

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS, STATE AND

FEDERAL LEGISLATION

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CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL  
OPERATIONS, STATE AND FEDERAL  
LEGISLATION

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May 1, 2024

Start: 1:33 p.m.

Recess: 3:42 p.m.

HELD AT: COMMITTEE ROOM - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Lincoln Restler, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Gale A. Brewer  
David M. Carr  
James F. Gennaro  
Jennifer Gutiérrez  
Shahana Hanif  
Vickie Paladino  
Lynn C. Schulman  
Inna Vernikov

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING:

Robert F. Holden  
Rita C. Joseph

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS, STATE AND  
FEDERAL LEGISLATION

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A P P E A R A N C E S

Tiffany Raspberry, Senior Advisor to the Mayor  
and Director of Intergovernmental and External  
Affairs

Ruth Messinger, Manhattan Borough President

Rosie Mendez, self

Nick Gulotta, self

Betsy Gotbaum, Executive Director of Citizens  
Union and former New York City Public Advocate

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS, STATE AND  
FEDERAL LEGISLATION

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SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Check, check. Please  
silence all electronic devices at this time.

At no time, please do not approach the  
dais.

If you have any questions, please raise  
your hand, and one of us, the Sergeant-at-Arms, will  
kindly assist you.

Chair, we're ready to begin.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: [GAVEL] Good  
afternoon. My name is Council Member Lincoln Restler.  
I have the privilege of Chairing the Committee on  
Governmental Operations, State and Federal  
Legislation, try to say that ten times fast, and I  
would like to welcome all of you who have joined us  
today, including my Colleagues, Council Members  
Brewer and Carr and Gennaro, and, of course, the  
Public Advocate, Mr. Jumaane Williams.

At today's hearing, the Committee will be  
conducting oversight on the Mayor's new Elected  
Official Engagement Form. As elected officials, our  
top responsibility is serving our constituents.  
Collectively, we help tens of thousands of individual  
New Yorkers every single day. My office serves  
hundreds of Brooklynites every week. We accept walk-

1  
2 ins at our office, answer telephone calls and emails,  
3 attend community meetings, and support constituents  
4 as we encounter them on the street, around our  
5 community, when I'm buying groceries, whenever we  
6 can. No matter how we hear about an issue, our goal  
7 is to respond and help New Yorkers navigate the  
8 labyrinth of City government. Much of this work  
9 requires partnering closely with City agencies. We  
10 meet regularly with agency heads, borough  
11 commissioners, deputy commissioners, and other agency  
12 staff to discuss issues and strategize on how we can  
13 work together to improve the lives of New Yorkers.  
14 Some of the best solutions come out of these very  
15 meetings. When we're able to share direct feedback  
16 with agencies on how certain policies and operations  
17 are being enacted on the ground, we can work together  
18 to troubleshoot and find ways to improve outcomes for  
19 all New Yorkers. Simply put, this is the job all of  
20 us were elected to do, to be problem solvers, to be  
21 the voice of our constituents in front of City  
22 government. On April 10th, that all changed. Without  
23 any notice, our requests for assistance were denied.  
24 Instead, we were told to fill out a form and wait. I  
25 asked the Parks and Health Departments to address

1  
2 unsafe lead levels in a park. I was told to fill out  
3 a form and wait. My Colleagues' requests for meetings  
4 about illegal dumping, a cannabis store near an  
5 elementary school, requests for agency  
6 representatives to attend community events from job  
7 fairs to mental health forums, were all met with the  
8 very same response. Fill out a form and wait. This is  
9 the opposite of efficiency. This is the opposite of  
10 get stuff done. This is how nothing gets done, and it  
11 is in direct conflict with the City Charter. Based on  
12 the feedback we have received from Colleagues,  
13 Council Members meet with senior leaders at City  
14 agencies an average of about four times a week,  
15 sometimes more if you ask Council Member Brewer.  
16 There are over 160 elected officials representing New  
17 York City at the city, state, and federal levels of  
18 government, and they are each engaging City agencies  
19 every single day. If 160 elected officials are  
20 sending one form request each day, and if the Mayor  
21 is serious when he says he's reviewing every single  
22 one, that means no City agency will act on any issues  
23 from elected officials until the Mayor has personally  
24 read hundreds of forms daily. If the Mayor spends a  
25 minute reviewing every form and emailing an agency,

1 that is over two hours every day. If that's what  
2 Mayor Adams plans to do all day, not only will our  
3 constituents' concerns be bogged down in a pointless,  
4 needless delay, the Mayor would have less time to do  
5 his actual job. The Mayor has already admitted what  
6 was clear from the start. This has nothing to do with  
7 efficiency. It's about preventing elected officials  
8 who question or criticize his Administration from  
9 doing our jobs. City agencies are filled with hard-  
10 working policy experts. They are Charter-mandated to  
11 work with elected officials to solve problems. This  
12 is a dangerous politicization of City government to  
13 prevent City agencies from doing their job based on  
14 the political whims of the Mayor. There are real  
15 issues facing our city that require leadership and  
16 the Mayor's focused attention. Two million New  
17 Yorkers and one in four children in our city are  
18 living in poverty. One in three tenants spend half  
19 their income on rent every month. 120,000 people are  
20 sleeping in the shelters tonight. These are the  
21 issues the Mayor should be focused on, not  
22 politicizing our City agencies. Elected officials  
23 across all branches of government are baffled by this  
24 process. We sent a letter today to the Mayor that was  
25

1 signed by 65 elected officials representing the  
2 people of New York City at the city, state, and  
3 federal levels, requesting that the Mayor reverse  
4 this policy immediately. I've spoken with over a  
5 dozen former Deputy Mayors and Commissioners who  
6 cannot understand how City government leaders are  
7 able to do their jobs with this inane policy in  
8 place. Adams' Administration representatives, Deputy  
9 Mayors, Commissioners, and other senior agency  
10 personnel continue to call elected officials like us  
11 daily and request meetings with us because they rely  
12 on us to secure community support, additional  
13 funding, and vital feedback on the projects that they  
14 are advancing. I look forward to hearing from Tiffany  
15 Raspberry, the Senior Advisor to the Mayor and  
16 Director of Intergovernmental and External Affairs,  
17 about why this new procedure is in fact necessary and  
18 how exactly it will improve transparency,  
19 communication, and efficiency between city, state,  
20 and federal elected officials and the Adams'  
21 Administration.

22  
23 With that, I would like to thank our  
24 Committee Counsel Jayasri Ganapathy, and Erica Cohen  
25 from Central Staff for their hard work in putting

1 this hearing together, and I especially like to thank  
2 my brilliant Chief-of-Staff, Molly Haley, for her  
3 hard work on this as well.  
4

5 I don't think we've been joined by any  
6 additional Members of the Council. We have Council  
7 Member Schulman online. Thank you for joining us.

8 Before we hear from the Administration,  
9 I'd like to turn it over to our Public Advocate,  
10 Jumaane Williams, for opening remarks.

11 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE WILLIAMS: Thank  
12 you so much, Mr. Chair.

13 As mentioned, my name is Jumaane  
14 Williams. I'm the Public Advocate of the City of New  
15 York. I want to thank Chair Restler and the Members  
16 of the Committee on Government Oversight, State and  
17 Federal Legislation for holding this critically  
18 important hearing and allowing me the opportunity to  
19 make a statement.

20 The Administration's recent policy to  
21 require elected officials in city, state, and federal  
22 office to seemingly seek approval from City Hall for  
23 meetings with agency commissioners and their  
24 executive teams is troubling to say the least, and  
25 all the pushback is truly understandable and I hope

1 that the Administration is listening. This policy as  
2 was designed and presented will stymie vital  
3 interaction between government partners preventing  
4 public service on behalf of New Yorkers in order to  
5 service the Administration's seeming need to exert  
6 further control over all government operations.  
7 Furthermore, it will set a dangerous precedent  
8 limiting followup and oversight as related to  
9 hearings. My Colleagues on the Council know how often  
10 Commissioners need to get back to them on certain  
11 questions and issues. "Completing this form does not  
12 result in a guarantee of a meeting or appearance."  
13 With the Administration's reserved right to decline  
14 any requests, I am concerned this policy is simply  
15 the latest in a wave of policies curtailing agency  
16 transparency. It is possible that serious issues in  
17 need of investigation, correction, and certainly  
18 public spotlighting may never see the light of day,  
19 denied by the Mayor's Office for any number of  
20 reasons. This is not the way to make government work  
21 for New Yorkers and, if the purpose of this is to  
22 make sure there's a trail of who's asking for what,  
23 that seems to be the functions of what government  
24 relations people would do, and I would recommend that  
25

1 the people who are getting the request be the ones  
2 that have to submit to a central repository, not  
3 elected officials who are elected specifically to  
4 provide oversight for their constituents. I was happy  
5 to learn that these forms are subject to our City's  
6 Open Data Law mandating public release and storage of  
7 municipal data. However, this policy should not exist  
8 plain and simple. For offices like that of the Public  
9 Advocate which exists outside the purview of the  
10 Office of the Mayor, this policy is a significant  
11 overreach. It would affect my office's ability to  
12 comply with our Charter-mandated responsibilities  
13 and, as an ex officio Member of the Council, I feel  
14 compelled to add it would also limit Council Members'  
15 ability to work collaboratively with agency partners  
16 and deliver results for their constituents. As I was  
17 once name-checked in the press conference, I do want  
18 to point out there's a difference between my other  
19 offices having a form for constituents to try to make  
20 appointments than elected officials who are elected  
21 by our constituents to provide an oversight function  
22 to routinely meet with agencies. I'd also like to  
23 suggest that if there's an issue as was now being  
24 pushed of gathering information, conversations before  
25

1 something like this is put out may help everyone to  
2 figuring out what the issue really is and how we  
3 could address it. Everyone here, our partners in  
4 government hopefully moving forward, we can have  
5 those conversations before these things are put in a  
6 place, not after. Thank you very much.

8 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you so much,  
9 Mr. Public Advocate.

10 During the hearing, I will be calling on  
11 panelists to testify. I'd like to remind everyone who  
12 is testifying via Zoom that you will be on mute until  
13 you were called on to testify at which point you will  
14 be unmuted by the host. For those of you who are  
15 testifying in person, be sure to sign up with the  
16 Sergeant-at-Arms in the back even if you're  
17 registered in advance.

18 We will now call representatives of the  
19 Administration to testify. We'll be hearing today  
20 again from Miss Tiffany Raspberry, Senior Advisor to  
21 the Mayor and Director of Intergovernmental and  
22 External Affairs.

23 At this time, I'll call on the Committee  
24 Counsel to administer the oath.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you,  
Chair Restler.

I'll call on Tiffany Raspberry.

Do you affirm to tell the truth, the  
whole truth, and nothing but the truth before this  
Committee and respond honestly to Council Member  
questions?

DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Yes, I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL GANAPATHY: Thank you.  
Chair.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thanks. I'd like to  
invite you to prepare your testimony and thank you  
for modifying your schedule to be with us today.

DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: (INAUDIBLE) My name  
is Tiffany Raspberry (INAUDIBLE) Oh, I guess I wasn't  
being recorded. Let me start over again.

Good afternoon, Chair Restler, Public  
Advocate Williams, and Members of the Committee on  
Government Operations, State and Federal Legislation.  
My name is Tiffany Raspberry, and I am the Director  
of Intergovernmental and External Affairs for the  
Mayor's Office. Thank you for giving me the  
opportunity to address the newly implemented  
operational protocol, specifically known as the

1 Elected Official Engagement Request Form. The form is  
2 aimed at ensuring efficient and equitable engagement  
3 amongst elected officials and agency commissioners  
4 and executive directors. This protocol not only  
5 facilitates coordination with our agency leadership  
6 but also ensures the efficient allocation of City  
7 resources. I want to start by thanking all of you who  
8 have already utilized this form to engage with our  
9 City agencies and also emphasize that every level of  
10 government, federal, state, and city are utilizing  
11 it. Examples of appropriate engagement requests  
12 include meetings with Commissioners or Executive  
13 Directors, meetings with senior level agency staff,  
14 requests to either tour districts, attend events,  
15 attend task force meetings, requests for taking part  
16 in interagency meetings, and requests to discuss  
17 enforcement amongst others. The form is not intended  
18 to stand in the way of elected officials picking up  
19 the phone to reach out to a Commissioner, Borough  
20 Commissioner, or any other official in the  
21 Administration. I still encourage you all to continue  
22 to do just that. Rather, it's to request formal  
23 meetings or deployment of agency resources outside of  
24 an emergency response so that we can make sure we are  
25

1 connecting with and serving all of our government  
2 partners as efficiently and effectively as possible.  
3 While we are still early in the process, we have  
4 already seen how this new system serves as a one-stop  
5 shop for elected officials to easily access every  
6 agency regardless of whether or not they have  
7 specific contact information or individuals in those  
8 agencies. I would also like to make clear that this  
9 does not apply to inquiries for constituent cases,  
10 basic requests for information, general outreach  
11 regarding emergency issues, or standard project or  
12 informational updates that fall outside of formal  
13 briefings. Instead, this form should be used for  
14 formal meeting requests with agency leadership and  
15 for the deployment of agency resources. For inquiries  
16 related to constituent cases, elected officials  
17 should feel free to contact the most appropriate  
18 agency contact including agency leadership as well as  
19 your partners here at City Hall, including myself,  
20 those on my team, or one of my colleagues for a  
21 response and attention to any matters.  
22

23                   One of the key objectives of this  
24 protocol is to mitigate disparities in access among  
25 elected officials. While many elected officials know

1  
2 agency leadership or intergovernmental staff, there  
3 are many newly elected officials who may not have  
4 those contacts. This process seeks to prevent  
5 situations where certain elected officials have  
6 greater access than others, thereby fostering a level  
7 playing field for engagement. Additionally, it aims  
8 to streamline inquiries by consolidating issues  
9 raised by multiple officials into cohesive meetings,  
10 enhancing the Administration's responsiveness and  
11 effectiveness.

