



March 15, 2024
Testimony of Commissioner Laura Kavanagh, FDNY
“Preliminary Budget Hearing FY25”

Good morning Chair Ariola and members of the Fire & Emergency Management Committee. I want to thank you for the opportunity today to discuss the Preliminary Budget for the New York City Fire Department for Fiscal Year 25.

2023 was a successful year for the Fire Department in many ways. It was our strongest year ever in terms of outreach and education. The Fire Safety Education Unit gave fire safety presentations to 423,000 individuals. This is an increase of 180% in only two years. We also increased the number of fire safety presentations in New York City schools by 30%. The Mobile CPR unit trained a total of 67,000 individuals to perform basic CPR. This represents a 127% increase in trainings since the previous year. This continues a positive trend of more robust CPR education, and the 2023 figure represents a more than 800% increase since 2021.

It was also a strong year for smoke alarm installations performed by the Department. In partnership with the American Red Cross, we installed nearly 22,000 alarms, which was a 50% increase from 2022. Through this voluntary program, which is conducted at no cost to the resident, we visited approximately 7600 homes, which was an increase of 42%. I invite all the councilmembers here today to follow up with the FDNY Community Affairs Unit after this

hearing. We would love to schedule education events and alarm distributions for your constituents.

FDNY Youth programs had their most successful year to date. In June, we launched the FDNY Fire Cadet program, and Cadets are now on their third rotation, receiving a well-rounded introduction to the Department. We certified 111 young men and women from our Youth EMS Academy as New York State Emergency Management Technicians, which brings the total number of alumni certified through our program to 599. Of those who were certified in 2023, 94% filed for Civil Service to become FDNY EMTs. Youth Academy alumni were hired as EMTs and as FDNY Cadets, making 2023 the year with the highest number of alumni being hired by the Department. The FDNY Captain Vernon A. Richard High School had a graduation rate of 93% last year, which was higher than both the boroughwide and citywide averages. We also continued our successful FDNY Exploring Program. Across eight Explorers Posts, FDNY Explorers completed nearly 600 hours of community service at 55 different events.

We honored the legacy of departed members in 2023. To cite just a few examples, we renamed the FDNY Headquarters auditorium after the Department's first Black Fire Commissioner, Robert O. Lowery. We hosted a plaque dedication and street re-naming in honor of EMS Captain Alison Russo. We also released a Public Service Announcement and messaging to encourage organ donation in honor of Firefighter Billy Moon, who donated his liver, heart, lungs, and kidneys so that five others may live. The legacies of all three live on as heroic examples to our FDNY family.

Another highlight of last year was FDNY members using innovative technology to carry out significant life-saving operations. In April, after the partial collapse of a parking garage in the Financial District, the FDNY Robotics Unit used a robot Dalmatian to survey the wreckage and assist with searches. In July, Manhattan fire companies were dispatched to a high-rise building that was under construction in response to a crane on fire. The FDNY Robotics Unit used drones to provide eyes in the sky, coordinating hose streams and enabling engine and ladder companies to evacuate tenants, extinguish the fire, and assess structural damage. In December, after a seven-story building collapsed in the Morris Heights section of the Bronx, FDNY units arrived on scene within 90 seconds. After occupants of the building were moved out of harm's way, the FDNY Robotics Unit incorporated the use of drones along with first responders and trained dogs to search for potential patients in need of aid. Together, they spent hours combing through a massive pile of debris, ensuring that no victims were left behind. Ultimately, we were very fortunate to confirm that, despite the magnitude of the collapse, there were no fatalities.

Of course, time-tested technology continues to be instrumental to our life-saving mission as well. I took a great deal of pride a few weeks ago when members of Ladder 28, Squad 41, and Rescue 3 performed three daring rope rescues at a fire in Harlem. Among the courageous individuals who went over the side of the building to rescue individuals hanging from windows was Jason Lopez, a Probationary Firefighter who has less than a year of service. He is a true example of the difference that each member of the FDNY can make, from the most experienced member of a company to the "probie" who has only months in the firehouse.

The fire in Harlem was caused by a lithium-ion battery for an e-bike. 2023 was a challenging year for the Fire Department with regard to the frequency of lithium-ion battery fires. The number of fires caused by batteries for micromobility devices such as e-bikes and e-scooters increased to 268 in 2023. As we've previously described to the Council, these fires are tremendously destructive. 150 people were injured in lithium-ion battery fires, and 18 people were killed. It's a problem that is plaguing the City. Though not prevalent on Staten Island, these fires occurred in significant numbers across the remaining four boroughs.

The Council has been a great partner as we work to combat this crisis. Last year, we passed a package of bills aimed at creating rules and safeguards for e-bike use in the city. Together, we prohibited the sale and rental of uncertified devices, and we restricted the assembly and reconditioning of second-use batteries. We developed a comprehensive public education campaign and then worked with our fellow agencies such as the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection and the Department of Transportation to perform outreach to e-bike retailers and consumers, including online retailers. Our partnership has continued this year, with the Council recently passing legislation that granted the Fire Department cross-enforcement ability, enhancing the penalties for repeat offenders, and requiring stores that sell e-bikes, e-scooters, and other personal mobility devices to post safety materials and information guides. We are grateful for the attention paid to this issue by this committee, and in particular to Chair Ariola for your ongoing advocacy.

Turning to the budget, the Department's FY25 Budget is \$2.53 billion. This includes \$2.28 billion in Personal Services (PS), and \$241 million in Other Than Personal Service (OTPS). Our

FY25 budgeted, full-time headcount is 16,984. Our FY25 capital budget is \$216 million. Our ten year capital budget, from FY24-FY33, is \$1.9 billion.

We were fortunate enough to have two of our Program to Eliminate the Gap, also known as PEGS, from November reversed in January. Fifth firefighter staffing on 20 engines was restored, as was the Limited Service Squad, or “LSS” long term disability termination PEG. In the Mayor’s preliminary budget, the Department received funding in FY24 to replace the five EMS units that were previously being operated by Beth Israel Hospital. Beth Israel has stopped running those units and, as a result of this funding, residents of the areas served by those units won’t experience any decrease in service. We also received new needs funding to cover Personal Service deficits for EMS and civilian members of the Department, as well as Other Than Personal Service funding to cover structural deficits, primarily in the area of auto parts for FDNY Fleet Services. This will enable the Department to continue making necessary purchases to keep trucks, ambulances, and other FDNY apparatus on the road.

