

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

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February 26, 2020

Start: 12:16 PM

Recess: 12:26 PM

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Rm.
16th Fl.

B E F O R E: MARK LEVINE
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Alicka Ampry-Samuel
Inez D. Barron
Andrew Cohen
Mathieu Eugene
Robert F. Holden
Keith Powers

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

2 (sound check) (pause)

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Welcome everybody. I
4 am Mark Levine, Chair of the City Council Health
5 Committee. I am pleased that we are joined by fellow
6 Health Committee members, Council Member Alicka
7 Ampry-Samuel, Council Member Andy Cohen, Council
8 Member Bob Holden, Keith Powers, and we're also
9 joined I'm pleased by one of the sponsors of our bill
10 today Council Member Danny Dromm. We'll be joined by
11 our other sponsor Council Member Miller momentarily.
12 Our topic today is sickle cell disease with a hearing
13 on this in September, which many of you attended. One
14 of the most impactful I think we've done in the
15 Health Committee. I encourage anyone who didn't
16 attend to watch the video. It's quite emotional and
17 meaningful. We-we're pushing in that hearing for
18 state action in favor of creating demonstration
19 sites—demonstration sites around the state to
20 increase the resources, education and attention to
21 this disease. That has not yet happened. So we're
22 moving forward today with a resolution that is led—
23 the lead sponsor is Council Member Dromm calling on
24 the state to pass two pieces of legislation that
25 would authorize the creation of this network of sites

2 to serve those suffering from this disease, and those
3 are in the Assembly Bill Number 6493 and in the
4 Senate Bill Number 2281, and I am please to the cue
5 Council Member Dromm for a few words in favor of this
6 important resolution.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Thank you very
8 much Chair Levine. First, thank you for holding this
9 vote on Resolution 335-A, which calls on the New York
10 State Legislature to pass and the Governor to sign
11 vital legislation that will direction much needed
12 attention and resources to sickle cell disease and
13 sickle cell traits. Of course, I would be remiss if
14 I did not also recognize the state bill's two
15 sponsors, Senator James Sanders and Assemblywoman
16 Alisha Hyman-Alicia Hyman. Sickle cell related
17 conditions highlight health disparities in our system
18 as communities of color are disproportionately-
19 disproportionately affected. Sadly, New York falls
20 behind other states in rectifying this problem by
21 fully funding the programs needed to enhance outcomes
22 and quality of life for those with sickle cell
23 disease. At the hearing last year we heard from
24 Assemblywoman Hyman, healthcare professionals and
25 advocates. Especially compelling was the testimonies

2 of New Yorkers who have sickle cell disease and are
3 trying to live full and productive lives despite the
4 challenges. I want to give a shout-out to on special
5 young witness at that hearing: Abigale June along
6 with the entire fifth grade class of Ms. Duflian
7 (sp?) at P.S. 38 in Brooklyn. Abigail wrote me this
8 morning to urge us to act. I ask the members of the
9 Committee on Health to do so—to do so as Abigail and
10 her classmates have asked—have asked for a vote on
11 Resolution 335-A, but even more than that I ask
12 Albany to pass A.6493 and S.2281 the legislation that
13 will improve the lives of Abigail and countless
14 others across New York. I want to express my
15 gratitude do Dr. Tom Olson who first brought this
16 problem to my attention, and who has advocated
17 tirelessly for better treatment of this community,
18 and Tom Olson is here with us as well. Thank you,
19 Tom Olson, Dr. Olson, and thanks finally to the
20 Health Committee staff: Zay Emanuel Hailu, Sarah Liss
21 and Emily Valcan (sp?). Thank you very much.

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you very much,
23 and while we're waiting for Council Member Miller,
24 we're going to call the vote in case any of our

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2 colleagues are on a tight schedule. So, I'll ask our
3 Committee Clerk Billy Martin to please begin.

4 CLERK: William Martin, Committee, roll
5 call vote Committee on Health, Resolutions 335-A and
6 980. Chair Levine.

7 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: I vote aye.

