, Commissioners, for
25 having me here today. Thank you for the opportunity

1 for me to speak. My name is Susan -- and I'm
2 representing the Civil Rights Union of Local New York.
3 Local New York is a grassroots -- based
4 organization -- to end -- conservation, homelessness,
5 the war on drugs, and the epidemic of HIV and AIDS.

6 I live in Harlem, born and raised. I
7 also have my children and my grandchildren in Harlem.
8 I -- deeply concerned about the current Charter
9 Revision project. I did not even know about the
10 Commission or this hearing until last week. This
11 speaks to some of my concern about the
12 process -- excuse me -- that has not properly focused
13 on public participating. It seems like the point of
14 the Commission is to keep people out of the actual
15 process. Instead, we have a rushed, politically
16 motivated Commission that is not reflective of
17 the -- thorough review that the City Charter deserves.
18 The timeline speaks volumes.

19 The Commission was announced on
20 May 21st, held its first session June 5th, and plans
21 to finalize -- questions by August 5th. By contrast,
22 the 2019 Commission took a year with over 20 public
23 hearings, meetings to consider changes. This drastic
24 difference highlights a lack of genuine commitment to
25 public input.

1 Any Charter Revision Commission should
2 carefully examine our -- Charter, the foundation of
3 our government through inclusive -- discussion with
4 experts and the public. This process -- hasn't done
5 anything but -- more carefully -- that is quickly,
6 seemingly -- that's been the -- and according to daily
7 news, it has been clear that the intent of the
8 Commission to revisit Charter authority, especially
9 concerning public safety legislation.

10 The preliminary report issued after
11 just five -- undermines the City Council's role,
12 particularly -- it aligns with the Mayor's attempts to
13 intimidate the NYPD and the Department of
14 Corrections -- proposed -- and accountability,
15 two -- components of -- the democratic process must be
16 respected. Change to the Charter should not be a
17 reaction to -- but a thoughtful and -- endeavor.

18 Recommit the legislative branch that
19 protects the -- that undermines our democracy. I urge
20 you to reconsider this rushed approach and to commit
21 to a more deliberative -- process that truly reflects
22 the public's voice and preserve the integrity of our
23 City Charter.

24 This would not be --

25 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you very much.

1 Your time is up.

2 SUSAN: Okay. Thank you.

3 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Do you have that in
4 writing? Can you submit it? Thank you so much.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No. Questions?

6 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you. This
7 is -- I don't know who this is. The last name is
8 Duzant? Are you on?

9 MS. DUZANT: No, the
10 name -- yes -- good evening. Thank you for having me.
11 My name is Ms. Dolina Duzant.

12 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Oh, Duzant. Okay.

13 MS. DUZANT: I am the cofounder -- yes.
14 I am the cofounder of the Malcolm X Beautification
15 Group. We do community cleanups. And I'm also a
16 County Commission member for my District.

17 So one thing I do know when I'm reading
18 the Charter, it states that we endeavor to ensure that
19 every person who resides in New York City has the
20 opportunity to thrive. And this is part of the
21 preamble.

22 Then they list a number of things. And
23 one of the -- one of them was resources necessary to
24 prosper and build -- that -- is not here. I'm from
25 Brooklyn. I've been living in Harlem now for the last

1 30 years. There's no say to what kind of business
2 comes into the community. Since -- the whole
3 Malcolm X Boulevard, we're inundated with barbershops,
4 liquor stores -- that sell, you know, weed.

5 Vendor's license applications need to
6 be revised and constructed differently, especially for
7 vendors that are seasonal, like Icees, hot dogs,
8 people that are outside.

9 DOH needs to be broken down. It needs
10 to be restructured to achieve certain goals and to
11 respond to the changes in the community. We do not
12 need more -- when you're doing a sweep of different
13 people avidly -- different people on the street
14 because they don't have the proper licenses.

15 We know you have to get a proper
16 license. But however, the process is very long.
17 People don't -- everybody is not a vendor. Everybody
18 doesn't know the process. Everybody doesn't know how
19 to go about that, and everybody is not a veteran. So
20 we need to find ways to restructure DOH, the
21 Department of Health, way of doing these vendor
22 licenses, especially those that are regional.

23 I know at one point they were supposed
24 to -- the City Council was supposed to pass a bill
25 where commercial property was going to be rent-

1 stabilized. That hasn't happened. It seems like it
2 just, whoop, vanished into thin air. We really need
3 to do something. The City -- if the City just
4 restructured how they did things, especially when
5 people are entrepreneurs and trying to start a
6 business. Then, one, people will get the proper
7 licenses, pay their taxes, and money will come back
8 into the community. And people will have a way to
9 feed, house, and clothe themselves and take care of
10 their children.

11 Thank you so much. You all have a
12 wonderful week.

13 MR. BRAGG: Thank you.

14 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Thank you.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you. She
16 was right on time. Yeah, that's it. That was it.

17 VICE CHAIR DUKES: The meeting is
18 adjourned.

19 MR. BRAGG: Motion to adjourn. Motion
20 to adjourn.

21 VICE CHAIR DUKES: Yes, motion to
22 adjourn.

23 MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Second.

24 VICE CHAIR DUKES: The meeting is
25 adjourned.

(Whereupon, the meeting concluded at
8:44 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE

I, THEA POPKO, 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.

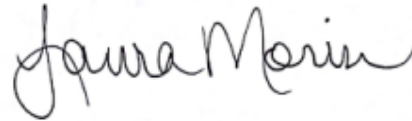


THEA POPKO

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9 which this was taken; and, further, that I am not a
10 relative or employee of any counsel or attorney
11 employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or
12 otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

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15 LAURA MORIN
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