With the support of Mayor Adams and the City Council, we look forward to another strong year ahead. At this time, I would be happy to take your questions.



Testimony of Commissioner Zach Iscol
New York City Department of Emergency Management
Preliminary Budget Hearing
March 15, 2024

Good morning Chairs Ariola and Brannan and members of the Committee on Fire and Emergency Management, as well as the Committee on Finance. I am Zach Iscol, Commissioner of New York City Emergency Management. I am joined today by First Deputy Commissioner Christina Farrell and Chief Financial Officer Chris Blanco.

As the agency serving New Yorkers before, during, and after emergencies, Emergency Management coordinates the City's preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation efforts in an ever-evolving threat landscape. We are thankful for our government, non-profit, private sector, elected and community partners that help us serve New Yorkers as we build a more inclusive and resilient city. 2023 was yet another busy year, and the pace in 2024 has not let up. Time and time again, our staff adapts plans and strategies and responds, always incorporating lessons learned from previous incidents to improve outcomes for our city. I am incredibly proud to work with the best, brightest, and hardest working emergency management professionals in the world and would like to highlight some key programs and data points.

Emergency Management continues to keep the public informed through the Mayor's Management Report (MMR) submissions and the agency's *Annual Report*, highlighting the impressive progress the agency has made towards achieving goals outlined in our *Strategic Plan*. Notable recent accomplishments include preparing City government and external partners for disasters by holding the agency's first in-person interagency Emergency Operations Center functional exercise since 2019, which included over 100 participants from partner agencies, and offered over 100 instructor-led emergency management training sessions.

Our most public-facing program, Notify NYC, available in 14 languages including American Sign Language, issued almost 2,500 messages last year and we are currently at over 1.22 million subscribers. The Notify NYC program continues to evolve. For example, in 2023 Notify NYC launched a notification group for residents living in basement or cellar apartments to sign up for notifications regarding life-threatening weather conditions, with over 2,500 New Yorkers subscribing. Additionally, Notify NYC expanded graphics for messages to increase message accessibility and clarity for all users. Emergency Management also continues coordinating emergency response and recovery for disasters of all scales and types. Our Operations Bureau, which tracks incidents 24 hours a day, monitored and responded to over 2,200 incidents in 2023. These included building collapses, infrastructure incidents, the asylum seeker emergency, water main breaks, incoming weather, fires, and more. Regarding activations, we continue to be activated for different phases of the City's asylum seeker operation. We also simultaneously activated over the past year for extreme weather, significant fires, building and parapet collapses, and other emergencies.

In 2023, our CERT volunteers participated in a total of 203 deployments and reported 13,375 volunteer hours. The program trained and added 90 new volunteers to the program. The Strengthening Communities program added 20 new networks to its roster, expanding the program to include a total of 35 community networks across all five boroughs, working towards more equitable response and recovery operations in hard-to-reach communities. These partners helped us distribute over 2,450 hydra barriers and 2,900 flood alarms throughout the city, organized 18 preparedness events for National Preparedness Month, and spread the word during the September 29th flood emergency by amplifying our messaging and notifications through multiple social media posts, 49 emails, 263 text blasts and 624 phone calls to over 44,325 community



members in all boroughs. Ready NY held 338 preparedness events across the city, trained 27,993 New Yorkers in emergency preparedness and distributed over 52,000 emergency preparedness guides. In September 2023, Ready NY and CERT celebrated their 20-year anniversaries with Mayor Adams issuing a proclamation recognizing September 12th as Ready NY and CERT Day in recognition of the contributions of the programs to increasing preparedness.

Emergency Management supported the City's response to the asylum seeker emergency, by opening and operating respite sites for overnight guests. We continue to manage the waitlists for all available cots, including coordinating overnight waiting areas with our partners at New York Disaster Interfaith Services and the Housing Recovery Office. Since October we have been operating a reticketing center that has reticketed over 3,000 guests. Emergency Management has also supported the expansion of Humanitarian Emergency Response and Relief Centers and partners closely with the Office of Asylum Seeker Operations, the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, Health and Hospitals, Housing Preservation and Development, and other agencies to identify a long-term strategy for the influx of asylum seekers, helping support the city's transition to a sustainable operation.

We continue to look ahead to find new ways to prepare the city and our residents for the next emergency. With that, let me now provide a snapshot of our budget for next fiscal year.

Our projected total Fiscal Year 2025 City Tax Levy expense budget is \$170.7 million, of which, \$141.2 million is for the agency's asylum seeker emergency. We rely on our City Tax Levy expense budget to support the majority of the agency's administrative, technological and operational costs.

The projected Fiscal Year 2025 City Tax Levy Personnel Services budget is \$9.5 million, which supports the 82 personnel lines paid directly through our tax levy funds. This includes \$1.5 million in funding for 16 staff members dedicated to working on increasing communication and services to people with disabilities, access and functional needs. Our other staffing is supported through grant funds and personnel on assignment from multiple City agencies.

Our projected Fiscal Year 2025 Other Than Personnel Services budget is \$161.2 million, which includes \$141.2 million for the agency's asylum operations. The remaining \$20 million covers all agency operating and administrative costs. This budget includes a significant portion of nondiscretionary funding. These funds are designated to cover our warehouse lease, utilities, and telecommunications costs including the maintenance and operations of our Emergency Operations Center and backup facilities. This money also supports our fleet and all additional equipment, supplies, and materials needed to run the agency.

The agency receives grant funding to support many of our core programs. In the past year, we secured \$33.3 million in federal funding, primarily through the Urban Area Security Initiative grant. This funding is vital to our ability to run many of our initiatives, including the Ready New York public education program, Community Emergency Response Team program, Continuity of Operations Program, Geographic Information Systems, Training and Exercises, Watch Command and Response, and Citywide Incident Management System planning, and the Emergency Supply Stockpile. We work with City Hall, OMB, the City's congressional delegation, and our partner agencies to push for full homeland security funding in future years; this money supports critical operations within ours and several other agencies' budgets and is critical to the City.

