



The Fabulous Waack Dancers  
Princess Lockerooo (Samara Cohen)  
347 E 104th Street Apt 4  
New York, NY 10029

January 24, 2024

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION  
120 Broadway, 31st Floor  
New York, N.Y. 10271

Re: Testimony in support of City of yes Zoning for Economic Opportunity

I am Samara Cohen, professionally known as Princess Lockerooo. I'm a Director, Producer, Educator and Entrepreneur in the Arts.

I'm a proud New Yorker who grew up immersed in the vibrant arts scene that NYC is known for.

At the age of 19, during a particularly challenging time, I was a lost teenager, my life could have taken many paths, but here I am today, standing before you, and it's all thanks to being allowed to dance in clubs.

My journey through club dancing ultimately brought me to the forefront, headlining at Lincoln Center with my dance company, and becoming a global dance icon recognized for Waacking, a dance that originated in Gay clubs of 1970's LA and provided a safe space for the LGBTQ+ community. Venues that allow dancing continue to be a sanctuary everywhere.

The NYC underground dance scene is a cultural phenomenon. I found myself surrounded by dance luminaries known for their work with icons like Michael Jackson, Mariah Carey, and Janet Jackson. The level of talent within the dance circle was unparalleled, and it provided me with inspiration, a clear life path and with a means to express myself without the objectification. The environment wasn't fueled by sexuality, perversion, or addiction; rather, it was a celebration driven by the power of music.

Live music is protected under the 1st amendment, and I believe that we should extend the same protection to social dancing, preserving our city's status as the global epicenter of cultural experiences.

I fully endorse the provisions within the zoning law that advocate for intermittent dancing in small restaurants and bars, as well as the proposals supporting scheduled entertainment. These initiatives pave the way for creative expression, and employment.

The art forms of Waacking, voguing, house dance, hip hop, locking, popping, and more—each hold rich history and culture. These art forms distinguish the USA on the global stage, making it stand out in a way that attracts people from all corners of the world. It's essential to recognize that social dancing is not just an art form; it's also an economic driver.

Like many of my peers, I have ventured into producing international street dance festivals, that draw people from all corners of the globe. People travel to New York City specifically to experience our rich dance culture. The impact of social dancing on tourism, and cultural exchange is immeasurable. By allowing us to dance you are welcoming a global audience to witness the diverse and unique dance styles that define our city.

I advocate for the sentiments shared by thousands of dancers who feel that the constraints on dancing in New York City are not only oppressive but also infringe upon the very freedom of expression that forms the foundation of my community and my life's journey.

The restrictions on dancing impede our freedom of expression and limit the potential of our creative city. The consequences of restrictions on dancing go beyond just the dance floor, because they particularly impact our vulnerable communities.. New York City has always been a beacon for artists and dreamers, Together, I hope that we can celebrate and safeguard social dancing as a vital thread in the rich tapestry of New York City.

Fiercely yours,

Princess Lockeroo (Samara Cohen)  
Artistic Director