12           After clicking on the link, you will be  
13 directed to complete a brief questionnaire which will  
14 allow the Administration to enhance collaboration and  
15 streamline the delivery of services to our city. It  
16 also helps to ensure that the Administration avoids  
17 duplicative efforts as we work toward our shared  
18 goals for the city. As of this morning, we have  
19 received a total of 182 requests through the form,  
20 and all have received a response. Of that, we've  
21 received 51 requests from City Council Members  
22 representing 23 different offices. It is important to  
23 acknowledge that no request has been denied and the  
24 average turnaround time for approvals stands at 24 to  
25 48 hours. Again, it is crucial to emphasize that in

1 cases of emergencies or urgent matters, the Adams'  
2 Administration remains fully committed to promptly  
3 addressing issues without use of this form. Elected  
4 officials are not required to fill out the form for  
5 such matters, and our team stands ready to respond  
6 swiftly and effectively to any emergency situations.  
7 Likewise, again, I want to stress how the form is not  
8 for constituent cases and how those inquiries are not  
9 required to go through this process.  
10

11 I am optimistic about the continued  
12 collaboration between the Mayor's Office and the City  
13 Council, and I look forward to our ongoing efforts to  
14 serve the people of the City of New York. Thank you  
15 for your time and interest in this matter.

16 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Great. Thank you so  
17 much for your testimony.

18 I'd like to acknowledge my Colleagues,  
19 Council Member Vernikov, Council Member Paladino, and  
20 Council Member Gutiérrez.

21 Thank you for joining us today. I'd like  
22 to start with a few questions on a few topics and  
23 then I'll pass it over to my Colleagues. I'll just  
24 begin with a yes or no question. I just want to  
25

1  
2 affirm your testimony. You've denied zero requests to  
3 date?

4 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Yes, that is correct.

5 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: So is there a  
6 situation in which you would deny a request?

7 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: I haven't seen one  
8 yet.

9 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay, so but you're  
10 willing to deny requests under what circumstances?

11 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: I haven't seen an  
12 instance. I can't think of one.

13 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: You cannot think of  
14 a situation in which a denial would be appropriate to  
15 an elected official request for a meeting?

16 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: That is accurate.

17 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay, so I just want  
18 to remind you under oath, that there is no situation  
19 that you can envision for which a denial to a request  
20 could be issued.

21 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: At this moment, there  
22 is no situation that I can envision under which we  
23 will deny a request.

24

25

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay, we're very  
3 happy to hear that you expect all requests to be  
4 approved.

5 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: I do not envision a  
6 scenario. I don't know how many times I can answer  
7 that question. I'll be happy to speak with you again  
8 in a month if you want, but I do not envision a  
9 scenario where a request will be denied.

10 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: No, it's just  
11 helpful to note because then we'll certainly make our  
12 concerns known if that policy were to change.

13 I'd just like to shift to how this policy  
14 came into place. What authority does City Hall have  
15 to interfere with Mayoral agencies' ability to advise  
16 and assist the Members of the City Council?

17 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: So I think that this  
18 is a Mayoral Administration policy, and so Mayor  
19 Adams has the authority to establish the policies for  
20 his Administration, and I think he wanted me to share  
21 with you today that he would never intervene if any  
22 of you establish a process by which individuals  
23 should interact with your staff or team members and  
24 so here at City Hall, in this Administration, we see  
25 our agencies and the Commissioners not as a separate

1 entities but of extensions of City Hall and as full  
2 partners of the Adams' Administration.

3  
4 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay, I'd just like  
5 to note that if an elected official or the Mayor  
6 himself were to have a policy where we needed to fill  
7 out a form to meet with him, I don't think anyone  
8 would blink, but what you've created here is a policy  
9 that applies to thousands of City workers that for us  
10 to set up a meeting with any one of them we have to  
11 go through a centralized process where you and the  
12 Mayor are presumably reviewing each and every one of  
13 those requests. Is that right?

14 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: We have a centralized  
15 system, and it is in fact true that the IGA team  
16 oversees the process.

17 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I'd like to just  
18 come back to the legal authority that you believe you  
19 have in creating this process. Chapter 16 of the City  
20 Charter grants certain "powers and duties" to the  
21 heads of Mayoral agencies. In particular, Section 386  
22 directs heads of Mayoral agencies to "advise and  
23 assist the Mayor, other elected officials, and bodies  
24 of elected officials in regard to matters under the  
25 jurisdiction of their agencies" so I just want to ask

1  
2 again, what legal authority does the Mayor have to  
3 interfere with Mayoral agencies' ability to advise  
4 and assist the City Council and other elected  
5 officials as is guaranteed in the City Charter?

6 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Council Member  
7 Restler, thank you so much for that question. I think  
8 you know this about me but, unfortunately, I am not  
9 an attorney so I can't answer that question, but I  
10 will refer that question to our Chief Counsel's  
11 Office and perhaps we can get you an answer.

12 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Was a legal analysis  
13 conducted of the Mayor's ability to enact this policy  
14 in advance?

15 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: The Mayor conducts a  
16 legal analysis before he implements any new policies  
17 here...

18 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: So a legal analysis  
19 was conducted in advance?

20 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: The Mayor conducts a  
21 legal analysis before...

22 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: The Mayor's not a  
23 lawyer either like you or me.

24 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Yes, but we have a  
25 very competent legal staff. Our Chief Counsel Lisa

1 Zornberg as well as the Office of the Corporation  
2 Counsel so we did work in collaboration with them on  
3 the launch of this new protocol.  
4

5 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: So the Chief Counsel  
6 and the Corporation Counsel both reviewed this policy  
7 before it was enacted?

8 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: They were both  
9 engaged in the development of it, yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay, so they  
11 reviewed and approved this policy and they reviewed  
12 Chapter 16 of the City...

13 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: I can't speak to  
14 that...

15 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: You can't speak to  
16 what they reviewed, but I would just like to  
17 underscore that the Charter mandates that Mayoral  
18 agencies advise and assist the Mayor, other elected  
19 officials, and bodies of elected officials in regard  
20 to matters under the jurisdiction of their agencies.  
21 You've recently put forward or it appears you're  
22 intending to put forward a candidate for Corporation  
23 Counsel whose job is to represent the Mayor, the City  
24 Council, all of City government as the lawyer for the  
25 City just as Mayoral agency heads are required to do

1  
2 the same. Furthermore, the Charter notes that heads  
3 of agencies shall "have cognizance and control of the  
4 government, administration, and discipline of their  
5 agencies" so with that in mind, do you consider a  
6 meeting with an elected official to be part of the  
7 government and administration of a City agency?

8 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: I don't feel  
9 comfortable speaking on my interpretation of the City  
10 Charter. I came here..

11 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: It's not a legal  
12 interpretation. It's just a plain question. Do you  
13 consider a meeting with an elected official to be  
14 part of the government and administration of an  
15 agency?

16 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: So as I was starting  
17 to say and, I'm sorry, Council Member, I am not here  
18 to speak on my interpretation of the City Charter.  
19 Our Mayoral agencies work in collaboration with Mayor  
20 Eric Adams and carry out the goals of this  
21 Administration.

22 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Right, but it is the  
23 role of, the agency head has the authority to  
24 determine the government, administration, and  
25 discipline of their agency. It is interfering by

1 imposing this policy and requiring that every agency  
2 head check with you and the Mayor before they set up  
3 a phone call with Council Member Gutiérrez. It is  
4 interfering with their Charter-mandated role.  
5

6 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Council Member, I  
7 appreciate your opinion on this matter. My team and I  
8 will discuss that with the Mayor upon conclusion of  
9 this hearing.

10 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I'd like to just  
11 underscore that I believe this is in stark conflict  
12 with the City Charter and that you have undermined  
13 the independence of agency heads and their roles and  
14 responsibilities to work collaboratively with elected  
15 officials by imposing this policy. I'd like to go  
16 back to the...

17 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: And, Council Member,  
18 just to address that point, we firmly disagree with  
19 your interpretation of this and hope that you can  
20 take some time to meet with us outside of this public  
21 forum so that we can speak with you...

22 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Do I have to fill  
23 out a form?

24 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Step-by-step...

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Seriously. Do I have  
3 to fill out a form because that's what the message I  
4 get on every request I send to City Hall and to City  
5 agencies these days is to fill out a form and wait.  
6 Do I have to fill out a form to have a followup  
7 conversation with you about this.

8 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: You can always call  
9 me up and have a conversation, Council Member.

10 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: That was not an  
11 answer to the question.

12 I want to go back to the reason or the  
13 impetus for this because I think the Mayor clarified  
14 it at a recent press conference. On April 16th, a  
15 reporter asked the Mayor about the reason for this  
16 policy, and the reporter specifically mentioned my  
17 name actually in their question. In the Mayor's  
18 response, he said certain elect officials were having  
19 greater access than others. Did the Mayor implement  
20 this policy because I work effectively with City  
21 agencies to deliver results for my constituents.

22 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Council Member  
23 Restler, thank you for that question. I know that in  
24 my engagement and I'm sure that you can recall this  
25 from when you worked across the aisle at the Mayor's

1 Office, there are often times when elected officials  
2 have reached out to City agencies and their calls  
3 emails have gone unresponded to, but they hold City  
4 Hall and the City Hall staff responsible for those  
5 misinteractions and so the development of this  
6 protocol is to make sure that communications are  
7 streamlined and efficiently directed in a manner that  
8 is timely and efficient.

10 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Yeah, I mean, look,  
11 I worked at City Hall as you noted. I worked in  
12 Intergovernmental Affairs. I managed agencies'  
13 communications with elected officials and external  
14 stakeholders and never would we have ever created a  
15 policy that would have interfered with elected  
16 officials' ability to do their job, and I set up  
17 weekly reports where agencies let us know what key  
18 incoming they were getting from electeds, what  
19 upcoming meetings they had, we guided and provided  
20 support and coordinated as is your role, but to  
21 interfere and prevent elected officials from engaging  
22 with City agencies is a dangerous politicization of  
23 City government.

24 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: We believe that we  
25 are aiding the communications to elected officials,

1 not interfering, and I think that oftentimes some  
2 people believe that technology is a tool for the  
3 future, but here in the Adams' Administration, we  
4 believe that technology is a tool that we should be  
5 utilizing now, and so this new tool that we're  
6 utilizing is going to prove to be an effective manner  
7 in which elected officials can reach out to our  
8 agencies and connect with agency leaders. We firmly  
9 believe that.  
10

11 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I am a little  
12 surprised that we're talking about a multiple page  
13 Microsoft Office form as new technology but, that  
14 aside, this is not about technology. This is about  
15 bureaucratic bottlenecks, and the idea that the Mayor  
16 is going to review hundreds of forms daily, if every  
17 elected official in New York City actually complied  
18 with this, is just an absolutely maddening approach  
19 to governing the city.

20 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: So, you know, it's  
21 really unfortunate that you feel that way. As I've  
22 said in my testimony, we really believe that this  
23 tool will improve access to City agencies for all  
24 elected officials from all levels, city, state, and  
25 federal. I can recall an instance where a newly

1  
2 elected official was one of the first individuals to  
3 access this tool because they didn't probably have  
4 the same level of knowledge about how to navigate the  
5 City bureaucracy that you mentioned that many of you  
6 here have had experience now.

7           CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I mean the  
8 historically the main way that elected officials and  
9 others have tracked who to contact at City agencies  
10 is the Green Book. The Green Book managed by DCAS  
11 should be an up-to-date resource that tracks who are  
12 the senior agency officials and what are their  
13 contact information at every single agency, but do  
14 you have an update on when the last time the Green  
15 Book was updated?

16           DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: You know, I don't  
17 want to speak out of turn so can you please share  
18 that information...

19           CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: It's been years  
20 since we've had updates of many agencies in the Green  
21 Book.

22           DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: It was which  
23 Administration?

24           CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Under your  
25 Administration for the last two years and four

1 months, we have not seen proper consistent updates of  
2 the Green Book. That is the place where you google  
3 and find information about where to contact City  
4 agencies, not create silly bureaucratic processes and  
5 politicize who can engage with which agency. Why has  
6 the Administration not taken updating the Green Book  
7 seriously?  
8

9           DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: So I think that I can  
10 recall that the Green Book hadn't been updated in the  
11 previous Administration as well so it's been a number  
12 of years prior to the Adams' Administration.

13           CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: There were some  
14 updates in some agencies, but many have not.

15           DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Technologies change,  
16 and the way that Administrations do business change,  
17 and so the Adams' Administration implemented this  
18 technology because we believe that this is an  
19 effective manner in which we can address a lot of the  
20 needs that the Green Book did but in a more modern-  
21 day way.

22           CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Why is it a more  
23 modern or efficient process instead of having elected  
24 officials contact agencies directly to have all of  
25 those hundreds of daily requests go through you and

1  
2 the Mayor to personally review? How is that a more  
3 efficient process?

4 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: So it's unfortunate  
5 that you are not open to just exploring how efficient  
6 this is. I can't...

7 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: No, I want you to  
8 explain it to me because it doesn't make any sense.

9 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: I don't think there's  
10 anything more that I could say than I already said.

11 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay.

12 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: To justify it...

13 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: So is the Mayor  
14 reviewing every single one of these requests himself?

15 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: The Mayor believes  
16 that this is a great tool. He has access to the form  
17 and reserves the right to look at it whenever he  
18 wants to, but the responsibility of managing the form  
19 and the requests submitted lie within the IGA unit.

20 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: So the Mayor is  
21 reviewing every form?

22 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: The Mayor has access  
23 to it. He believes in the collection of data. You may  
24 have recalled him saying that at the beginning of his  
25 career he was involved in the early form of the

1  
2 ComStat program. As we know, ComStat is an effective  
3 law enforcement tool that is not only used in New  
4 York City but has been replicated all throughout the  
5 country and so you know he has implemented all forms  
6 of processes and technologies. When he first...

7 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I would..

8 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: If you please let me  
9 finish...

10 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Please.

11 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Thank you. When he  
12 first took office, he implemented a similar system  
13 for individuals who wanted to meet with him in his  
14 Administration. He would have continued and we  
15 probably would have launched this next stage that  
16 we're discussing here today sooner, but it's  
17 unfortunate that we've been distracted by so many  
18 real-life crises, the asylum-seeker crisis, we most  
19 recently had a minor earthquake, we've had all kinds  
20 of things happen, and so this was always a part of  
21 our technological strategy to try to streamline City  
22 processes and services.

23 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Unfortunately, you  
24 haven't yet explained how it streamlines City  
25

1  
2 processes or services. I'd like to just share a quote  
3 with you...

4                   DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Because it's a one-  
5 stop shop, and it holds us accountable because we can  
6 see in one place where all of the requests are made,  
7 but, you know...

8                   CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: The accountability  
9 piece...

10                   DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: I can only imagine, I  
11 look at my emails that I receive every day, sometimes  
12 thousands a day. I can only imagine what it looks  
13 like for our agency leaders as well as your offices,  
14 but what I do know is that with this form, no  
15 requests will ever go missed, no emails will go  
16 missed or noticed several days later than they were  
17 sent and so that's how it streamlines the process  
18 because it puts all of the requests in one  
19 centralized place that we can follow and track and  
20 make sure that the responses are made.