I would like to express my admiration for our incredibly hardworking and dedicated emergency managers who continue to work tirelessly to ensure our city meets challenges. I am honored to lead this agency and look forward to continuing our progress and growth. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to working with the Council and I am happy to take your questions.



JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS

**STATEMENT OF PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS
TO THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT
MARCH 15, 2024**

Good Morning,

My name is Jumaane D. Williams and I am the Public Advocate for the City of New York. Thank you to Chair Ariola and members of the Committee on Fire and Emergency Management for holding this hearing and for allowing me to share my statement.

Fire safety is a top concern for New Yorkers. The Preliminary Fiscal 2024 Mayor's Management Report states that there have been 102 civilian fire fatalities in FY23, which means a civilian death once every three days. This is a sharp increase from FY22 and FY21, with 64 civilian fire fatalities in FY21. Fire safety is a public safety concern, and I appreciate that the Mayor has acknowledged it during his Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2025 by exempting the FDNY from additional PEGs.

However, more must be done to stem the trend of fire deaths. Under the Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2025, the Mayor's Office's budget added a 5th firefighter to 20 companies. I support the increase in fifth firefighters and applaud the Adams Administration for supporting fire safety. However, this means that only about 10% of engine companies will have five firefighters, or 20 out of 193 engine companies. Furthermore, this just restores a extremely recent December 2023 cut. This is less of a positive change and more of putting out a fire you've started- which in and of itself would be a return to the broken status quo. The Uniformed Firefighters Association President Andrew Ansbro argues that with an increase in fires and increase in the strength of fires, there needs to be more resources for engine companies. I agree and stand in support of the Uniformed Firefighter Association's calls for fifth firefighters.

Part of the growth in civilian deaths from fires can be attributed to lithium ion batteries. Lithium ion battery fires are difficult to contain and the fire can spread very quickly, putting civilians and firefighters in danger. On February 2, 2024, Fire Commissioner Kavanaugh announced that lithium batteries are now a leading cause of fires¹. The FDNY, the Mayor's Office and the collective New York City Council all acknowledge how lithium ion battery fires are a significant challenge for New Yorkers safety, and have passed life-saving legislation such as restricting reconditioned batteries.

¹<https://www.nyc.gov/site/fdny/news/Y40203/fdny-warns-lithium-ion-batteries-now-leading-cause-fires-fire-deaths-new-york>



JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS

We must continue to look ahead, because micro mobility device usage and lithium ion batteries will only become more commonplace. Our city faces a major challenge and we must respond as comprehensively and quickly as possible. One of the easiest ways to prevent lithium ion battery fires at the source is using a fire retardant storage case for storing lithium ion batteries at home or at the office. These inexpensive storage cases protect batteries during the charging process when batteries are most vulnerable to overheating and exploding. Fire retardant bags only cost about \$20. This relatively affordable investment will pay a huge dividend in decreasing the number of fires as well as saving lives and infrastructure. We must take immediate action to make New York City safer, and providing riders with both information and equipment is among the most direct ways we can act. With the purchasing power of New York City buying these bags in bulk, it will cost roughly \$500,000 to provide a lifesaving tool to the 65,000 delivery workers citywide driving e-bikes for their livelihood. These funds should be allocated to the Fire Department to work with the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection to distribute fire retardant storage cases, similar to the smoke detector and battery distribution program. Furthermore, delivery apps can mandate that drivers use and own certain equipment, such as possessing a fire retardant storage case, in order to be able to make deliveries, or provide them themselves.

Often in government, we're forced to make hard decisions about whether the impact of a policy is worth the price tag. Here, though, we have a simple, cost-effective solution that will ultimately save money, and much more importantly save lives. This does not solve the issue fully or forever, but it can have real and immediate impact at a moment when this destruction is constantly on our streets and screens. We are responding far too slowly to the alarms that have been sounding for over a year, and the longer we delay action, the more we're playing with fire. I urge the administration and Council to fund this purchase and distribution without delay.

In the long term we must redesign New York City's infrastructure to accommodate electric micromobility devices. These devices help to transport New Yorkers who otherwise may use a car or use a gas powered moped as well as assist the disabled community. We must encourage wide scale adoption through addressing outstanding safety concerns. It is now common in South and East Asian countries to see battery swap stations where ebike owners can pay a monthly subscription to swap a dead battery for a fully charged battery, so they do not have to ever charge the device at home. The City should consider creating a franchise agreement for a battery swap system with a singular battery standard, as we already have similar infrastructure in the form of the Citi Bike system. Delivery apps also have a responsibility for supporting infrastructure for its delivery drivers. Companies offering 15-minute delivery local services like Getir already provide charging stations to their drivers. The onus should be on delivery companies to set up charging stations for their drivers.



JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS

Finally, the New York City Council Committee on Fire and Emergency Management has been doing an excellent job responding to lithium ion battery safety concerns by passing comprehensive legislation. The committee must continue to make sure that the legislation is being enforced by holding oversight hearings to determine if the Mayor's Office has complied with the Local Laws. Thank you.



Sheet Metal Workers' Local 28

JOINT APPRENTICESHIP COMMITTEE

139-20 Jamaica Avenue, Jamaica, NY 11435

Support of Int. No. 88 (Sanchez)

Good morning, thank you for allowing me to speak on behalf of SMART Local 28. My name is John Jackson and I am the Director of Training. I am tasked with the development and training of all SMART Local 28 apprentice as well as it's membership. We have been serving NYC and Long Island for over 100 years. We are a very unique skilled trade. We are the only trade that designs, fabricates, installs, balance, and inspect our own work. We can proudly say we are the last true American made trade.

We are here to discuss fire smoke dampers in our HVAC systems. When one speaks of fire prevention they go right to sprinklers, fire extinguishers, and egress. They never think of the HVAC systems. The HVAC system is not only used for climate control but also air purification (IAQ) to prevent diseases such as Legionaire's in a building. It runs through the entire building from the basement to the roof. It is strategically filled with fire smoke dampers to control the spread of smoke and fire from floor to floor and even room to room depending on design. When inspected regularly this can insure the safety of evacuating aid the Firefighters in their effort to contain loss of life and damages. Inspected regularly by a certified technician would insure that the building is a safe building for the people of New York. I thank you again for the opportunity to speak and ask that you vote yes for this initiative to be placed in effect. This will save lives and also insure the safety of the FDNY when called into action.