8 CLERK: Eugene.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER EUGENE: I vote aye.

10 CLERK: Cohen.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: Aye.

12 CLERK: Ampry-Samuel.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: Permission
14 to briefly explain my vote.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: But by all means.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: I just
17 wanted to just lend my voice and just say
18 congratulations and thank you so much for your
19 leadership Council Member Dromm with this resolution
20 and to my colleagues. My vote is in memory of my
21 little cousin Timothy McVay spelled McVay who was 26
22 years old and died April 2018 of complications due to
23 his sickle cell. Timmy was in a crisis and going to
24 a hospital, and because the hospital staff was not
25 familiar with what was happening with him, and his

2 healthcare needs, they asked him continuously what
3 kind of drugs was he on, and just different things
4 that he should not have had to go through and he
5 collapsed into a coma and died. And like I said,
6 Timothy was 26 years old and this was in April 2018,
7 and it tore our family apart, and just one year later
8 I had a very close friend Sean Brooks from
9 Brownsville, grew up in Van Dykes who was also
10 suffering with sickle cell, and he came to our office
11 January of 2019 for help with medication because they
12 increased the cost of his medication, and because of
13 that he started to swell and had a lot of subsequent
14 health problems between January of 2019 and August of
15 2019 when Sean died at the age of 42. And so this is
16 so critical. We all understand how critical it is in
17 our community to have more funding and resources for
18 education and working with healthcare professionals,
19 but I think it's critical that we continue to tell
20 the stories of young people who are suffering now,
21 but those who passed away and there was nothing that
22 we can about it or things that we could do about it
23 that we did not, and so I vote aye in support of the—
24 the bills, but again that's in memory of Timothy
25 McVay and Sean Brooks. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: What a tragedy for
3 you Council Member. Thank you for sharing that. I
4 wish I could say that's the first story like that
5 I've heard, but it's not unique. We have a
6 healthcare system that has inadequately responded to
7 this. We've also as we've spoken about a lot here
8 we've not adequately-adequately financed research
9 into this disease (bell) which is slow work towards a
10 cure. It's hard to separate any of that from the
11 fact that this is a disease which overwhelmingly
12 affects people of color particularly African-
13 Americans, and also Hispanic Americans to a lesser
14 degree and so, I'm happy that you and other leaders
15 here are stepping to speak on that, and Mr. Martin,
16 if you want to continue the roll and then we'll hear
17 from Council Member Miller in a moment.

18 CLERK: Council Member Barron.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I vote aye on all
20 and commend the sponsors for introducing this
21 legislation.

22 CLERK: Holden.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: I vote aye.

24 CLERK: Powers.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Aye.

2 CLERK: By a vote of 7 in the
3 affirmative, 0 in the negative and no abstentions
4 both items have been adopted by the committee.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: And Council Member
6 (applause) Council Member Miller, we thank you for
7 your sponsorship of one of the important Resos today
8 and I'd like to cue you for some words if you'd like.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER MILLER: Thank you so
10 much, Mr. Chair and thank you to my colleagues for—
11 for your vote on this important reso—these important
12 resolutions this afternoon. Obviously we know that
13 sickle cell is a disease that disproportionately
14 impacts communities of color, and yet we receives a
15 fraction of the funding of the other comparable
16 diseases receives the treatment, and for instance
17 Cystic Fibrosis, which affects mainly whites have a
18 third of the number of sickle cell patients—patients
19 that sickle dose, but receives nearly four times the
20 amount of research and funding nationally. Reso 980
21 aims to address this disparity by educating and
22 informing the public about the severity of the
23 disease and needs for additional funding and
24 treatment in centers in New York—around New York
25 Sate. I'd like to thank my colleagues for supporting

2 this legislation. I'd like to thank the Chair, but I
3 also would like to thank Council Member Dromm for his
4 leadership on this and this is not something that--
5 it's--it's funny that could you imagine that something
6 of this magnitude, and I have a trait myself, and--and
7 so--and--and I could only tell you that the pain that--
8 that comes along with that--that folks can't imagine
9 in their lifetime with that, and--and--and we've seen
10 diseases really be eradicated in our lifetime, right
11 and when there's the will to do so, and--and--and we
12 have to make sure that this Council is at the
13 forefront of that, and I'd like to thank the
14 advocates for the work that they do to ensure that
15 the State prioritizing that we prioritize it. Day in
16 and day out folks like Gloria Rochester from--from
17 Queens Sickle Cell Advocacy and I--I saw her sneaking
18 around here somewhere there, but she's absolutely
19 directless (sic) in this throughout the country that
20 there are people on the front lines fighting this
21 fight and--and--and it fills my heart to know that the
22 members of this committee is--is leading the charge.
23 So, thank you very much.

24 CHAIRPERSON LEVINE: Thank you, Council
25 Member Miller. We'll have to work together for this

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2 year's June 19th to make this an important day, and
3 we've actually had full attendance of the committee
4 and an unanimous vote. So, we're going to wrap up.
5 Thank you to everyone and thank you our sponsors.

6 [gavel]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date March 15, 2020