21                   CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I can certainly  
22 appreciate that it could be a resource. It could be a  
23 way that...

24                   DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Thank you for that.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: People could reach  
3 out to City Hall and make sure that there was City  
4 Hall's attention around an issue, but what you've  
5 done is prevented any of us from engaging and doing  
6 the daily work of advocating for our constituents by  
7 directly engaging with City agencies to solve  
8 problems...

9 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Well, Council Member...

10 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: So it's not an  
11 alternative or an additional way in which you can  
12 help. It's actually a bureaucratic bottleneck that  
13 doesn't make any sense.

14 I'd like to just share a quote with you.  
15 Back a few years ago, this quote "the need of a  
16 comprehensive directory of City Departments has long  
17 been recognized but has remained for the present  
18 Administration to issue the first edition of the  
19 Green Book" said supervisor of the City Record Peter  
20 J. Brady in 1918. Over a hundred years ago, we  
21 created a resource for people to be able to contact  
22 senior leadership and agencies. If the Adams'  
23 Administration were intent on making it easier for  
24 all of us to engage with City agencies and senior  
25 leadership, you would simply update the relevant

1 information online and encourage every elected  
2 official to follow it and engage with the appropriate  
3 stakeholders at agencies. This process creates an  
4 unnecessary bottleneck. It's not about  
5 accountability. It's about undermining efficiency. It  
6 is actually about slowing down engagement and in  
7 making it harder for us to get our problem solved  
8 because we have the politicization of City Hall that  
9 is the lens through which everything is approved.  
10

11 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Council Member

12 Restler, it's unfortunate that you feel that way. I  
13 respectfully disagree with you. You know, I joined  
14 the Adams' Administration. You know my background.  
15 You know where I grew up. I believe that at some  
16 point, if I recall, you even met my late mother. I  
17 did not join this Administration to become a  
18 bureaucrat. I joined this Administration so that I  
19 could contribute to the City of New York and serve  
20 not only the people of the City of New York and the  
21 community that I come from but also to just do good  
22 work, to make a change, to make a difference, and  
23 that's what I'm committed to you, and I have to say  
24 that it's a hurtful to hear you reduce the work that  
25 we're trying to do in the Adams' Administration to

1 the level in which you're describing our efforts  
2 today.

3  
4 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: It's not personal.  
5 This is a simple critique that what's been proposed  
6 makes no sense, and we want to have policies in place  
7 that allow us to effectively advocate and deliver for  
8 our constituents. We don't want to have bureaucratic  
9 bottlenecks at City Hall stopping us from engaging  
10 City agencies, engaging the Parks Department,  
11 engaging the Department of Education, engaging the  
12 Department of Small Business Services to meet the  
13 needs of our constituents each and every day.

14 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: So there have been no  
15 bottlenecks. Most of the...

16 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Because most elected  
17 officials have refused to engage.

18 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: And that's  
19 unfortunate, and I hope that those of you who have  
20 refused to engage reconsider, but many of you have  
21 engaged and have seen that the turnaround and the  
22 responses that you've received from City Hall  
23 probably come a lot quicker than maybe you may have  
24 received from some of our agency staff because  
25

1 they're busy serving the people of the City of New  
2 York every day as well.

3  
4 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: If a lobbyist is  
5 interested in meeting with a City agency or City  
6 Hall, with yourself, are they required to fill out a  
7 similar form.

8 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: That is not in my  
9 purview so I don't have an answer for that.

10 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: But lobbyists meet  
11 with you all the time, right? Is a lobbyist required  
12 to fill out a form to meet with you, Miss Raspberry?

13 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: What I will say is  
14 that we're in the process of implementing like the  
15 next stage of this, and this is creating a form so  
16 that even when you want to have...

17 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: How many lobbyists  
18 have you met with in the previous month?

19 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Not many. I can't  
20 think of any that I've met with.

21 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay.

22 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: I primarily engage  
23 with elected officials.

24 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: So you haven't met  
25 with any lobbyists in the previous month?

1

DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: I can't recall.

3

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: The Mayor

4

unfortunately doesn't release much of his schedule,

5

unlike previous Mayors, but lobbyist spent 33 million

6

dollars last year to lobby the Mayor and his

7

agencies. There are meetings with Mayoral agencies

8

and with the City Hall representatives all the time.

9

Are they required to fill out any form to the best of

10

your knowledge today to meet with representatives

11

from your administration? Yes or no?

12

DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: I don't have an

13

answer to that question.

14

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: But you're a direct

15

report...

16

DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: I can get back to

17

you.

18

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: To the Mayor, you're

19

a senior staffer. Are you aware of any form, it's

20

just a yes or no, are you aware of any form that any

21

lobbyist has to fill out on behalf of their corporate

22

clients and real estate interests, special interests?

23

DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Yes, actually..

24

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: You're aware of a

25

form? Please, tell us.

1  
2                   DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: If you want to meet  
3 with Mayor Adams...

4                   CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay, other than the  
5 Mayor, anybody else...

6                   DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: A form that you have  
7 to fill out to meet with him.

8                   CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Any other  
9 representative of the Administration, are you aware  
10 of any form that any lobbyist has to fill out to meet  
11 with anyone outside of Mayor Eric Adams in the entire  
12 330,000 person Adams' Administration?

13                   DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: I know that it's the  
14 Mayor's desire that everyone in the senior leadership  
15 adopts a form similar to his for meetings, and so we  
16 are working on that as we speak.

17                   CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I just have to say  
18 for us to have a process where you're requiring every  
19 elected official to jump through a multi-page form of  
20 lots of silly questions that you want us to fill out  
21 but lobbyists have direct access to every single  
22 person in this Administration is a horrible  
23 juxtaposition of who you are prioritizing serving and  
24 supporting. We are here as duly elected  
25 representatives on behalf of the people of New York.

1  
2 Lobbyists are there on behalf of special interests,  
3 and you are prioritizing their access over our own to  
4 meet the needs of our constituents.

5           DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: I respectfully  
6 disagree with you. I also want to point out that I  
7 have a copy of the form somewhere here with me, and  
8 it's a very basic form that takes only seconds to  
9 fill out, and I know that here in the Council, we can  
10 all understand the importance of data collection and  
11 making sure that things are characterized in an  
12 appropriate way and responded to and tracked.

13           CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I am all here for  
14 data collection. I am not here for inefficiency and  
15 bureaucratic roadblocks.

16           I'd like to just ask you a hypothetical  
17 question. I'll close on one topic and then kick it  
18 over to my Colleagues. I apologize for going so long.  
19 I'd like to ask a hypothetical question. If an  
20 elected official has an ongoing chronic issue in  
21 their district in which they were regularly meeting  
22 with representatives from City agencies to push  
23 forward and find solutions, would they be required to  
24 fill out this form?

1  
2 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: I'm sorry. Can you  
3 repeat your question?

4 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: If an elected  
5 official had an ongoing chronic issue in their  
6 district in which they were regularly meeting with  
7 representatives from City agencies to push forward  
8 and find solutions, would they be required to fill  
9 out this form?

10 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: That's a very good  
11 question and one that we commonly hear so I'm glad  
12 that I have the chance to address it here. Let's say  
13 you have a long-standing, reoccurring meeting about  
14 an issue with a school in your district. What we  
15 would like is for our agency staff to input that into  
16 the system so that we can have a registration of it,  
17 we can know that it's happening but, once you have it  
18 in for the one time, there's no need to go to the  
19 forum on a repetitive basis.

20 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I think you misheard  
21 the question. I apologize. If there was an ongoing  
22 chronic issue, regular meetings were already  
23 happening, do now elected officials need to fill out  
24 this form before those meetings continue?

1  
2           DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: I'm sorry if my  
3 answer was not clear. I said if you have an ongoing  
4 meeting that you've been having, let's say over the  
5 past year or six months, I would ask our agency IGA  
6 staff to submit that to the form, I'm sorry it's not  
7 a Google Doc but it's like one, so that we would have  
8 a record of it and, once it's submitted the one time,  
9 there is no need to resubmit for every recurring  
10 meeting.

11           CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay. Well, this  
12 isn't what happened to Speaker Adams. Her District  
13 Office has been convening an interagency task force  
14 to address issues relating to the Tuskegee Airmen Way  
15 for more than a year. Their collaborative partnership  
16 has been productive and helpful in alleviating long-  
17 standing concerns for local residents but, after the  
18 Mayor imposed this new form, agencies effectively  
19 stopped participating, hindering the immense progress  
20 made on the Tuskegee Airmen Way. This is not the  
21 service that her constituents or any of our  
22 communities across the city want or deserve so we  
23 hope that you'll begin having those meetings again  
24 with Speaker Adam staff to get the Tuskegee Airmen  
25 Way process moving forward.

1  
2           DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Thank you for raising  
3 that concern, and I believe that we've corrected many  
4 of these questions that you've spoken about but, as  
5 you can imagine...

6           CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I can promise you,  
7 they have not been corrected.

8           DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: These are emerging  
9 issues. The form has only been operational for the  
10 last couple of weeks, and I would encourage you, when  
11 you meet these kinds of challenges, that you call me  
12 or my staff, Connor Martinez, who you know very well  
13 who's the Director of City Legislative Affairs, to  
14 raise them with us and we can discuss it so that we  
15 can address them on a one-by-one basis.

16           CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I just want to be  
17 clear, the Speaker is not a stranger to City Hall.  
18 She knows everyone in the Mayor's Office. She's  
19 raised the issues and was told she needs to fill out  
20 a form to see this issue move forward. I'm asking on  
21 her behalf is the Administration prepared to continue  
22 these meetings and move forward to address.

23           DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Of course, and I  
24 believe we had a meeting in her District with our  
25 agency representatives last week.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: She is keen to see  
this move forward.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LICATA: And if you  
have any specific information, the type of meeting,  
the agency, that would help me address this more  
directly.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: We will follow up  
with you in writing with all the relevant  
information, but we're very pleased to hear that  
you're ready to move forward on this important issue.

DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Two more questions  
from the Speaker. The Speaker has publicly stated  
that she initially found out about this directive via  
a journalist's post on social media which is, of  
course, unacceptable. Did the Administration intend  
to brief the Speaker and the Council on this mandate?  
If so, when?

DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Of course. As you  
know, we have regular communication with multiple  
senior leadership level staff members in the  
Speaker's Office. We had a rollout plan for this  
engagement. It started with briefing our agency  
leaders and Administration officials and ironing out

1 any questions or concerns that they had. Our next  
2 phase was to convene the elected officials, and you  
3 all know that I love to convene large groups of  
4 elected officials on Zoom calls, right, it's  
5 something that we do quite regularly, and that was  
6 something that we had planned. Unfortunately, the  
7 information broke in the news before we could get  
8 that meeting scheduled and, at that point, instead of  
9 being able to communicate with all of you and discuss  
10 the rollout, we had to respond to the criticisms that  
11 were communicated to the press, and so it's very  
12 unfortunate. It is never our desire that you or  
13 anyone in the Council find out about any policies  
14 that would impact the manner in which you would have  
15 to engage with this Administration through the news.

17 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Well, we were  
18 certainly very disappointed to find out about this in  
19 the news rather than in direct communication from  
20 City Hall and, still three weeks after the  
21 announcement of this policy, there has been no formal  
22 briefing shy of an email that frankly included  
23 significant conflicting and contradictory  
24 information.

1  
2           One more question from the Speaker and  
3 then I'll pass it to my Colleagues. Council Members  
4 have had long-standing relationships with agency  
5 leadership and their staff for many years. I'm not  
6 asking Gale how many years. Since the implementation  
7 of this...

8           COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: (INAUDIBLE)

9           CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: There you go. Since  
10 the implementation of this directive, we and our  
11 Staff have received a lot of feedback from our agency  
12 partners, much of which has been angry and apologetic  
13 with regard to the disruption in helping us  
14 effectively serve our communities. What feedback, if  
15 any, have you received from Agency Commissioners and  
16 Directors with regard to this form?

17           DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: So I'm not going to  
18 share in this public forum private conversations that  
19 I have engaged with in my professional capacity, but  
20 we have received feedback from agency leaders. I've  
21 made myself available as has the Mayor, our Deputy  
22 Mayors to any agency leader that has any concerns  
23 that they want to express or discuss, and I take and  
24 we all take very seriously all of the recommendations  
25 that have been made.

1  
2           CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Well, I think this  
3 is clear. It's disappointing that there was no  
4 consultation or communication with elected officials  
5 in advance of creating this process. It's even more  
6 disappointing that there hasn't been a briefing in a  
7 real conversation with elected officials in the three  
8 weeks since. I have heard from over a dozen people in  
9 senior roles in the Adams' Administration at City  
10 Hall, inter-gov staff at agencies, agency heads who  
11 have been embarrassed by this new policy and their  
12 inability to do their jobs effectively and to partner  
13 with us because they know how much they rely on us to  
14 do their jobs.

15           I'm going to pass it to Colleagues for  
16 questions, and hopefully we'll have some time to  
17 circle back for a second round.

18           DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: And, Council Member  
19 Restler, I want to thank you for these questions and  
20 for this open dialogue, and I want to say it's always  
21 a very tricky situation. My team and I are in the  
22 process of planning a briefing, and we honestly  
23 thought about doing it this week but we didn't know  
24 if you might find it to be a conflict with this  
25 hearing so we wanted to come to the hearing first,

1  
2 hear your concerns before we have the briefing so you  
3 will receive a notification for a briefing very soon,  
4 and I hope that we can continue this dialogue, not  
5 just here in this public forum but in a way where we  
6 can roll up our sleeves and really get things done.  
7 Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: And we've been  
9 joined by Council Members Holden and Hanif.

10 I just want to say Deputy Mayors,  
11 Commissioners, Staff at City Hall call me every day  
12 and you could have called me too if you wanted to  
13 talk about it. We're always available to work  
14 together even if that's not the approach of the  
15 Adams' Administration.

16 I'm going to pass it over to Colleagues  
17 for questions. We'll start with the Public Advocate  
18 and then Council Member Brewer.

19 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE WILLIAMS: Thank  
20 you, Chair.

21 Miss Raspberry, I want to start off by  
22 acknowledging my belief of your genuinely wanting to  
23 do good for the people of the City of New York. I've  
24 known you for a long time. I believe that so I want  
25 to start off I genuinely believe that. I also want to

1 say that I think I want to do the same and, in that,  
2 I sometimes may make mistakes. That doesn't take away  
3 my intention of what I was trying to do and have been  
4 trying to do.  
5

6 I believe this Administration as a whole  
7 for over two years has the inability to publicly say  
8 when they've made a mistake or done something they  
9 didn't mean to do and instead of saying we made an  
10 error here, here's how we're going to correct it,  
11 there's a doubling and tripling down of that and,  
12 from what I've heard in the testimony, it seems like  
13 there's now an attempt to clean up a process that  
14 wasn't well thought out from the beginning. I think  
15 there's a way that that could have been done without  
16 this hearing and so that is my level of frustration.