Respectfully,
John Jackson
Local 28 SMART Director of training

Casmir Caesar:

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen of the council, my fellow brothers, and sisters of the local. My name is Casimir Caesar, I am from queens New York, and I represent Our local 28 sheet metal union pertaining to intro 88.

I am currently in my 4th year of the sheet metal apprentice program, 8th term. And over the years I have grown to understand and appreciate the importance of my trade. Coming from a dead-end job, paying me minimum wage, I viewed work as more of a chore than anything else. I knew for a fact it was not going to pay my bills. And we live in New York City where there are over 8.4 million people fighting for their lives. Thanks to this Local union and those that fight for it, I am able to feed my family and not just survive but live at a decent means. And that is what we want for everyone. Prosperity, life, and safety.

With as many people as there are in NYC, we know it can get congested in these buildings.

One sudden fire can kill an entire family and then some. For example, the tragedy at twin park that took so many lives. If we take more care in how we examine fire and life safety, meaning checking that our dampers work, making sure that old dampers were installed correctly..., this can be a lifesaving work. Myself along with my brothers and sisters of the local take extreme pride in what we do. It will be an honor to add this scope of work to our resume and I know we can get it done.

Thank You.

Sabrina Liriano:

Good afternoon, everyone, I am Sabrina Liriano, third year apprentice at smart local 28. I am here to advocate for intro 88. Being a resident of The Bronx, fire life safety has been made known as a necessity. I witnessed personally how that particular fire by Webster Avenue devastated communities near and far. Fire prevention is imperative. As an active member in my local, I asked myself as I was learning about dampers if by any chance, in these poor communities, is that even an option? Probably not. Correct usage and maintenance of fire safety dampers can eliminate such grief and in return can also create employment for people like me that are within the union. The safety of lives should be the priority for landlord, not financial, so let us all support into 88 and save lives, thank you.

Bryan Smith:

Good afternoon chair Sanchez and members of the committees on house, building and fire emergency management. My name is Bryan smith, I live in Jamaica, Queens. I am a 4th year apprentice with the local 28 sheet metal union. I joined the union for the benefits my previous job could not offer me. I have since been blessed by the many different career opportunities my union offers. Im here in support of Intro 88. Fire life safety is one of the first and cheapest defenses of saving lives. As a biological service technician in my previous job, I have seen firsthand the damage and distress of faulty fire prevention equipment. I support Intro 88 to make sure my friends, family and loved ones can safely walk into a building knowing local 28 properly installed and inspected all fire life safety measures. In addition, the countless jobs it will create for my local. I hope that you can support Intro 88 the same way my union does. Thank you.

Committee Chair Ariola, Present in the Hearing Room,
Committee Member Present in the Hearing Room, Schulman,
Council Member Present in the Hearing Room, Brewer.
And other Members of the Committee: De La Rosa, Feliz, Gennaro, Riley, Yeger,
and Zhuang:

The 4,000-plus women and men of the FDNY Emergency Medical Services, the EMS, who are "New York's Best", deserve equity in pay and benefits with "New York's Bravest", "New York's Finest", "New York's Boldest", and "New York's Strongest".

On page 9 of today's *Report on the Fiscal 2025 Preliminary Plan for the Fire Department*, we can once again read, quote: "The EMS are consistently the lowest paid first responders in New York City. The Council has long advocated for wage equity for the EMS making their salaries competitive with other first responders." unquote.

Unfortunately, this is nothing more than a re-hash of a recurring theme in such Council reports. Three years ago, in the March 19, 2021 Report one can read, quote: "As the lowest paid first responders in New York City, the Council has continually called for an increase in the salaries of EMS Members. . . ." unquote.

Well, as we all know, wage and benefits parity didn't happen when the City negotiated the EMS labor contract that year.

Over the years, Members of the Council have spoken many kind words in support for the FDNY EMS.

But the sad fact is, that no mayoral candidate's promise, no Council Member's speech, no Council report, no Council Law and no Council Resolution has ever brought pay and benefits parity to the FDNY Emergency Medical Services.

We all ask ourselves, "WHY IS THAT?"

In this year's *Report on the Fiscal 2025 Preliminary Plan for the Fire Department*, Emergency Medical Services personnel are still referred to as "civilians" instead of "uniformed" first responders.

FDNY EMS's members are still paid, not thousands of dollars less, but tens of thousands of dollars less a year than the other uniform services: sanitation, corrections, police and fire.

And the pay gap between EMS and the other uniformed services keeps getting wider. For example, under their new contract Sanitation Workers will make 40% more than Emergency Medical Technicians.

Pay parity has been achieved for city workers in the last year, for the 8,000 Health & Hospital Corporation Nurses.

In the first year of their contract, the nurses salaries will jump \$16,006, and then jump another \$5,551 in the second year. That is a pay jump of over \$21,000 in two years.

I ask this City Council to adhere to the words of Council Speaker Adams. On Wednesday, she stated that the Council is a co-equal branch of city government with the duty to turn ideas into effective laws and to conduct oversight. Take action and conduct rigorous oversight in this budget process to guarantee that the City treats the FDNY EMS as the 'uniformed' first responder service that it is, and that pay and benefits parity happens in the upcoming FDNY EMS contract.

I want to share with you today's front page of *The Chief* (March 15, 2024), with its headline, "**FDNY EMS Suit Moves Forward after Judge Rejects the City's Arguments**". It has cost the City over \$600,000 to settle just one lawsuit with the EMS unions, paying for the plaintiff's attorneys' fees. There have been four suits in recent times. The EMS shouldn't have to sue to get parity.

Thank you for allowing me to share my views.

3 Attachments:

5-page compendium of words of support by public officials for fair compensation for FDNY EMS.

The 2022 City Council Charts - EMS & Fire Workforce by Gender and Ethnicity

March 15, 2024 flyer, Make FDNY EMS PAY PARITY a PRIORITY in the NYC 2025 FY Budget.

Testimony Attachment 1 of 3

**The NYC Council and other State and City Leaders Have Talked
for YEARS and YEARS about FDNY EMS PAY PARITY**

NOTHING HAS HAPPENED

These are their words - - -

NYC Council Speaker (2018-2022) Corey Johnson

"Both are FDNY members, both perform lifesaving work. This is a social justice issue, and the City Council will continue to focus on this critically important issue of pay disparities within the city workforce. . ." "FDNY EMS Rally for Equal Pay", Queens Gazette, October, 2, 2019.

