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Testimony to NYC Council Committee on Rules, Privileges, and Elections

Nomination to the Landmarks Preservation Commission

April 2025

Good afternoon, Madam Speaker Adams, Chair Powers and members of the Committee. I want to thank you for holding this hearing and for considering my nomination to serve on the Landmarks Preservation Commission. I would also like to express my deep gratitude to the Administration for this nomination.

I believe that city service is an honor. I am writing to express my fervent desire to serve as a member of the Landmark Preservation Commission. As an architect and entrepreneur from Harlem, NY, I bring over two decades of experience in shaping the built environment, with a deep commitment to community enrichment that has been the cornerstone of my career.

My academic credentials, which include a Bachelor's Degree in Architecture from Howard University and a Master's Degree in the Science of Architecture from Carnegie Mellon University, provide a solid foundation for my professional journey. My affiliations with esteemed organizations such as the American Institute of Architects (AIA), the Preservation League of New York State, and the National Organization of Minority Architects—where I currently serve as President for the New York Coalition of Black Architects—underscore my dedication to advocating for the preservation of our architectural heritage.

My formal involvement in historic preservation began in 2021 when I became a trustee for the Preservation League. Since that time, I've been exposed to projects and sites throughout the state that highlight the challenges, values, significance, and impact of preservation work. Through my service on committees such as Seven to Save, the Preservation Opportunity Fund, Excellence Awards, and Governance, my knowledge has deepened around preservation policy, funding strategies, advocacy, and the intersection of preservation with equity, sustainability, and community development. This experience has strengthened my commitment to ensuring that preservation efforts reflect the full breadth of New York's cultural and architectural heritage.

My passion for preservation, however, was sparked nearly two decades ago. My first job after graduate school, working in Harlem, ignited a deep commitment to improving and protecting my community. Harlem is not just a neighborhood to me—it embodies a rich history and cultural significance that I hold dear. I cherish its legacy and strive to honor its past while contributing meaningfully to its future. This personal connection fuels my belief in the vital role the Landmarks Preservation Commission plays in safeguarding New York City's diverse architectural narrative.

My work with two Harlem-based companies during a transformative period for the neighborhood provided invaluable experience in revitalizing and preserving historic brownstones, multifamily residences, churches, and cultural institutions. Many of these projects were designated landmarks or located within historic districts. Through this work, I came to understand the critical importance of restoration and the profound impact these buildings have on community identity. I also

witnessed the loss of unrecognized structures that, while not officially landmarked, were essential to the fabric of the neighborhood.

Recently, someone asked me about the backdrop of my professional headshot and why I chose that location. I explained that every member of our team selected a Harlem landmark meaningful to them: Damaris, posed in front of Hamilton House; Malika chose Marcus Garvey Park; and Montgomery selected Striver's Row. I chose Astor Row—a group of individually designated rowhouses built in the 1880s. That location is especially significant to me because, at my first job after graduate school, I was part of the team responsible for preparing the architectural drawings submitted to the Landmarks Preservation Commission for the restoration of one of those homes. It was my introduction to the formal process of preservation, and it continues to shape how I view the role of architecture in honoring and sustaining community legacy.

I am drawn to the Commission's mission of preserving the buildings and places that reflect New York City's rich cultural, social, and architectural history. My belief in this mission aligns with my strong interest in utilizing architecture to uplift underserved communities. Serving on the Commission would not only be an honor but also an opportunity for me to further my knowledge of effective historic preservation while collaborating with dedicated individuals who share my passion.

I am dedicated, motivated, and enthusiastic about contributing to the preservation of our city's history, and I believe my unique perspective and experiences would be a valuable addition to the Commission. Thank you for considering my application. I look forward to the opportunity to discuss my vision and commitment to historic preservation further.