17 I do want to just quickly ask and one of  
18 the things I just mentioned, if something was  
19 mentioned by a reporter that wasn't supposed to be,  
20 and my understanding was that it was in response to  
21 something the Administration actually said, why not  
22 pause the form, have the briefing, and then implement  
23 it? What was so urgent that we had to implement the  
24 form at that moment in time?  
25

1  
2           DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: So thank you so much  
3 for your question, Public Advocate Williams, and I  
4 know that we are all well-intentioned in trying to  
5 work on behalf of the people of the City of New York.  
6 I just want to make it clear that the Adams'  
7 Administration, everything that we do is well thought  
8 out. I don't think it's a fair assessment to say  
9 we're not just haphazardly making decisions and  
10 taking actions. We have a lot of really highly  
11 skilled public servants who spend a great deal of  
12 time making sure that we are working to serve the  
13 people of New York the best way that we know how.

14           You asked a very valid question about the  
15 rollout. Once the press wrote the story, we wanted to  
16 make sure that we communicated as much as we could.  
17 For any elected officials who reached out to us, we  
18 had meetings with them. Council Member Restler  
19 mentioned the correspondence that our team sent. I  
20 know that you said you felt that it was insufficient.  
21 At all points, we communicated that we were available  
22 to answer direct questions. We wanted to talk to  
23 people on a one-on-one basis because we felt like if  
24 you have very specific questions, we want to make  
25 sure we get you very specific answers, and so our

1 plan was well thought out but, unfortunately, we live  
2 in a time now where there's a 24-hour news cycle.

3 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE WILLIAMS: I just  
4 want, and I'm sorry, I don't know how much time I  
5 have, but my specific question is what was happening  
6 so urgently that you couldn't pause the  
7 implementation to have the conversations? Why did it  
8 have to happen right at that moment in time?

9 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Having quick starts  
10 and stops is confusing, and so...

11 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE WILLIAMS: But it  
12 hadn't started.

13 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: One thing that we  
14 want to always make sure is that our messaging is  
15 consistent, and I think that two, three weeks into  
16 the...

17 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE WILLIAMS: But the  
18 process hadn't started.

19 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Two, three weeks into  
20 this process, there's still plenty of time and  
21 opportunity for us to answer the questions that you  
22 may have and talk about the process.

23 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE WILLIAMS: At the  
24 moment in time I'm talking about, the process hadn't  
25

1 started so it wouldn't have been a starting and  
2 stopping. It would have pushed a few weeks so that we  
3 can have this conversation privately as opposed to  
4 starting and stopping so why was that the decision  
5 made not to pause it then and to go through this  
6 process to where we're going through it now?

8 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: I appreciate your  
9 question. Thank you again. As you know, I serve at  
10 the pleasure of Mayor Adams and this is his policy,  
11 and so he made the decision that we should move  
12 forward, and I know that he would be open to having a  
13 conversation with you if you wanted to question why  
14 he chose that.

15 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE WILLIAMS: Okay,  
16 well, if you could him know this was probably the  
17 worst way to put forward even a well-intentioned,  
18 particularly when you heard feedback that it was  
19 going to be troublesome, and I think this is a great  
20 example of how the Administration decides to move  
21 forward.

22 Another thing about the Charter. We have  
23 some Charter questions as well. I won't bring it up  
24 because it sounds like we're not prepared to answer.  
25 I just want to be clear in the well-intentioned

1  
2 thought-out process. Are you saying that the  
3 attorneys reviewed the Charter to make sure that this  
4 form complied with the Charter mandate?

5 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: I don't know what the  
6 process was that the Law Department and our Chief  
7 Counsel's Office engaged in when they reviewed this  
8 form, but I can't imagine that they don't take the  
9 law fully into consideration when they're reviewing  
10 policies.

11 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE WILLIAMS: So in  
12 the well-thought-out process, we're just not sure if  
13 the Charter was reviewed.

14 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Well, you called me  
15 here to speak about my experience with the form, and  
16 it was not in my responsibility to review the City  
17 Charter as it pertained to the form so I can only  
18 speak on the job that I did and that I continue to do  
19 in this area every day.

20 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE WILLIAMS: The  
21 last thing I will say is because, the form itself  
22 says completion of this form does not result in a  
23 guarantee of a meeting or appearance, which says to  
24 me that there is a way that will be denied. I still  
25

1  
2 would love to understand what was envisioned for it  
3 to be denied. Otherwise, we wouldn't have that.

4 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: I don't know if  
5 anything was envisioned, but none of us can predict  
6 the future. All that I could speak on right now is  
7 that there haven't been any requests that have been  
8 denied.

9 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE WILLIAMS: And  
10 then you mentioned another thing that I hadn't heard  
11 of at all...

12 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: And I'd like to say,  
13 Council Member Restler, we believe you submitted a  
14 request but maybe someone...

15 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I have not submitted  
16 a request.

17 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Submitted it as spam  
18 but, when...

19 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: No, your staff  
20 submitted a request on my behalf.

21 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Submitted, we  
22 responded immediately so.

23 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE WILLIAMS: I just  
24 want to finish this because, one, I don't know if you  
25 know in the form to speak with my office, myself,

1 says I have to fill out a form which is quite  
2 interesting. I don't know if you've reviewed it to  
3 make sure everything makes sense there. But the other  
4 part is you mentioned something else I hadn't brought  
5 up which is some newly elected officials don't have  
6 the same contacts, which is a separate problem. I'm  
7 not sure why this would not be one way that you can  
8 contact if you don't have the contacts as opposed to  
9 the only way to try to provide this so this clearly  
10 seemed like this is a process put in place to solve a  
11 problem that no one else knew was happening except  
12 the Administration and, if there was an issue, I  
13 think it should have been reversed that the  
14 Administration find a way to gather that and hold  
15 them accountable for not responding. Not having duly  
16 elected officials whose job is to hold the  
17 Administration accountable jump through a  
18 bureaucratic hoop that could possibly be denied.  
19 Thank you so much. If there's a second round, I might  
20 do that.

22 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: And, Public Advocate,  
23 I really appreciate your feedback. Thank you.

24 PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE WILLIAMS: Thank  
25 you.



1  
2 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I offered to do a  
3 call with you in advance of this and you said no so...

4 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: If you had provided  
5 me with these questions, I would be able to answer  
6 you but you keep asking...

7 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I ask every agency  
8 who comes before my Committee...

9 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: The same questions  
10 about the City Charter over and over, and I am not  
11 here to address what any lawyer in this  
12 Administration's interpretation of the City Charter  
13 was as it pertains to this form.

14 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I simply asked if  
15 you discussed it with them, and I just want to be  
16 clear, I offer every Administration witness who comes  
17 before my Committee the opportunity to speak in  
18 advance. I offered you that same opportunity and you  
19 demurred so please don't imply otherwise on the  
20 record.

21 Council Member Brewer.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you. The  
23 last Green Book was 2016 de Blasio, and I have them  
24 back to 1978 just in case people want to know when  
25 the last Green Book was and sometimes, just in terms

1  
2 of access, Green Book NYC online is fine but there  
3 are not many phone numbers there so what I do is I  
4 look at the number, I look at the date, I look at the  
5 title of the job, I call that number, I get somebody  
6 so it's just a crazy way to have to do work  
7 sometimes. This, as you know makes me crazy, this  
8 form. No Mayor has ever asked for it. It does feel a  
9 little bit like big brother wants to know what's  
10 going on as opposed to good government so I have the  
11 honor, of course, of the Oversight and Investigations  
12 Committee. They have an investigation staff. If  
13 they're going to do an investigation, they always  
14 contact the agency, they state what they're doing,  
15 but other times it makes sense to do an investigation  
16 without contacting the agency. What I'm saying is  
17 they are now precluded from going to certain  
18 locations, particularly focused on migrants, unless  
19 they fill out a form. That is not, in my opinion nor  
20 the opinion of the attorneys working on that  
21 Committee, appropriate. They can't do their job. So  
22 how would you respond? These are not elected  
23 officials. These are staff people who have a job  
24 similar to what the Public Advocate does, I guess, to  
25 do an investigation, to then bring the information

1 back to the City Council, happy to share it, have a  
2 hearing, do a report, always with information going  
3 to the agency, but the idea of having to tell the  
4 Mayor that all of that is happening, it borders on  
5 insane to me so I just want to understand is even an  
6 investigations that is legally mandated as an  
7 oversight body has to go through a form? That's my  
8 question.  
9

10 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: So thank you so much  
11 for that question. I can recall an instance, I think  
12 within the last two weeks so within the first week  
13 that we utilized this form, where a staff member from  
14 the Oversight and Investigations Committee reached  
15 out wanting to schedule a tour with the NYPD to go on  
16 a ride-along. We responded immediately. I think that  
17 since that happened, staff members have gone out on  
18 two different ride-alongs with the NYPD so, in that  
19 instance, it didn't interrupt the process of  
20 government and it's no different than what was  
21 happening before because, prior to this, anytime the  
22 Oversight and Investigations Committee wanted to  
23 engage with any of our agencies, they would reach out  
24 on average to the IGA unit and they would respond so  
25 that's no different.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay, but that's  
3 different than filling out a form. There's a very  
4 different feeling than in some cases calling to let  
5 you or your staff know what's going on. It's a very  
6 different feeling.

7 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: I think it's  
8 psychological because I think that we're moving into  
9 a different time and putting your name and address  
10 and a question into a submission form...

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

12 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: I think that this  
13 form has sort of become like the boogeyman in the  
14 room, and I don't know if you've ever opened it or  
15 looked at it, but it's not okay as complicated as...

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: We're going to  
17 differ. Let's just keep going.

18 Today's Daily News had a story on this  
19 topic and mentioned that all of the forms that have  
20 been filled out need to be on the Open Data platform.  
21 Are they?

22 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Are you asking me  
23 about the Open Data Law?

24 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Yeah. I know the  
25 Open Data Law. I wrote it.

1  
2 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: The Administration is  
3 compliant with the law on those matters.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So the requests  
5 that have been made, which would be in a database,  
6 are now on the Open Data platform? That's the  
7 question.

8 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: So I know that our  
9 Chief Counsel is working with OTI to make sure that  
10 we are compliant with this form.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: For this  
12 particular request of data?

13 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Yes.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Now agencies, as  
15 you know, with all due respect, I know most of the  
16 Commissioners longer than you, longer than the Mayor.  
17 I know most of the people in the agencies longer than  
18 you and longer than the Mayor, and I have all their  
19 cell numbers, literally half of City government, I  
20 have their cell number, and I have 30,000 interns in  
21 City government all over the place so the notion that  
22 to talk to them I have to fill out a form, you can't  
23 imagine how it feels, it's like ridiculous so I will  
24 not fill out a form. I'm just letting you know. I  
25 will continue to get my work done by talking to the

1 people for whom I have great respect. You have  
2 phenomenal, phenomenal Commissioners, and they don't  
3 want to fill out a form so my question to you is have  
4 you, because they obviously don't want to lose their  
5 job so they may not tell you I don't want to fill out  
6 a form but I have 10 people who have called me, and  
7 I'm sure there are others, who say that having this  
8 form is impeding their ability to do their job.

10 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Council Member, thank  
11 you for that question. As I mentioned in my remarks,  
12 there are very specific instances when we are asking  
13 you all to fill out this form. We are not telling you  
14 that you can't call the people that you know and that  
15 you are friendly with and have conversations. If you  
16 are calling an agency leader to ask them for an  
17 update on a conversation that you've already begun,  
18 we're not telling you to fill out a form. I listed  
19 out some very specific instances and so you should  
20 continue, all of you, to enjoy the relationships that  
21 you have with your former interns, former colleagues,  
22 and friends. You know, politics, I've worked in and  
23 out of this building over the last 20 years as well  
24 so we all have long-standing relationships and  
25 friendships that go beyond the workday, and that's

1 the great the great thing about this work that we do,  
2 and we should all continue to utilize those  
3 conversations. We are just asking that if you are  
4 looking for agency leaders to deploy City services to  
5 your District or if you are looking for formal  
6 meetings, you should utilize the form.  
7

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. One other  
9 issue is related. We obviously get a lot of eviction  
10 requests. We get a lot of human service requests.  
11 There is a form you have to fill out, this is not  
12 related to your form, it's a different form, and what  
13 happens is the agencies are nervous, the constituents  
14 are nervous, my staff is nervous because by filling  
15 out that form which does take some time to comply  
16 with by the agencies, sometimes we are not able to  
17 deal with the eviction so there's another form. I  
18 will get you information offline, but the notion that  
19 any of these forms impede the work of government. I  
20 have to say if I was in charge, and I'm not, I would  
21 say we've made a mistake on this form, we will at  
22 this point as I think the Public Advocate said, we  
23 will pause, figure out what makes sense, when is the  
24 form actually necessary. Really, I have to say you  
25 know all the way back to Ed Koch, Bloomberg, nobody's

1  
2 ever asked, and I don't even know if around the  
3 country anybody's ever asked. It sets a cold blanket,  
4 shall we say, on the work between City government and  
5 the people who want, just like you, City to succeed.  
6 Now you're very accessible. Your staff is fabulous. I  
7 don't think this helps with them doing their job, and  
8 I know it doesn't make sense for the agencies. If  
9 you're asking the agencies honestly, they're going to  
10 tell you this is not helpful to them because they,  
11 ten of them have told me. I really wish you would  
12 reconsider it. I know the Mayor, he's just as  
13 stubborn as I am and, when he decides...

14 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: That is really  
15 stubborn.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: He's going to do  
17 something, he's going to do it. I'm stubborn too, but  
18 this would be an example when you would say mea  
19 culpa, I've made a mistake, and let's see if we can  
20 review this and figure out a different system for how  
21 we can communicate better. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

22 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you so much.

23 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: And if I have a  
24 moment...

25 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Sure, briefly.

1  
2 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: I consider it one of  
3 the greatest privileges of my professional career to  
4 work for Mayor Eric Adams. I think that he is a great  
5 leader, and so I will take everything that you have  
6 said here back to our team under consideration, but I  
7 don't I don't want to walk away without stating that,  
8 whatever personal feelings are, you know Mayor Adams  
9 is a great public servant and he is doing the very  
10 best that he can to make sure that City services are  
11 provided to the people of the City of New York in a  
12 non-bureaucratic efficient and effective manner.  
13 Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you, Council  
15 Member Brewer.