NYC Council Member (2018 -) Robert Holden

"We must do right by our EMS so they can continue to do the work that they do for nearly nine million New Yorkers and millions more who visit our city each year." "FDNY EMS Rally for Equal Pay", Queens Gazette, October, 2, 2019.

NYC Council Member (2010-2021) Peter Koo

"(T)he life-saving services of our EMS workers' demands fair and equal compensation. . ." "FDNY EMS Rally for Equal Pay", Queens Gazette, October, 2, 2019.

NYC Council Member (2014-2022) I. Daneek Miller

"Our first responders of color at EMS love their jobs, but don't get a fair salary that keeps food on their families' tables, and reluctantly leave for gainful employment as firefighters or sanitation workers. The Council's Committee on Civil Service and Labor has led the way on the principle of pay equity on behalf of our city, and will continue to push this administration to be consistent with its progressive values by providing these brave women and men equal pay for equal work." "FDNY EMS Rally for Equal Pay", Queens Gazette, October, 2, 2019.

NYC Council Member (2018 -) Francisco Moya

"It's time to end this appalling pay disparity. EMTs shoulder the greatest burden of 911 calls. They handled 1.3 million of the 1.8 million calls, or 71% of all emergency calls, in 2018. They accomplished that with less than half the number of EMTs than the FDNY has firefighters – 4,000 medical technicians to 11,000 firefighters. They may not look the same — FDNY is majority white and male, while EMS is predominantly made up of women and minorities — but they're alike in one

Mar 15, 2025. Testimony before the NYC Council Fire and Emergency Management Committee. City Hall

critical way: They are heroes. Countless New Yorkers are alive today because of the lifesaving decisions EMTs made when they arrived on the scene. Every day we ask EMTs to save lives while barely paying them enough to live themselves," said Councilman Francisco Moya." "FDNY EMS Rally for Equal Pay", Queens Gazette, October, 2, 2019.

NYS Attorney General Letitia James

"During her tenure as New York City Public Advocate, James published multiple studies on race- and gender-based pay inequity in the city workforce, and filed an amicus brief in support of the FDNY EMS unions. "Equal pay for equal work is a basic human right," said Attorney General James. "Our EMS and EMT workers dedicate their lives to supporting us, and it's past time we give them the support they deserve. I'm proud to stand with them in solidarity in their fight for fairness." "FDNY EMS Rally for Equal Pay", Queens Gazette, October, 2, 2019.

NYS Assembly Member (2016-) Stacey Pheffer Amato
Chair, Committee on Governmental Employees

"The long-standing practice of discriminatory pay towards EMS workers is simply unacceptable and must be rectified immediately." "FDNY EMS Rally for Equal Pay", Queens Gazette, October, 2, 2019.

NYC Council Speaker Adrienne Adams
and NYC Council Finance Committee Chair Justin Brannan 2020

"This tremendous wage gap sends a clear message to rank- and-file EMS, most of whom are women and people of color, that they are second-class citizens in the eyes of our city. . . Police officers, firefighters and EMS workers may have different titles and responsibilities, but they are all first responders who risk their lives daily to protect our lives and the lives of their fellow first responders. The case for pay parity is overwhelming. We need to deliver it and we need to deliver it now." Adrienne Adams and Justin Brannan, "Pay EMTs What They Deserve", *New York Daily News*, February 22, 2020, page 20.

FDNY Commissioner (2014-2022) Daniel Nigro 2020

"FDNY Commissioner (2014-2022) Daniel Nigro voiced support Tuesday for boosting wages for emergency medical services staff to bring them in line with other first responders . . ." Shant Shahrigian, *New York Daily News*, March 3, 2020. as posted at: <https://www.ems1.com/labor-issues/articles/fdny-commissioner-voices-support-for-raising-ems-provider-pay-eMqizMbfpOwmYBGD/>

NYC Council Speaker (2018-2022) Corey Johnson
and Council Member (2014 - 2022) I. Daneek Miller,
Chair, Council Committee on Civil Service and Labor 2020

Mar 15, 2025. Testimony before the NYC Council Fire and Emergency Management Committee. City Hall

"There can be no further argument against fairly compensating these beleaguered but endlessly brave first responders. The time is now to show our gratitude for their service, commitment to excellence, and the value they add daily to our city by giving them the equal pay and benefits they rightly deserve." Johnson, Corey and Miller, I. Daneek, "Enough Talk, Time to Give FDNY EMS Their Due," *Gotham Gazette*, May 27, 2020.

NYC Council 2020

On May 28, 2020, the NYC Council unanimously passed **Resolution 1062-2019-A**. It called for "the salaries of New York City emergency medical service personnel to be comparable to New York City's firefighters and police officers". Current Council Speaker **Adams** voted for that Resolution, as did re-elected Members **Ayala, Borelli, Brannan, Holden, Louis, Moya, Rivera, Salamanca, Jr., and Yeger**.

NYC Mayoral Candidate Eric Adams 2020

"Our EMTs, paramedics, and fire inspectors deserve our City's thanks and respect, but for years they have been shamefully denied basic pay equity. As mayor, I will not stand for discrimination against workers, especially not the women and men who have put their lives at risk to save ours day after day. . ." Mayoral Candidate Eric Adams 2020. *New York Post*, June 26, 2023. "Finally one of your own is going to understand." video link: <https://www.nbcnewyork.com/on-air/as-seen-on/eric-adams-voices-support-for-emt-workers-who-boycotted-ticker-tape-parade/3143223/>

FDNY Commissioner (1996-2001) Thomas Von Essen 2021

"It's time to pay up. . . You have to want to do it." "*Paramedic Pay: 7 On Your Side Investigates Salaries, Benefits of NYC's First Responders*" Dan Krauth, January 29, 2021. See video interview - <https://abc7ny.com/ems-new-york-city-fdny-emts-7-on-your-side/10132108/>" 'Nobody worked harder during the pandemic . . . They gained more respect than ever. But I don't see anybody really making an effort to close the gap between firefighters and EMTs.' " [Former] FDNY Commissioner Von Essen. *New York Daily News* March 16, 2021.

The New York City Council 2021

"Using figures provided by the Fire Department, the average Emergency Medical Technician makes \$32,000 less than the average firefighter, and paramedics make \$14,000 less compared to firefighters. When fringe benefits, including pensions, are factored in the average EMT earns \$134,000 less and the average paramedic makes \$108,000 less." *Report of the Finance Division on the Fiscal 2022 Preliminary Plan and the Fiscal 2021 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report, Fire Department City of New York*, March 19, 2021.p. 15.

Then Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams and Council Member Justin Brannan 2021

Mar 15, 2025. Testimony before the NYC Council Fire and Emergency Management Committee. City Hall

"There's no other way to say it: The way New York City treats our EMS workers is shameful, if not borderline discriminatory." Adams, Eric and Brannan, Justin, "New York City Needs to Treat EMS Workers So Much Better, *am/NY*, April 21, 2021.

The New York City Council 2021

". . . Firefighters and EMS workers belong to different unions yet work in the same agency, resulting in vastly different compensation. EMS workers (predominantly women and Hispanic or Latino, and Black or African American) have attempted bargaining for higher pay but have not been successful, while the FDNY has not faced the same issues " New York City Council Data Operations Unit, "Pay Equity in NYC, Analysis of Pay differences in the New York City Municipal Workforce", August, 2021.

The Official Website of the City of New York 2021

"Mayor de Blasio, Commissioner Campion Announce Tentative Contract Agreement with EMS Union District Council 37, . . . This agreement conforms to **the pattern reached with other civilian unions**. . ." August 6, 2021.

NYS Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli 2022

FDNY EMS personnel are compensated less than other first responders in the City and other EMS departments nationwide." Office of the New York State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli, *Issue Brief*, February 2, 2022. <https://www.osc.state.ny.us/files/reports/osdc/pdf/fdny-issue-brief.pdf>

The New York City Council Finance Division 2022

"EMS Pay Parity. In its Fiscal 2022 Preliminary Budget Response the Council called for wage adjustments for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) staff. FDNY's emergency medical technicians and paramedics are among the lowest paid first responders in New York City. The Council called on the administration to increase the salaries to be comparable to other first responders by performing an analysis to determine the cost of phasing in a wage increase. There are approximately 4,300 FDNY EMS members, of whom approximately 59 percent are nonwhite. FDNY's EMTs and paramedics earn significantly less than other emergency responders in New York City and other EMS services around the country. A starting EMT in San Francisco earns \$74,000 in the first year, compared to \$35,254 for an FDNY EMT. After five years, the base salary in New York is only \$50,604 for EMTs, \$65,226 for paramedics, in comparison to \$85,292 for firefighters. The gap continues into supervisor ranks, and the average salary is \$102,253 for a Uniformed FDNY lieutenant and \$70,139 for an FDNY EMS lieutenant." New York City Council Finance Division, "Note on the 2022 Executive Budget for the Fire Department of New York", p. 5.

The New York City Council 2022

"The Council Calls on the Administration to take the necessary steps to achieve EMS pay parity. (p. 2) . . . Finally, it is important to recognize that pay parity for our Emergency Medical Services workers is still a priority to the Council; EMS salaries must be competitive with other first responders so that these frontline worker positions can be retained. (p. 11.) . . . Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Pay Parity. EMS members are the lowest paid first responders in New York City, and the Council has consistently advocated for wage equity. We urge the Administration to raise EMS salaries to be competitive with other first responders. Prior to his election, Mayor Adams stated that EMS personnel required parity. The Council requests that the Administration include wage parity in future contract discussions with EMS members. The Administration should also conduct an analysis to assess the cost of phasing in a salary increase for EMS personnel, as well as modifying the Fire Department's (FDNY) wage scales for emergency medical technicians and paramedics to be more in line with other higher paid emergency medical responders. The approximately 4,600 members of EMS, including EMTs and paramedics, earn much less than other emergency responders in New York City and other EMS services across the country. Following negotiations in the summer of 2021, the EMS union stated "the City categorically refused to provide pay parity or anything that approximated pay parity for EMS First Responders in the FDNY." (p. 13) "The New York City Council's Response to the Fiscal 2023 Preliminary Budget and Fiscal 2022 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report," April 1, 2022, pp. 2, 11, 13.

FDNY Commissioner Laura Kavanaugh 2022

". . . [then acting] FDNY Commissioner Laura Kavanaugh said she agreed that the current gap in pay and benefits was outdated . . ." by Caroline Lewis, *Gothamist*, September 23, 2022.
<https://gothamist.com/news/new-york-city-struggles-staff-paramedics-emt-emergency-call-response-times-grow-longer>

Chief of EMS (2019-2023) Lillian Bonsignore 2023

"Bonsignore said she . . . hopes her successor continues the push . . . [to] decrease the sizable pay gap between EMS and other first responders so EMTs and paramedics are able to support themselves and not work multiple jobs. . . we're not just a group of ambulance drivers. We're highly trained medical professionals that can bring emergency room training to your bedside." Thomas Tracy "First Woman NYC EMS Chief to Retire after 3-Decade Career; 'No One Told Me We Would Have a Worldwide Pandemic', *New York Daily News* • Dec 07, 2022.

New York City Council 2023

"Another common reason . . . provided for high vacancy rates in particular positions, something that predates the pandemic, is the low pay provided to employees in certain titles. . . The Council has called upon previous Administrations to provide for pay parity in several City job titles. . . This is an issue of particular concern for the emergency medical service (EMS) workers at the Fire Department. . . Without additional pay parity, service provision will continue to erode, in some cases endangering public safety." "Response to the Fiscal 2024 Preliminary Budget and Fiscal 2023 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report", p. 19.

Chief of EMS Michael Fields 2023

"Asked at the hearing about wages for members of FDNY EMS, Fields said "It's a priority of this administration to make sure that we can have a decent salary for our EMTs, paramedics and officers as well as to make sure we have the resources in the communities that we serve." . . . 'Retention and making sure that we have the proper staffing is the priority to make sure that everybody can get an ambulance in a timely

Mar 15, 2025. Testimony before the NYC Council Fire and Emergency Management Committee. City Hall

fashion,' Fields said." Freeman, Duncan, "FDNY EMS chief warns budget cuts could worsen response times", *The Chief*, October 31, 2023.