16 I'd like to now pass it to Council Member  
17 Gutiérrez and thank her for her leadership on kind of  
18 calling out the importance of the Open Data Law, and  
19 I'd like to acknowledge our Education Chair, Council  
20 Member Rita Joseph, for joining us. Thank you for  
21 being here.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Thank You  
23 Chair.

24 Tiffany, thank you for your testimony.  
25 Can I just have a clear understanding, maybe I missed

1 this in your examples, where the submission of this  
2 form would be required? Requesting a meeting with  
3 police captain at my local precinct, do I need to  
4 fill out that form?

5  
6 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Yes. He's considered  
7 an agency leader but, in contrast, if you have an  
8 emergency concern you want to reach out to the  
9 captain, you should feel free to do that. If you want  
10 to reach out to the community affairs officers in a  
11 precinct, you should continue to do that. This is  
12 solely directed at leaders in the City service.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Okay. Well,  
14 I'll just say that in my experience in North  
15 Brooklyn, we've had quite a turnover of captains in  
16 the two and a half years since I've been in office so  
17 this scenario of submitting forms would be often in  
18 this instance if I'm requesting a meet-and-greet with  
19 a new captain because it's happened in multiple of my  
20 precincts within a very short window of time.

21 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Yes, and I've heard  
22 from your colleagues in an instance where a new  
23 captain might start at a precinct and they've reached  
24 out that they didn't get a response as quickly as  
25 they've wanted and City Hall has had to intervene to

1  
2 coordinate communication and so this, if you're  
3 saying that you're experiencing great turnover, this  
4 solves that problem because you will always be sure  
5 to get in front of those individuals in a quick and  
6 efficient way.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Well, I never  
8 had an issue connecting with them despite the  
9 turnover, right? In general, the culture has been I'm  
10 new here, let's meet with the elected officials, and  
11 now what I'm saying is the requirement of this form  
12 makes it so on top of the turnover there's a constant  
13 like we have to submit a form to do a meeting, just a  
14 meet-and-greet with new captains, but I do want to  
15 move on. I'm sorry, Tiffany.

16 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: If the captain wants  
17 to reach out to you, the captain does not have to  
18 submit a form so we are not trying to impose upon any  
19 desire that any agency leaders have to need to engage  
20 with your offices.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: What about  
22 meeting with school principals?

23 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: School principals do  
24 not fall into this category.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: And what about  
3 anybody from the local firehouses?

4 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: If you're meeting  
5 with leadership, it would apply.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Okay. I would  
7 love to...

8 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: And in the point in  
9 which you're engaging with FDNY officials might be  
10 likely in emergency situations so in no way would  
11 this apply in those instances.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Okay. I would  
13 like if you can just expand, in your testimony, you  
14 mentioned that there haven't been any denial of  
15 requests, but I do know from certain Members that  
16 they were denied specific requests so they had asked  
17 for a walk-through with a Commissioner and the  
18 request was denied with the Commissioner but a  
19 suggestion was made to meet with another agency head.  
20 Do you have the number on how many of those you've  
21 responded?

22 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: I don't, and I  
23 apologize. I don't have that information, but I can  
24 get back to you.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, and you  
3 wouldn't qualify that as a denial?

4 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Not at all.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, but if a  
6 Member is seeking a walk-through with a Commissioner  
7 and the agency says no but you can meet with so-and-  
8 so that is a denial?

9 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: It's not a denial  
10 because I think that this is streamlining resources  
11 and making sure that appropriate members of the  
12 Administration are handling appropriate tasks so, if  
13 there is a borough-specific or community-specific  
14 outreach that you're making, it might be more  
15 appropriate for you to talk with the borough  
16 commissioner who has more direct knowledge about it  
17 for this walk-through than to have the Commissioner  
18 go out and then follow up with the Commissioner at a  
19 later time.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: But why not  
21 make that an option as opposed to this is the  
22 response? I'll just say that in that, and I can talk  
23 to you offline, in that specific scenario the  
24 Commissioner reached out to the Members saying that  
25

1 they were happy to do this tour, they were just being  
2 told they couldn't do it.

3  
4 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: I appreciate the  
5 feedback and would love to continue the conversation  
6 offline.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: On the spirit  
8 of opting in, was there a conversation before the  
9 launch of this form with agency Commissioners and the  
10 option for those agencies that maybe get thousands of  
11 requests versus agencies that get significantly less,  
12 was there an option for them to opt in or opt out of  
13 this form process?

14 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: We believe in  
15 uniformity, so this is not an optional process in our  
16 Administration, but we did seek feedback from agency  
17 leaders throughout the City service before the  
18 deployment of this form.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Can you share,  
20 like no specific people, but what was some of the  
21 feedback?

22 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: As I stated the last  
23 time one of your Colleagues asked me a question, I'm  
24 not going to share confidential conversations that we  
25 have in this Administration but thank you.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Okay, so then  
3 we have no way of knowing if the feedback was  
4 negative or positive about the form. There was just  
5 existing conversations, but they were neither  
6 supportive of it or not is what I can walk away with.

7 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: I don't I don't think  
8 of information in that way, negative or positive I  
9 think that you know...

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: It's feedback.  
11 Feedback is in that way, positive or negative.

12 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Mayor Adams welcomes  
13 critical comments, critical communications. We're not  
14 afraid of having hard conversations and, if anyone  
15 has any criticism, as I'm sitting here today  
16 listening to all of you, we're happy to hear it, take  
17 it back, and consider it.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Okay. I would  
19 just like to add to what Chair Restler said earlier  
20 and Council Member Brewer where I've had  
21 relationships with a lot of these Commissioners for a  
22 long time and I'm connecting with them one-on-one and  
23 I think they do not agree with the intention of this  
24 form which, as you've repeated, is to create more  
25 efficiency. They agree with a lot of the Members here

1  
2 that it's inefficient, that it's not an appropriate  
3 way to really run inter-gov and just, in the last  
4 second, I think you said it before but if I could  
5 just get you to confirm because we did send out a  
6 letter to the Mayor you were copied on wanting to  
7 hear a commitment on the compliance of any and all  
8 data collection for the purpose of Open Law. Can you  
9 just repeat whether you are committed to submitting  
10 all data information?

11                   DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: We are committed to  
12 complying with the Open Data Law, yes.

13                   DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Thank you, and I just  
14 want to say thank you for your questions, thank you  
15 for the letter. Change is hard and change is often  
16 met with resistance, but there are lots of systems  
17 that have been introduced that were resisted at first  
18 and then in the long run proved to be a worthwhile  
19 and worthy and so we want to let our work speak for  
20 us. If you submit a request to the tracker and you  
21 get a timely response and you're able to commit to  
22 connect with agency leaders, then that's just my work  
23 and our Administration's work speaking for us, and  
24 that's all we want the chance to be able to do.

25

1  
2                   COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Sorry, Chair.  
3 One last question. Do you all have an intention to  
4 assess the efficiency of this form at some point  
5 within three to six months and say this is what we  
6 want to change, this is actually not good? Is that  
7 something that you can share with us now that there  
8 is an intention to look, assess, evolve if necessary.

9                   DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: We are doing that  
10 every day, and that's really the point of data  
11 collection. Data collection allows you to look at  
12 things from a bigger picture and see where the needs  
13 are, where resources perhaps need to be deployed,  
14 extra resources, and so we are reviewing our systems,  
15 all of them, all the time and having very detailed  
16 conversations about what's working, what's not  
17 working, and what we could be doing differently,  
18 better, and just making sure that we're providing  
19 services to the best of our ability.

20                   COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: And can I just  
21 ask, and you don't have to answer right now, that  
22 with in compliance with Open Data that the  
23 Administration make the distinction between denials  
24 that are made versus suggestions that are made with  
25 appropriate staff.

1  
2           DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: As I said, our Chief  
3 Counsel, Lisa Zornberg, is working very closely with  
4 the OTI team to make sure that the City of New York  
5 remains compliant with that law.

6           COUNCIL MEMBER GUTIÉRREZ: Thank you.

7           CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thanks so much. I'd  
8 now like to go to Council Member Paladino followed by  
9 Council Member Vernikov followed by Council Member  
10 Holden.

11           COUNCIL MEMBER PALADINO: Thank you very  
12 much, Chair. I appreciate it.

13           Let me start by saying this, while Rome  
14 is burning, we're concerned about filling out papers.  
15 Let me say this also. These papers take exactly two  
16 minutes to do. Let me say also this. We asked the  
17 same requirement of our police officers not long ago  
18 where all of you sat here and said it's necessary  
19 that they fill out paperwork for transparency. Well,  
20 now we're being asked to fill out a two-minute piece  
21 of paper, which I think is outrageous. I agree with  
22 the format. I am not going against the format because  
23 if the police have to fill out papers guess what? So  
24 do we? And anybody who has a problem with that, too  
25 bad. You should also think before you act.

1  
2           Now, we all have our Commissioners that  
3 we deal with. Tiffany has sat here and given us her  
4 time. The Mayor's Office has sat here and given us  
5 their time and anybody who knows Commissioners, we  
6 all do and, to Council Member Brewer's point, I have  
7 a list too of private cell phone numbers that I know  
8 that if I call they will answer. This is just for  
9 transparency and I want to say this is absolutely  
10 ridiculous in my opinion that this meeting is  
11 actually even taking place. Giving the fact that the  
12 police have to do it, what's the big deal if they  
13 have to stop and fill out a few forms? Well, you know  
14 what? It is a big deal, but this what we're asking to  
15 do, it gives the Mayor's Office transparency. It gets  
16 also an opportunity to see how well the offices are  
17 working, our District offices, because I'm very proud  
18 of the way my District office works and I'm very  
19 happy to fill out whatever needs to be filled out so,  
20 on behalf of District 19, I want to say thank you  
21 very much. Thank you.

22           DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Thank you very much.

23           CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you, Council  
24 Member Paladino.

25           Council Member Vernikov.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: Thank you very  
3 much, Chair.

4 I'd just like to say that I agree with  
5 some of my Colleagues here. I don't think that the  
6 form is a good policy. I think it adds to red tape  
7 and bureaucracy, but I also would like to call out  
8 the complete and utter inconsistency and hypocrisy of  
9 this body when they vote for the How Many Stops Act  
10 to burden our NYPD who's already burdened with crime  
11 in our city but, when it comes to their doorstep and  
12 now has to be imposed on them, then it's forms for  
13 thee but not for me. I think that's incredibly  
14 inconsistent, and I agree with Council Member Brewer.  
15 I think that the NYPD should do the same. I think  
16 that the NYPD should say I'm not going to fill out  
17 this form. I think every single police officer should  
18 refuse to fill out this form and I think that we also  
19 need a mea culpa from this Body and we need to  
20 reverse the How Many Stops Act because we are  
21 burdening the NYPD with the inefficiency of filling  
22 out forms when they have a job to do. Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you very much,  
24 Council Member Vernikov.

25 Council Member Holden.

1  
2           COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you, Chair.  
3 I have a very different view of that to some of my  
4 Colleagues that just spoke. We have an issue where  
5 car meetups in our communities. It's many communities  
6 around Queens and Brooklyn, have these car groups  
7 that get together and they play loud music until the  
8 wee hours so we wrote an email to a commander in an  
9 affected precinct and we got an answer you have to  
10 fill out a form. I found that insulting. I just found  
11 it insulting that we're trying to fix quality-of-life  
12 issues and we have to fill out a form, particularly  
13 since I've written to the Mayor, I've written to many  
14 agencies and I get no response to my letters, so now  
15 I have to fill out a form to get a meeting together  
16 to try to solve a problem. It's just adding another  
17 level, Tiffany. It just adds another level. We have  
18 too many levels now that are not being addressed. We  
19 have quality-of-life issues for whatever reason. I  
20 don't want to get into all the problems that we're  
21 having, but we do have a crisis. The last thing we  
22 need is to talk to somebody to fill out paperwork on  
23 an ongoing issue. You said in here in your testimony  
24 that if it's an ongoing issue, constituents are  
25 complaining, that we don't have to fill out forms.

1 Well, we do now but, if I could show you all the  
2 letters that I've written to City Hall and to  
3 agencies, we spent a lot of time writing letters and  
4 I don't even get a response. Not an email, not a  
5 response. If you want to see it, I'll give it to you  
6 so adding this level and adding bureaucracy to our  
7 jobs is unnecessary, and I have to agree with the  
8 Public Advocate, normally I don't, but I have to  
9 agree with him on this, that what was the rush, what  
10 was the rush to roll this out, Tiffany? Tell me why.  
11 I know that you said that we got into other issues,  
12 but there's always other issues in the city. What was  
13 the rush to just hold it for a few weeks until, you  
14 heard the questions on this Committee? We don't know  
15 all the rules yet. Do you think that's wise to roll  
16 something out when we don't even know when do we have  
17 to fill out this form, what issues do we have, when  
18 is it appropriate, when is it not appropriate? You  
19 see, that's adding another layer unnecessarily. If  
20 you gave us some feedback or if you told the Speaker  
21 about this and if we were able to give feedback, we'd  
22 say here's a better way to do this. Here's our  
23 suggestions. We didn't get that opportunity. And  
24 we're oversight by the way. We're oversight on the  
25

1  
2 Mayor's Office so we're giving you feedback. It's not  
3 personal, but I just think this is unnecessary.

4 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Council Member

5 Holden, thank you so much for your comments. Our team  
6 will be following up with you to address the issues  
7 that you raised. I'm not here to interject my  
8 personal opinions about anything. I'm just here to  
9 speak on the usage of this form but, as I said  
10 before, I'm happy to meet with any of you who want to  
11 meet after this hearing so that we can discuss the  
12 concerns and recommendations that you have.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: But, again, listen

14 to, you got to almost put yourself in our position  
15 too. I understand. I'm not going to get into the How  
16 Many Stops. Again, we're not here for that. That's  
17 been done. What we're here for is to make this City  
18 work and to address quality of life. When my former  
19 precinct commander, who I feel didn't address half  
20 the issues on car meetups, in fact, they never gave  
21 summonses to the people making noise at all hours for  
22 a couple of years. We got very few noise summonses,  
23 and then I had to come up with legislation to try to  
24 solve that, then we're getting told by the same  
25 commanding officer, who's now in another precinct in

1  
2 Queens, experienced the same issues, to try to get a  
3 meeting together with some of the commanders of the  
4 affected precincts, fill out a form, I get told.  
5 That's insulting, because we didn't get the service  
6 we were supposed to get, and it's almost like this is  
7 unnecessary, unnecessary. Let's stop adding stuff.  
8 Let's solve these issues in the right way. Again, if  
9 we have to know all the rules and regulations to  
10 filling out a form, then you got to see that's adding  
11 another layer of bureaucracy. Thank you. Thank you,  
12 Chair.

13 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you so much,  
14 Council Member Holden.

15 I just want to say if you're keen to  
16 understand what meetings are happening between  
17 elected officials and your agencies, why not just ask  
18 agencies to report that information directly back to  
19 you when they hold meetings? Why not take this  
20 bureaucratic obstacle out of the way and just report  
21 back the meetings that agencies have with elected  
22 officials, or do you not trust your agencies to do  
23 that or to make decisions on which meetings they  
24 should hold?

25

1  
2                   DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Again, Council  
3 Member, respectfully, I disagree with your  
4 interpretation of this process. We are in constant  
5 communication with our agency leaders and partners,  
6 and we believe that this is an effective way to  
7 improve access to City agencies for all elected  
8 officials from every level of government, city,  
9 state, and federal, and we've implemented this to  
10 more efficiently and effectively utilize and deploy  
11 City resources.

12                   CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I'd love if you can  
13 answer the question. Why not just have agencies  
14 report back to you on what meetings they have with  
15 elected officials? Why not do it in reverse? That's  
16 how it's always been done.

17                   DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: We communicate..

18                   CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Over many  
19 Mayoralities.

20                   DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: We do that and more  
21 so. We communicate with our city agencies and leaders  
22 all the time.

23                   CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: You've created a  
24 process that reverses it and creates the bottleneck  
25

1 and the approval process at City Hall so you decide  
2 which agency meetings happen.

3  
4 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: There have been no  
5 bottlenecks. That is just what your opinion is.

6 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: As we've heard from  
7 Colleagues, we had a Colleague who requested to have  
8 an agency head come out for a tour. The agency head  
9 wanted to come out for the tour of their District.  
10 City Hall denied it. City Hall rejected it, is what  
11 we've been told by the Council Member.

12 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Not a rejection.

13 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: And that they said  
14 another agency mid-level staffer should go out  
15 instead, despite the agency head, who has a Charter-  
16 mandated authority to make that decision for herself,  
17 and despite the Charter-mandated authority of the  
18 agency head to work with elected officials, City Hall  
19 intervened and said, no, some mid-level staffer can  
20 go out and do this instead. How is that not a denial?

21 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: I appreciate your  
22 feedback, but your interpretation is not accurate so  
23 we'll just agree to disagree.

24 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I just wish you  
25 would answer the questions.

1  
2           As you know, we sent a letter from 65, 65  
3 city, state and federal elected officials, asking you  
4 to reverse this policy. Has it changed your opinion  
5 at all? What would it take for you to consider  
6 reversing this policy? If 100 elected officials asked  
7 you to reverse it? We're the ones who are impacted by  
8 it. We're the ones who understand how it negatively  
9 undermines our ability to do our jobs and fight and  
10 serve for our constituents. These 65 elected  
11 officials across city, state and federal government,  
12 is their opposition to this policy, their request for  
13 reversal, encouraging you to change your mind?

14           DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Mayor Adams  
15 implemented this policy because he believes that is  
16 the best tool that we have at this time to  
17 effectively deploy City services, and I encourage you  
18 and any of your Colleagues here today to reach out to  
19 him, to speak with him directly about any concerns  
20 that you may have if you feel like the answers that  
21 I'm providing you today are insufficient.

22           CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: So it doesn't matter  
23 if every elected official in the City of New York,  
24 except for Council Member Paladino, opposes this  
25 policy? If every city, state, and federal elected

1  
2 official were to tell you that they think this makes  
3 zero sense and this undermines our ability to do our  
4 job, you and Mayor Adams are just going full steam  
5 ahead anyway. You do not care.

6 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: My personal opinion  
7 is not relevant here, and so if you have questions...

8 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Did you propose this  
9 policy to the Mayor?

10 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Excuse me?

11 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Did you propose the  
12 creation of this policy to the Mayor? Whose idea was  
13 it?

14 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: This is a policy that  
15 Mayor Adams implemented.

16 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Did you propose it  
17 to the Mayor? It's just a yes or no question.

18 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: No, I did not propose  
19 it.

20 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: So this was not your  
21 idea?

22 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: This was not my idea.

23 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay. That wasn't my  
24 understanding, but we hope that you'll start to  
25 listen to the elected officials who represent the

1 communities and know best about how we can fight for  
2 and serve our constituents.

3  
4 I'd just like to ask in our final few  
5 minutes, how many City officials are subject to this  
6 policy? Do you know how many thousands of workers  
7 have to have their meeting requests reviewed by you  
8 and the Mayor? Any estimate?

9 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: I can get back to you  
10 with a specific number if you'd like.

11 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Is it all people on  
12 the substantial policymaker list?

13 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: It's senior agency  
14 leaders.

15 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay, so senior  
16 agency leaders, if we were to take the substantial  
17 policymaker list as a floor, the Conflicts of  
18 Interest Board's substantial policymaker list that  
19 every agency submits to COIB as the senior agency  
20 leaders who have policymaking authority, that's 2,500  
21 people. That doesn't include your 77 precinct  
22 commanders or 250 firehouse leaders that you told  
23 Council Member Gutiérrez were also subject to this so  
24 we're upwards of just off, I don't imagine you have a  
25 comprehensive list of who's subject to this, do you?

1 Do you have a comprehensive list of which City  
2 officials...

3  
4 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: I can get back to you  
5 with that information.

6 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Could you provide  
7 that to us in writing of exactly which City officials  
8 are subject to this?

9 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: We can get you a  
10 list.

11 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: But it sounds like  
12 upwards of at least 3,000 people are subject to this  
13 so any meeting requests with any of 3,000 people are  
14 supposed to go to you and the Mayor for review and  
15 approval. Is that...

16 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: That number sounds a  
17 little high.

18 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I mean...

19 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: And so, as I said,  
20 I'm not going to make assumptions here and I can get  
21 back to you with that information.

22 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay. I'd just like  
23 to ask a couple other questions. As far as we could  
24 tell, there's no data security on this form. Are  
25 there any protocols that you have put in place with

1  
2 OTI to ensure the confidentiality of this  
3 information?

4 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: The Chief Counsel,  
5 Lisa Zornberg, as I mentioned earlier, is working  
6 with OTI on those matters.

7 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay, but I just  
8 would be concerned. There's sensitive information  
9 that's included in these requests, and it doesn't  
10 appear that there's any data security policies in  
11 place.

12 Do you know who decided which agencies  
13 were included on the list of meeting requests, like  
14 who put together the list of which agencies I have to  
15 go through this form to meet with?

16 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: I don't understand  
17 the question. It's a citywide policy.

18 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: But you included on  
19 this form library systems, you included on this form  
20 the Campaign Finance Board, series of non-Mayoral  
21 agencies that are not subject to your decisions.

22 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: If you go back to the  
23 form now, those agencies I believe are no longer  
24 listed.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: They've been  
3 removed?

4 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay, great. That's  
6 good to hear.

7 I'd like to just ask a question about  
8 what issues are subject to this form and what are  
9 not. One of the categories on here is enforcement so  
10 if it's an enforcement-related issue, we're supposed  
11 to go through this form.

12 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: An example of an  
13 enforcement issue might be wanting to go out with the  
14 sheriff to engage in enforcement on an illegal  
15 marijuana shop.

16 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: If a tenant has an  
17 enforcement issue that they need help from HPD to  
18 inspect...

19 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: That sounds like...

20 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: That's not  
21 enforcement?

22 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: I've said very  
23 clearly, constituent matters, which is what that  
24 would fall under, are not subject to this process.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I just want to be  
3 very clear. Every single issue I raise with City  
4 agencies, every single issue we all raise with City  
5 agencies are on behalf of our constituents. I don't  
6 know how to define what a constituent matter is.  
7 Everything I'm doing is fighting for my constituents  
8 and doing my absolute best to advocate for their  
9 interests so when you tell me constituent matters are  
10 not subject to this form, nothing would be subject to  
11 this form if that's in fact what you're trying to  
12 say.

13 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Well, Council Member,  
14 I'd be happy to go through this in greater detail...

15 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay.

16 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: If you have some more  
17 specific examples you want to share.

18 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: A tenant who has an  
19 enforcement issue with HPD, buildings, construction  
20 issue with DOB.

21 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: We've made it clear  
22 that those...

23 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Nothing, none of  
24 those issues.

25 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Exactly.

1  
2           CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: But if a sheriff has  
3 an enforcement issue, that would be subject, but no  
4 other enforcement issues would be?

5           DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: That is the  
6 deployment of City services to a particular District.

7           CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I just want to  
8 remind you, Ms. Raspberry, since you're under oath  
9 today, Libraries, CFB, COI, are all still on the  
10 online form. None of them are Mayoral agencies. We've  
11 just checked and confirmed.

12           DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: I see. Well, thank  
13 you for letting us know. My team and I requested to  
14 have those removed so, if they're still there, thank  
15 you for pointing it out. We will work with OTI to  
16 make sure that they're removed.

17           CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I want to be  
18 respectful that you modified your calendar to stay  
19 with us till 3 o'clock. I do really appreciate you  
20 coming in and engaging in a back and forth and a  
21 conversation and being willing to testify. You were  
22 the person that we hoped to have come before us today  
23 and you were willing to make yourself available. We  
24 appreciate it.

1  
2 I just want to close by saying 65 elected  
3 officials have made direct, as clear as possible to  
4 the Mayor and to you and the whole team, this policy  
5 doesn't work. The Speaker, 35 members of the City  
6 Council, dozens of State Legislators, Members of  
7 Congress have said plainly, directly, this policy  
8 doesn't work. This is an absolutely problematic  
9 policy that undermines our ability to do our jobs,  
10 and we're asking, requesting that this policy  
11 immediately be reversed because it doesn't make  
12 sense.

13 Thank you for joining us today, and we  
14 look forward to hearing back from you on some of the  
15 items that we raised that you said you'd circle back  
16 on. In particular, we'd like to follow up with legal  
17 representation from the Mayor's Office to understand  
18 the analysis of how, in fact, this policy is not in  
19 direct conflict with the City Charter.

20 DIRECTOR RASPBERRY: Thank you and, just  
21 on the letter, I appreciate you sharing that with us,  
22 and it's our intention to work so that we can  
23 demonstrate to you and all of your elected official  
24 colleagues in government that signed the letter to  
25 demonstrate how this tool will be an effective use

1  
2 for government and will, in fact, accomplish our  
3 goals, which are to deploy City services in an  
4 efficient and streamlined manner. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you very much,  
6 Ms. Raspberry. Have a nice day.

7 We're going to have our next panel of  
8 witnesses after folks clear out so just we'll give  
9 folks a minute.

10 I'd now like to open the hearing for  
11 public testimony.

12 I remind members of the public that this  
13 is a formal governmental proceeding and that decorum  
14 shall be observed at all times. As such, members of  
15 the public shall remain silent at all times.

16 The witness table is reserved for people  
17 who wish to testify. No video recording or  
18 photography is allowed from the witness table.  
19 Further, members of the public may not present audio  
20 or video recordings as testimony but may submit  
21 transcripts of such recordings to the Sergeant-at-  
22 Arms for inclusion in the hearing record.

23 If you wish to speak at today's hearing,  
24 please fill out an appearance card with the Sergeant-  
25 at-Arms and wait to be recognized. When recognized,

1  
2 you will have three minutes to speak on today's  
3 hearing topic, the Elected Official Agency Engagement  
4 Request Form. I didn't realize that was the name.

5           If you have written statement or  
6 additional written testimony you wish to submit for  
7 the record, please provide a copy of the testimony to  
8 the Sergeant-at-Arms. You may also email written  
9 testimony to [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov) within 72  
10 hours of this hearing. Audio and video recordings  
11 will not be accepted.

12           Once again, for those of you who are  
13 testifying in person or register in advance, please  
14 fill out an appearance card with the Sergeant-at-  
15 Arms.

16           Panelists on Zoom, once your name is  
17 called, a Member of our Staff will unmute you and the  
18 Sergeant-at-Arms will give you the go-ahead to begin  
19 upon setting the timer. Please wait for the Sergeant-  
20 at-Arms to announce that you may begin before  
21 delivering your testimony.

22           It is now my great honor and privilege to  
23 introduce our first speaker, the Honorable Ruth  
24 Messinger. Thank you so much for joining us today.

1  
2 RUTH MESSINGER: Council Member, can you  
3 hear me?

4 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: We can hear you.

5 RUTH MESSINGER: Fantastic. Thank you very  
6 much. I want to say this has been the most impressive  
7 hearing to listen to. I think you and your Colleagues  
8 and the Public Advocate have been amazingly clear. I  
9 feel sorry for the Administration's effort to present  
10 this as logical because it's not logical. So let me  
11 just give you my three minutes of thought and then  
12 see if there are any questions. From my point of  
13 view, and I've been in government, was in government  
14 for a long time and have stayed connected to  
15 government, although Council Member Brewer has all of  
16 us beat but, from my point of view, this is a  
17 distressing requirement because it's certainly bad  
18 for every elected official. It's bad for the  
19 constituents of those elected officials and, in my  
20 judgment, it's very bad for the City and for its  
21 delivery of services. What matters in this very large  
22 city and what helps it to be human is relationships,  
23 and I think there is no one who knows that better  
24 than the Mayor. His style prioritizes relationships.  
25 He takes personal phone calls. He lets people stop

1 him on the street and feel like they've actually  
2 spoken to their government. He ought to understand,  
3 especially since he was a non-Mayoral elected  
4 official representing the Borough of Brooklyn, that  
5 elected officials thrive on these kinds of  
6 relationships with their constituents, they thrive on  
7 being elected to make a difference, and they thrive  
8 on being able to make a difference partly because  
9 they develop capacity to get quickly to people in  
10 charge, often on issues, as several of you have  
11 pointed out, that are harrowingly immediate. I'm  
12 dealing most frequently now with the status of  
13 immigrants and asylum seekers whose children are  
14 being taken out of school, intervening literally at  
15 the minute, reaching the right person, and being able  
16 to get a response protects that child and that family  
17 from additional trauma. It is the strength of the  
18 elected officials in this city, and they are  
19 fantastic, that they know whom to reach out to and  
20 when to reach out and they can do that in the moment  
21 in a way that actually produces results in a hugely  
22 large city with an incredible number of agencies and  
23 personnel. The Mayor, in my judgment, is disrupting  
24 the quality relationships that help move the city  
25

1 along and, apparently, and this is sad to say, that  
2 his reasoning is that only he can be the quick  
3 responder and the miracle maker, and that nobody else  
4 can have that status or that role. That's incredibly  
5 destructive of the Charter, of the intention of the  
6 people who shape City government, and it's  
7 intentionally destructive of what we have going for  
8 us, which we all know doesn't work nearly as well as  
9 we'd like to, but works better partly because of  
10 these relationships and these connections. I guess I  
11 would like to make a few other points before I stop,  
12 and that is these, that is all of you, are our  
13 elected officials. We as the public pay your salaries  
14 and, because of a campaign finance law that I had  
15 something to do with, we help you to get elected  
16 using our tax dollars to put you in place, and a  
17 reasonable return on investment of that use of our  
18 tax dollars is to be able to get the kind of  
19 responses that most elected officials in the City,  
20 regardless of party, deliver over and over again for  
21 their constituents so my hope is that the way things  
22 are will continue to be the way things are, and that  
23 as several of you have suggested, it ought to be on  
24 the burden on the agencies to record meetings with  
25

1  
2 elected officials if that's of interest to the  
3 Administration. Thank you for allowing me to testify,  
4 Council Member.