City Government Values Speedy Delivery of Bagels over EMS Saving Lives?

"Low wages created a severe retention problem, with **30% of EMTs quitting after three years** and **50% after five years** . . ." By Bill Cary, "EMS Union President Asked if the City Government Values Speedy Delivery of Bagels over EMS Saving Lives," *EMS1*, June 27, 2023. <https://www.ems1.com/labor-issues/articles/fdny-ems-union-reacts-to-delivery-drivers-making-more-than-emts-TTAPoqrBkfCZGwXy/>

Former FDNY Commissioner Thomas Von Essen 2023

"Nobody did anything for those guys. These guys have been getting screwed around for years. It's so wrong. It's disgusting," said Von Essen – who oversaw the transfer of the EMS service from the public hospital system, Health + Hospitals, to the FDNY." Campanile, Carl "Life-Saving NYC Medics Treated Like Zeroes with Low Pay: ex-FDNY Boss Says", *The New York Post*, October 15, 2023.

And Once Again To Repeat the Past Words of the The New York City Council

"Using figures provided by the Fire Department, the average Emergency Medical Technician makes \$32,000 less than the average firefighter, and paramedics make \$14,000 less compared to firefighters. When fringe benefits, including pensions, are factored in the average EMT earns \$134,000 less and the average paramedic makes \$108,000 less." New York City Council Finance Division, "[Note on the 2022 Executive Budget for the Fire Department of New York](#)", p. 5.

Testimony Attachment 2 of 3

FDNY Workforce Analyses by Gender & Ethnicity of 4,550 "civilian" EMS First Responders and 10,841 "uniformed" Fire Division

Source: [source: https://council.nyc.gov/budget/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2023/01/FDNY-EMS-DEMOGRAPHICS-OCT-2022.pdf](https://council.nyc.gov/budget/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2023/01/FDNY-EMS-DEMOGRAPHICS-OCT-2022.pdf)



EMS WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

As of today: 10/03/2022

GENDER AND ETHNICITY															
EMS WORKFORCE	MALE							FEMALE							GRAND TOTAL
RANK	W	B	H	A	N	OTHER	MALE TOTAL	W	B	H	A	N	OTHER	FEMALE TOTAL	GRAND TOTAL
CHIEF of EMS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
ASSISTANT CHIEF	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
DEPUTY ASSISTANT CHIEF	4	1	1	0	0	0	6	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	8
DIVISION CHIEF	11	1	2	0	0	0	14	5	2	1	0	0	0	8	22
DEPUTY CHIEF	14	3	6	3	0	0	26	4	5	1	0	0	0	10	36
CAPTAIN	34	6	10	4	0	0	54	15	8	7	1	0	0	31	85
LIEUTENANT	177	50	87	31	1	3	349	40	34	28	7	0	1	110	459
PARAMEDIC	252	97	179	58	2	25	613	86	58	108	11	0	12	275	888
EMT	1030	437	575	85	10	163	2300	188	242	240	14	0	55	739	3039
EMS TRAINEE	2	3	2	0	0	0	7	0	3	0	0	0	0	3	10
TOTAL	1525	598	863	181	13	191	3371	340	352	386	33	0	68	1179	4550
Percentage %	33.52%	13.14%	18.97%	3.98%	0.29%	4.20%	74.09%	7.47%	7.74%	8.48%	0.73%	0.00%	1.49%	25.91%	100.00%



FIRE WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

As of today: 10/03/2022

GENDER AND ETHNICITY																	
FIRE WORKFORCE	MALE								FEMALE								GRAND TOTAL
RANK	W	B	H	A	N	UNKNOWN OTHER	TTL Min	MALE TOTAL	W	B	H	A	N	OTHER	TTL Min Female	FEMALE TOTAL	GRAND TOTAL
CHIEF OF DEPARTMENT	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
ASSISTANT CHIEF	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14
DEPUTY ASST. CHIEF	7	1	0	0	0	0	1	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
DEPUTY CHIEF	65	0	1	0	0	0	1	66	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	66
BATTALION CHIEF	345	1	6	1	0	0	8	353	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	354
CAPTAIN	528	10	26	4	0	0	40	568	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	569
LIEUTENANT	1253	49	109	11	0	0	169	1422	6	1	1	1	0	0	3	9	1431
FIREFIGHTER	5487	841	1389	222	13	91	2556	8043	55	40	28	4	0	5	77	132	8175
CHIEF FIRE MARSHAL	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
ASST. CHIEF FIRE MARSHAL	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
SUPV. FIRE MARSHAL	25	1	1	0	0	0	2	27	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	27
FIRE MARSHAL	86	11	23	1	0	0	35	121	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	123
PILOT	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12
MARINE ENGINEER	19	1	0	0	0	0	1	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20
WIPER	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13
CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DEPUTY CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
MEDICAL OFFICER	7	0	0	4	0	0	4	11	4	1	3	3	0	0	7	11	22
MEDICAL OFFICER MANAGER	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	4
CHIEF OF STAFF	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	7865	915	1555	244	13	91	2818	10683	69	43	33	8	0	5	89	158	10841
Percentage %	72.55%	8.44%	14.34%	2.25%	0.12%	0.84%	25.99%	98.54%	0.64%	0.40%	0.30%	0.07%	0.00%	0.05%	0.82%	1.46%	100.00%

Attachment 3 of 3 - Flyer

Make FDNY EMS PAY PARITY
a PRIORITY in the NYC 2025 FY Budget

Over the past 23 years, NONE of the New York City Council's initiatives fostering FDNY Emergency Medical Services pay and benefits equity have worked.

The FDNY Emergency Medical Services responds to 80% of NYC's 911 calls annually, that is, to millions of calls for help, but only gets about 20% of the FDNY budget. Will the budget for NYC Fiscal Year 2025 finally guarantee the pay and benefits parity with other first responders, that the women and men of the FDNY EMS deserve, and that for over two decades has been the stated aim of the NYC Council?