5 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Miss Messinger, can  
6 I ask just one question?

7 RUTH MESSINGER: Sure.

8 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Can you share from  
9 your historical perspective of working with different  
10 administrations, for a president, etc., running for  
11 Mayor, can you recall a Mayor doing anything like  
12 this in the past?

13 RUTH MESSINGER: The answer is a great  
14 question, Council Member, because the answer is no,  
15 except almost as a joke so some of you who are  
16 terribly old might remember that I regularly  
17 disagreed with Ed Koch on issues of policy, and for  
18 various reasons I was one of the people willing to  
19 disagree with him in public, and he would regularly  
20 say, sometimes publicly, sometimes to me, and I know  
21 sometimes to his Deputy Mayors and Commissioners,  
22 well, let's just not do any work in her District, but  
23 it was always said as a joke. It was his  
24 understanding that whatever we disagree with on  
25 policy, I still needed the garbage on the west side

1  
2 picked up. I still needed protection for the schools,  
3 and he knew that I would call, and he knew that  
4 starting with his First Deputy Mayor, Nat Leventhal,  
5 down to his Commissioners would respond to me as a  
6 concerned and informed elected official so your  
7 question is great, because it was sort of a joke  
8 during the Koch Administration, but it never was more  
9 than a joke, because he knew that I had to do my job,  
10 and he had to do his job and part of that was  
11 disagreeing with each other on policy and part of  
12 that was using the network, the complex network that  
13 is a Mayoral Administration in New York to be sure  
14 that we've got things done.

15 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Great. That is  
16 really helpful. Even at the height of the Giuliani  
17 Administration, we never saw policies like this. It's  
18 really quite something. Thank you so much for taking  
19 the time to testify. I know you have a lot to say.

20 RUTH MESSINGER: I'm going to add one  
21 sentence. As some of you know, I do a lot of work on  
22 a lot of issues. I do some of that work in and of and  
23 for the Jewish community in New York. The Mayor  
24 prides himself on being a man of faith, and so I  
25 would just like, on the record here, to call out to

1 the Mayor that the biggest lesson, he knows this for  
2 a fact, the biggest lesson that Moses learned from  
3 Jethro, his father-in-law, was he couldn't do it all  
4 alone.  
5

6 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you so much,  
7 Ms. Messenger. Thank you for making the time to  
8 testify and sharing your exceptionally helpful  
9 insights. Really, really appreciate it.

10 RUTH MESSINGER: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you. Have a  
12 wonderful afternoon.

13 It's now my privilege to call up our next  
14 panel, which includes former Council Member, Rosie  
15 Mendez and Nick Gulotta. I think I mispronounced it.  
16 Gulotta. There we go. I'm working on it, Nick. Thank  
17 you both for being with us today.

18 ROSIE MENDEZ: Good afternoon, Chair  
19 Restler. It's very nice to be back in this house, in  
20 this capacity. My name is Rosie Mendez, and I have  
21 worked in local government for 21 years, 12 years as  
22 a Council Member, four years as the Chief-of-Staff to  
23 my predecessor, Margarita López, three years as  
24 Director of Community Affairs for the great and now  
25 then Manhattan Borough President, Gale Brewer, and

1  
2 now Council Member again, and I'm currently a  
3 Director of Policy and Legislation for Public  
4 Advocate Jumaane Williams. In the interest of  
5 disclosure, I am off the clock and I'm exercising my  
6 First Amendment right just in case Tiffany hears this  
7 later.

8           As the Chief-of-Staff, I reached out to  
9 Borough Commissioners on a frequent basis, Agency  
10 Directors or Intergovernmental Staff to discuss and  
11 resolve constituent and District-wide problems, and I  
12 would only call up Commissioners or their staff to  
13 set up a meeting with a Commissioner when the  
14 Councilwoman actually wanted to meet with the  
15 Commissioner. It is in that capacity that I advanced  
16 and resolved the issues of the District in Council  
17 District 2. As the Councilwoman for Council District  
18 2, I would meet with Commissioners and Chairs of  
19 Commissions such as Landmarks Preservation  
20 Commission, the City Planning Commission, and the  
21 School Construction Authority on a regular basis.  
22 Those meetings focused on group constituent matters,  
23 proposed designations of landmark status for  
24 buildings and historic districts, proposed rezonings  
25 as well as alignment on capital allocations and

1 status updates. I frequently met with Parks  
2 Department, HPD, DCLA, NYCHA, and the School  
3 Construction Authority to advance capital issues and  
4 or those district-wide problems. At the Manhattan  
5 Borough President's Office, I would contact anyone  
6 who Gale told me that I should contact but, in that  
7 capacity as Director of Community Affairs, most of my  
8 discussions were with OATH because I oversaw all the  
9 work of staff with Community Boards and there were  
10 inevitably always issues and conflicts, and we ended  
11 up going to OATH a couple of times to try to resolve  
12 them. Also, with OMB because Gale had us be note-  
13 takers for when District Managers met with OMB to put  
14 their budget priorities together. In my current  
15 capacity, I've attended meetings and been invited to  
16 meetings with Commissioners and executive leadership  
17 to discuss the Public Advocate's bills. Those  
18 meetings were usually organized by the New York City  
19 Council or by the Admin... I'm gonna...

21 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Take your time.

22 ROSIE MENDEZ: Okay, is that all right?

23 Thank you.

24 Or by the Administration, and sometimes  
25 those meetings were fruitful, sometimes they were

1 not. I'll get into the How Many Stops Act later. I  
2 first learned about Mayors Adams' intention to  
3 require elected officials to request permission with  
4 executive and agency leadership through what is a  
5 multi-page online form from New York One. I  
6 immediately contacted people in our office in the  
7 Public Advocate's office because I thought this was  
8 very dangerous precedent and that it would limit the  
9 Council and the Public Advocate's oversight as the  
10 legislative branch to balance and check the executive  
11 branch, the Mayor's Office, the Administration. The  
12 authority and the powers of the New York City  
13 legislators is granted through the New York City  
14 Charter, the New York State Statute of Local  
15 Governance, and the Municipal Home Rule Law. The  
16 doctrine of separation of powers was intended and  
17 reinforced by the 1989 Charter Revision Commission,  
18 which expanded the powers of the Council. That  
19 Commission was headed by the Chair, Frederick A.O.  
20 Schwarz Jr. and Executive Director, Eric Lane. A main  
21 goal of 1989 Charter Commission was to make the  
22 Council a co-equal partner in governing the City and,  
23 in a New York Law School Law Review article in 1999  
24 written by Schwarz and Lane, they wrote that for a  
25

1 legislature to balance and check the executive branch  
2 is the American norm, so among the goals written in a  
3 report pursuant to the Charter Commission of 1989, it  
4 states in that report two things which I find  
5 important, that these goals were to achieve a more  
6 classical legislative and executive mode of  
7 government with the opportunity for expanded policy  
8 debate in the legislative branch, increased  
9 efficiency in the executive branch, and the  
10 corresponding check and balances that generally  
11 attend such a system as well as to provide for  
12 additional decentralization in decision-making to  
13 address the alienation experienced by residents of this  
14 great city. As a former Council Member, I am  
15 concerned about what happened here today, right, and  
16 what's happened to me when I used to Chair hearings.  
17 What will the process be when agency staff states on  
18 the record at an oversight hearing that they are  
19 going to get back to you? Do we have to fill out a  
20 form for that? What happens when they don't get back  
21 to you? Do you have to fill out a form for that to  
22 get the answers they were supposed to bring to the  
23 hearing? I'll go into some specifics maybe after his  
24 testimony, unless you want me to, but the How Many  
25

1 Stops Act and the issues they've raised, I feel is  
2 very misguided. The How Many Stops Act is a drop-down  
3 menu. What was in contention was not Level 2, 3, and  
4 4 stops. It was Level 1, and Level 1 would take  
5 seconds, and it was a drop-down menu. This multi-page  
6 form I went in, it's not a drop-down, well, there are  
7 some drop-down menus, but it's not all drop-down  
8 menus, and you can't go on to the next page and  
9 complete the form if you don't answer every question  
10 so that to me is problematic. It's more than seconds,  
11 it's minutes. That was asking police officers to  
12 report on what they did during these certain stops  
13 after the fact. It was not telling police officers to  
14 fill out a form to make a stop. You know, so  
15 requiring the legislators to fill out a form is  
16 infringing on the rights of the legislators to do  
17 your Charter-mandated right of oversight. There's a  
18 couple of things that Tiffany Raspberry said, and I  
19 will state that I was very disappointed that she was  
20 the only one here. I've been at hearings where there  
21 are multiple people that will answer the questions.  
22 Why wasn't the General Counsel here? Why weren't  
23 other people here who could answer the questions?  
24 More so, if they couldn't come, why didn't Tiffany  
25

1  
2 get those answers? You know, you would think you  
3 would anticipate these questions and come back  
4 prepared to answer them. Instead, now you've got to  
5 wait and possibly fill out a form to get those  
6 answers. She said that some Council Members have  
7 greater access than others, so this, I guess, levels  
8 the playing field. Well, are those Council Members  
9 who don't have access, have they complained? What was  
10 the reason to do a form besides everyone being at the  
11 whim and mercy of the Mayor for him to decide whether  
12 a meeting would be given? Unclear. She mentioned that  
13 a Council Member, a new Council Member, filled out  
14 the form who was unfamiliar with the process. Well,  
15 the Council Member needed to make certain decisions  
16 to complete that form of who they wanted to meet  
17 with. Otherwise, they wouldn't have been able to  
18 complete the form and get a meeting if the Admin  
19 decided it was worth giving them a meeting. I think  
20 this is really an issue also of transparency because  
21 we don't know if meetings are getting turned down.  
22 When are people being informed? How are they being  
23 informed? Within what timeframe and the reason why?  
24 We're not getting any of that. There is nothing in  
25 that forms that says they reserve the right to

1 decline any meetings. That's it. So that is very  
2 problematic. I have to say, you know, that you know I  
3 am a lawyer. I worked at legal services. I was a  
4 tenant organizer and also a Public Interest  
5 Coordinator at Rutgers School of Law, Newark, my alma  
6 mater, and so I looked at a couple of law review  
7 articles, one written by Schwarz and Lane and the  
8 other one written by former Members, former employees  
9 here, Liz Fine and Jim Karas, who were General  
10 Counsel and Deputy General Counsel some years back,  
11 and they wrote an article for the New York Law School  
12 Lawyer Review on how the functions and separations of  
13 powers were working 25 years after the 1989 Charter  
14 revision, and I think those are very important  
15 articles. So it's been 35 years since the City  
16 Council expanded its powers. There's never been a  
17 need for a form. We are now in the third year of the  
18 Mayor's first term, and now he decides that a form is  
19 needed. They roll it out very quickly with lots of  
20 mistakes, like having not the right agencies in there  
21 but, when the city became five boroughs, you know,  
22 and it was a board of aldermen then, and they created  
23 the City of New York, we were governed by the Greater  
24 New York Charter, and I don't know that for 127 years  
25

1  
2 there's been any issues or any meeting request form  
3 so it really begs the question of why it's needed  
4 now.

5           In closing, what I want to say is that  
6 the requirement for filling out this multi-page  
7 online form to obtain a meeting that may be declined  
8 at the whim of the Administration will interfere with  
9 the efficacy of resolving constituent matters and  
10 District issues while infringing on the separation of  
11 powers doctrine and with the responsibilities of  
12 local legislators to conduct their Charter mandate of  
13 oversight. Thank you.

14           CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you so much  
15 for that exceptionally eloquent testimony.

16           Now, Mr. Gulotta.

17           NICK GULOTTA: Thank you, Chair Restler,  
18 for inviting me to testify on this important topic.  
19 My name is Nick Gulotta, and I presently have the  
20 privilege of serving on City government, though, like  
21 Council Member Mendez, I am here in my personal  
22 capacity, not representing any elected official today  
23 and on my own time. I also teach on public policy and  
24 public service at the City College of New York to our  
25 next generation of city's public servants, and I'm

1 here today to offer a unique perspective from about  
2 12 years of working in City Council offices and also  
3 having served in City Halls in our Governmental  
4 Affairs Division with you, Council Member Restler,  
5 and many of our other colleagues. I also worked for a  
6 number of years in the Mayor's Office of Immigrant  
7 Affairs, working with elected officials and community  
8 organizations and want to share those experiences.  
9 It's critical that we understand, first and foremost,  
10 that New Yorkers primarily come to elected officials'  
11 offices because government has failed them. They've  
12 faced barriers, language barriers, and others,  
13 they've experienced injustices, their situations are  
14 urgent and complex. Because agencies have been unable  
15 to resolve their problems, they come to elected  
16 officials' offices. When I was part of City Hall's  
17 Intergovernmental Affairs team, I was responsible for  
18 day-to-day work with city, state, and federal elected  
19 officials, particularly in the Borough of Queens and,  
20 similarly at the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs.  
21 We worked daily with those same elected officials,  
22 work to address complex and nuanced and important  
23 issues, and everything as the great Ruth Messinger  
24 shared came down to relationships and being  
25

1 accessible, being reachable in a very human way. I  
2 couldn't have never imagined asking a Council Member,  
3 you know, from a co-equal branch of government to  
4 fill out a form to have a meeting. I would have never  
5 told Senator Comrie, for example, we're not going to  
6 meet with OMB or if you want to meet with OMB to  
7 discuss why Jamaica Hospital can't get capital  
8 funding, fill out a form or, you know, Council Member  
9 Danny Dromm would call me and my Commissioner or  
10 sometimes and, you know, on a Tuesday he would make a  
11 request saying, you know, there are tenants in  
12 Jackson Heights who are being discriminated against  
13 because of their immigration status and on Wednesday  
14 we'd have a multi-agency press conference in his  
15 District, cutting across multiple levels of our City  
16 agencies and bringing multiple agencies to the table.  
17 Council Member Gutiérrez, in her former position,  
18 could call me and discuss the dynamics of, you know,  
19 evictions that are going on in Ridgewood and ask for  
20 services to build events and a long-term plan from  
21 the Administration to deal with a longstanding issue  
22 and, we could do that in a way that was fundamentally  
23 human, responsive where we could dive into nuances,  
24 and ultimately successful in our work in trying to  
25

1 address those issues because we had those open lines  
2 of communication. I can give other examples. Council  
3 Member Menchaca, I remember called me and my  
4 Commissioner one day, an impromptu meeting to address  
5 protocols for supporting families who had experienced  
6 ICE raids in Sunset Park and those are the type of  
7 things you can't put in a form and explain and submit  
8 and hope for a response for. Forcing this type of  
9 communication to be submitted through a form, as I  
10 mentioned, would have been impossible. These are not  
11 conversations that you ultimately put into a form,  
12 and I think what's really obvious is that anyone  
13 who's worked in intergovernmental affairs before can  
14 tell you what this is about. This is about  
15 commodifying the work of government and our agencies  
16 so that it can be leveraged by the Admin, plain and  
17 simple. New Yorkers didn't elect this Mayor to dole  
18 out high level attention to some issues because of  
19 who's requesting them and ignore others. It's wrong  
20 for this Administration, it frankly would have been  
21 wrong for the previous Administration, and it will be  
22 wrong for the next one if they were to have this  
23 process. City government already has, as you noted,  
24 existing systems for tracking requests from elected  
25

1 officials. City Hall already has city, state, and  
2 federal leg teams who speak regularly with elected  
3 officials about their priorities and requests. As you  
4 noted, Deputy Mayor's offices also collect this  
5 information from the agencies that they cover. That's  
6 just good government. Finally, I just want to say  
7 that, you know, personally, I've worked across three  
8 Mayoral Administrations and I've never seen this  
9 level of dysfunctionality that we experienced today.  
10 The Public Advocates spoke a little bit about this as  
11 well, and I think as New Yorkers, we deserve an  
12 efficient and effective government that can actually  
13 get things done and not more red tape and barriers.  
14 Thank you and I'm happy to answer any questions.

16 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you both so  
17 much. I just want to ask a little bit about, maybe  
18 I'll ask Nick a question first. In your roles in  
19 intergovernmental affairs and Mayor's Office of  
20 Immigrant Affairs, did you ever consider the ideology  
21 or the relationship of the elected official with the  
22 Administration in your responsiveness to their  
23 concerns or complaints? Like how did you balance that  
24 and make sure to ensure responsiveness to the people  
25 who had concerns?

1  
2           NICK GULOTTA: Yeah, I really appreciate  
3 the question. You know, my experience is actually  
4 that there were a lot of elected officials for whom  
5 we, and I personally, didn't share any sort of  
6 ideology or similar beliefs in politics at all who  
7 received a tremendous amount of attention because the  
8 issues that they flagged, that they brought to the  
9 attention of our team were so important, and it  
10 shouldn't matter who the messenger is frankly. New  
11 Yorkers, like I said, don't elect a Mayor to decide  
12 whether a Commissioner should handle an issue or if  
13 they should be ignored and sort of pawned off to  
14 somebody else. At the end of the day, these are  
15 critical issues. I can give a few examples if that  
16 would be helpful. You know, in Rockaway, I learned a  
17 fair amount about beach erosion and had to deal with  
18 a number of stakeholders who I may not have shared a  
19 similar, even maybe even one similar belief with,  
20 other than maybe just having a good functional  
21 government, but that shouldn't matter. We spent a  
22 tremendous amount of time trying to address the  
23 impacts of climate change in that area and trying to  
24 make sure we had a resilient, you know, shorefront. I  
25 can think of many elected officials for whom, you

1 know, were very critical of the previous Mayor's  
2 agenda, whether it was around immigrant rights or  
3 other things who we nonetheless worked with, and so I  
4 would just put out there that I think that this  
5 process politicizes a lot of those just good work of  
6 government tasks.  
7

8 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you. Council  
9 Member Mendez, you spoke insightfully about the '89  
10 Charter Revision Commission and you've experienced  
11 City government from multiple sides, Public Advocate,  
12 Borough President, Council Member Staff. How do you  
13 think this policy or do you think this policy kind of  
14 shifts balance of power between the legislative and  
15 executive branches and are you concerned about that?

16 ROSIE MENDEZ: Absolutely. I think it does  
17 shift the power. I think it's unlawful, although, you  
18 know, that's not for me to decide and that's not for  
19 the Mayor to decide. That would be for a judge to  
20 decide, you know, if he continues with this policy,  
21 but, you know, I heard of a Council Member who was  
22 not invited to an event in the District and the Mayor  
23 said, you know, basically something to the effect of  
24 next time you'll think twice before overriding a  
25 veto. This had to do with the How Many Stops Act. So,

1 you know, it's interesting to me that this is  
2 happening now, and I think it's because, you know, he  
3 wants to micromanage and determine who gets meetings  
4 and maybe make certain Council Members ineffective  
5 because they won't grant the meetings or they'll take  
6 forever to grant the meeting. I really don't see an  
7 upside about this form and, if they, you know, and he  
8 vetoed the How Many Stops Act, right, and so he  
9 didn't think that those extra few minutes or seconds,  
10 right, were worthy of being documented and reporting  
11 but, in this case, then, you know, like if I was an  
12 elected official and I was told to do a report after  
13 the fact of what Commissioners I met with and how  
14 was, you know, the services, I would do it but, like  
15 you asked, why can't his own Commissioners do it?  
16 Because the question is not on How Many Stops Act,  
17 again, it's after the fact, and what he's doing is  
18 he's putting the breaks before the facts and before  
19 we could all do what we're supposed to do, including  
20 him, which is service the people of this city.

22 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I really want to  
23 thank you both for taking the time to be with us  
24 today and sharing your exceptionally helpful insights  
25 on the record for this hearing. It's really

1  
2 meaningful. Thank you both really. Have a wonderful  
3 afternoon.

4 ROSIE MENDEZ: Thank you, Chair Restler.

5 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you. It's now  
6 my great privilege to introduce our next panelist,  
7 our former Public Advocate, the Honorable Betsy  
8 Gotbaum. Thank you so much for being with us today.  
9 It's nice to see you.

10 I do. I'll call him right after this.

11 Well, I was sitting here.

12 BETSY GOTBAUM: Yeah, he knew that, but he  
13 was going to give you a hard time.

14 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Fair enough.

15 BETSY GOTBAUM: But he did say to say  
16 hello.

17 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Good.

18 BETSY GOTBAUM: Hi.

19 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: If you just turn  
20 your mic, press the button in front of the mic. It's  
21 just the button at the bottom there. Perfect.

22 BETSY GOTBAUM: The techno disaster is  
23 sitting here.

24 Hi. I just start. Is that? Yeah. Good  
25 afternoon, Chair Restler and Members of the City

1 Council. I'm testifying as Executive Director of  
2 Citizens Union and former New York City Public  
3 Advocate, which I'm actually doing this (INAUDIBLE)  
4 former New York City Public Advocate because that's  
5 where these kinds of issues came up all the time. I  
6 feel very, very strongly about how important it is  
7 for elected officials to be able to communicate, talk  
8 to, ask questions of, ask immediate questions of the  
9 of the Public because I totally believe that we are  
10 elected to help people and, if you look carefully at  
11 the Public Advocate sort of duties in the Charter,  
12 that's what the Public Advocate is, the Ombudsman of  
13 the City of New York, which means people in trouble,  
14 people who need things, they call you, call the  
15 office and, to me, that was the most serious and the  
16 most important thing, practically the most important  
17 thing that we did so I think this is unnecessary and  
18 unreasonable red tape that the Mayor is proposing,  
19 and I really don't understand why requiring an  
20 elected official to submit a request form if they  
21 want to speak with the Commissioner or a Senior  
22 Administrative Staff, why that would better  
23 coordinate issues, things in the city. I couldn't  
24 think of any examples in my eight-year career and  
25

1  
2 previously other careers in City government where  
3 that would be appropriate so I do believe, as Public  
4 Advocate, one of the things because we so emphasized  
5 the importance of helping people who had no place  
6 else to turn, we were able to make meaningful changes  
7 to help special education students, families access  
8 food stamps, and children in the Child Welfare system  
9 and more, and just a few examples. I remember one  
10 very, very cold February where people who lived in a  
11 NYCHA building called and said the boiler was out and  
12 they had no heat. They had called 3-1-1, they had  
13 called this, they had called that, and nobody had  
14 done anything so I called the Commissioner. Guess  
15 what? The Commissioner, even though it was night, the  
16 Commissioner sent people up to fix the boiler. Well,  
17 that's what we're elected for. You know that,  
18 Lincoln. The other examples were, there was a problem  
19 at an HRA Welfare center. This was quite humiliating  
20 because I went and was not allowed to enter. That is  
21 very unusual. You know, you say who you are and they  
22 still don't let you enter, and I called the  
23 Commissioner and guess what? I entered, so that's the  
24 kind of thing, and there were many, many. I'm sorry.

1  
2                   CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Feel free to speak  
3 as long as you like.

4                   BETSY GOTBAUM: There were many, many  
5 examples like that, which why would it be better  
6 coordination at a time like that to fill out a form  
7 and give the form into wherever you have to give it  
8 in and how would you fix the problem then and what's  
9 the point of doing the form so I question the, I just  
10 had a chance to look over the Mayor's statement, and  
11 I just question it. I don't get it. I don't  
12 understand why it would make things more efficient.  
13 It makes them much less efficient, and I'm sure my  
14 colleague, Ruth Messinger, probably said exactly the  
15 same thing, and so it's very important that we  
16 elected officials, when we're elected, that we have  
17 the access to immediately help people because if we  
18 don't have it, who's going to do it, and that goes  
19 completely with the City Council, with each Council  
20 Member who in their Districts that people rely on  
21 them and for the citywides and for everybody for  
22 every elected official. That's what we're elected for  
23 so I am obviously very opposed to this.

24                   CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you so much  
25 for that clear and compelling testimony. Can I just,

1 this is perhaps an unfair question, but can you  
2 hypothesize what the rationale for this policy could  
3 be? Like, what do you think?

4  
5 BETSY GOTBAUM: I'll tell you what I  
6 think, and I guess that I could be wrong about this,  
7 and this is what makes me really fear this policy,  
8 because I remember when the Giuliani Administration,  
9 when Mark Green was trying to get similar issues done  
10 like I did, Mayor Giuliani apparently had said, told  
11 his Commissioners not to talk to Mark Green and not  
12 to do things for Mark Green, who was Public Advocate  
13 at the time. I cannot imagine that Eric Adams is  
14 doing that because I know that he says this is the  
15 City of Yes, which means we're there to help people.  
16 I just think it's kind of a misplaced error and, if  
17 it is to punish somebody that you don't agree with or  
18 that you don't like, which I think was the case in  
19 Giuliani's time, that's wrong, that's really wrong.  
20 That's not democratic, and it's not what we're here  
21 for, and I think the Council knows that. I know it.  
22 All my colleagues and friends when I was Public  
23 Advocate knew that, and we worked very, very hard to  
24 do that. By the way, I've also heard that most of the  
25

1  
2 Commissioners could have cared less that they were  
3 told not to help, and they did it anyway.

4           CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: And you took the  
5 step, I think it was last week, of writing a letter  
6 to the editor in the Daily News expressing your  
7 concern, opposition to this policy. I imagine with  
8 your long and distinguished history in local  
9 government that you engaged with former senior  
10 officials, former elected officials. Have you heard  
11 from anyone that thinks this policy makes sense or  
12 could be beneficial?

13           BETSY GOTBAUM: Quite the contrary. I've  
14 gotten many compliments about the letter, and  
15 everybody says it's ridiculous. It makes no sense,  
16 and I've heard that, frankly, from a lot of my  
17 friends in the Administration.

18           CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Unfortunately, I  
19 have too. Anything else you'd like to add today?

20           BETSY GOTBAUM: No, I just feel that I  
21 would not give to the Mayor bad motives for doing  
22 this. I just think they may be a little bit  
23 misplaced, and I just hope that those of us who have  
24 had the experience and the knowledge of how important  
25 it is to New Yorkers to get things done and help them

1 when they need help, that he understands how  
2 important it is.

3  
4 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I could not agree  
5 with you.

6 BETSY GOTBAUM: Not to do this, I'm sorry.

7 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: No, I could not  
8 agree with you more. You know, we sent a letter from  
9 65 elected officials this morning to the Mayor, city,  
10 state and federal elected officials asking him to  
11 reverse this policy. I hope that he's listening to  
12 seasoned senior experienced government officials like  
13 yourself, Miss Messinger, Miss Mendez, and others,  
14 and, you know, really considers reversing it and  
15 doing so post haste because I'm very concerned about  
16 the harm that it could impose on our ability to do  
17 our job.

18 BETSY GOTBAUM: Yeah, absolutely right.

19 Thank you very much.

20 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you so much  
21 for taking the time. It's great to have you back at  
22 the City Council.

23 BETSY GOTBAUM: Very different to be here.  
24 Things have changed.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Well, hopefully  
3 we'll have more opportunities for you to testify in  
4 the very near future.

5 BETSY GOTBAUM: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you so much  
7 for sharing your expertise. We really appreciate it.

8 Our next and final panel is Miss Indiana  
9 Alba (phonetic) and Mr. Christopher Leon Johnson.

10 We will first unmute Miss Indiana Alba  
11 and, if Mr. Leon Johnson still here, feel free to  
12 join us.

13 Okay, Miss Indiana Alba, you have two  
14 minutes.

15 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

16 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: If we have  
17 inadvertently missed anyone who has registered to  
18 testify today and has yet to have been called, please  
19 use the Zoom hand function and you'll be called in  
20 that order that your hand has been raised.

21 I just want to thank everyone for making  
22 the time to join us today. I really greatly  
23 appreciate it.

24 With that, we will adjourn this hearing.

25 [GAVEL]

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 May 28, 2024