For more than a quarter of a century, both firefighters, and Emergency Medical Technicians and paramedics have been members of the same New York City Fire Department (FDNY), assigned to separate, but unequal divisions. Compared with 11,000 firefighters, the FDNY's Emergency Medical Services is 40% smaller, with about 900 medics and 3,000+ Emergency Medical Technicians. Rather than being stationed inside 200 or so firehouses, the women and men of the Emergency Medical Services are paired night and day in approximately 300 ambulances on the thousands of miles of city streets. In all weather conditions, when minutes count, they are ready to stoically provide emergency medical treatment to victims of pandemic diseases, heart attacks, strokes, gaping wounds, broken bones, extensive burns, smoke inhalation, chronic illness, and more. In the last ten years, the hearts of more than 10,000 of our fellow New Yorkers, that had once stopped beating, were brought back to life by the FDNY EMS.

Last June, the FDNY's Chief of Emergency Medical Services Operations, Michael Fields told a graduating class of 59 new medics that they had "chosen a career that demands them to put the needs of others ahead of their own, to rush into dangerous and hazardous circumstances without fear and deliver life-saving treatment under pressure, when every second matters." In recent years, two Emergency Medical Services personnel were murdered while on the job.

But EMS pay doesn't reflect their worth. After five years of providing emergency medical treatment on the streets and in the homes of New Yorkers, an Emergency Medical Technician's (EMT) current base salary is **\$59, 534**. In contrast, even before their latest contract, after 5 years, a "uniformed" firefighter's base pay was **\$85, 292 or 30% more than an EMT's**.

Over the past twenty years, the New York City Council has made several, seemingly futile attempts to improve the lot of the FDNY Emergency Medical Services. As long ago as **2001**, the City Council passed **Local Law 19** to guarantee that "individuals employed by the FDNY as

EMT's, paramedics and supervisors of EMT's or of paramedics be accorded the same unique bargaining rights as the uniformed forces of the City." Then NYC Mayor, Rudy Giuliani, vetoed that law, but the City Council over-rode his veto. Until 2007 however, the Giuliani Administration and the next, Bloomberg Administration continued a losing battle in the Courts against that law. And despite the NYC Council's stated aspirations, NYC government still fails to treat the FDNY EMS as the "uniformed service" that it is.

On May 28, **2020**, the NYC Council unanimously passed **Resolution 1062-2019-A**. It called for "the salaries of New York City emergency medical service personnel to be comparable to New York City's firefighters and police officers". Current Council Speaker **Adams** voted for that Resolution, as did current Members **Ayala, Borelli, Brannan, Holden, Louis, Moya, Rivera, Salamanca, Jr., and Yeger**. In 2021, a report of the NYC Council Committee on Fire and Emergency Management stated that **EMS staff were still "the lowest paid first responders in New York City"**. But in 2021, contrary to Council calls for comparable pay, **Mayor de Blasio's** administration specifically described the 2021 EMS contract **as continuing a pattern of agreements reached with the city's other "civilian" unions**, not with the unions representing the "uniformed" services of sanitation, correction, fire, and police. In the March 15, **2024** Council Report on the Fiscal 2025 Preliminary Plan - Fire and Emergency Management, once again can be read: "**The EMS are consistently the lowest paid first responders** in New York City. The Council has long advocated for wage equity for the EMS making their salaries competitive with other first responders."

If the Council does not act, the City will continue to expensively defend itself against the FDNY EMS' pursuit of justice in the Courts and from federal agencies. These have decided against the City in the past. For example, in December, **2021**, the **U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission**, responding to an application from FDNY Emergency Medical Services unions and personnel, found that: "**Workloads, working conditions, training, and risks to EMS First Responders and Firefighters are comparable, with a substantial degree of overlapping duties, especially with respect to medical emergencies.**" . . . "the evidence further shows the two groups have comparable accountability and responsibility. . . any difference in duties between the EMS First Responders and Firefighters fails to explain **the pronounced gap in wages and benefits**, . . . investigation further determined that" [the City] "**improperly treated and compensated EMS First Responders as civilians, when they are uniformed personnel.**"

Each year, the FDNY EMS provides emergency medical treatment to patients and transports them to hospital Emergency Rooms. Afterwards **NYC collects hundreds of millions of dollars in ambulance fees**. Despite their life preserving, and income generating, work, EMS staff are still paid tens of thousands less than other first responders and uniformed services."

Before the last labor contract was negotiated, many elected NYC officials, including current members of this Council, joined hundreds of off-duty EMS members on the steps of City Hall

hbayernorthmore

Mar 15, 2025. Testimony before the NYC Council Fire and Emergency Management Committee. City Hall

calling for better wages and benefits. Among them were then NYC Public Advocate **Letitia James** (now NYS Attorney General), then NYC City Council Speaker **Corey Johnson**; current Council Speaker **Adrienne Adams**; current Council Finance Committee Chair, **Justin Brannan**; as well as current Members **Robert Holden, Joann Ariola, and Francisco Moya**.

According to published reports, with their most recent labor contract, the "uniformed" Sanitation Workers' top annual base pay will increase to \$99,129. **That's 40% more than an EMT's**. Now is the time for the New York City Council to assert the authority given to it by the voters of New York, and use its legislative and oversight powers. Guarantee that the *NYC 2025 Fiscal Year Budget* provides the necessary means for the EMTs and medics of the FDNY Emergency Medical Services to receive pay and benefits that are comparable to those of other NYC uniformed first responders. That's exactly what the NYC Council has been calling for **AGAIN** and **AGAIN** and **AGAIN**.

3/15/24

My name is Jack Wei Lin, and I am 39 years old. I faithfully served as an EMT with the FDNY for over 14 years, starting in April 2008. My career abruptly ended in June 2022 due to my refusal to comply with the COVID vaccine mandate.

While the mandate was lifted in February 2023, I have not been able to return to work because of the unjust requirement imposed by the DCAS citywide waiver. This waiver demands that I relinquish my civil service rights to be considered for reinstatement, which is an unfair and discriminatory double standard since there have been other members that have been reinstated without having to sign this waiver.

I want to emphasize that my decision to refuse the vaccine was deeply rooted in my religious beliefs. I have been a devout Christian since childhood, having been baptized at the age of 12 and earning a Bachelor's degree in Religion from a Christian Liberal Arts College. I even dedicated a year of my life to serving as a missionary abroad.

My faith in God's sovereignty is unwavering, and I firmly believe that taking the COVID shots would have been a violation of my faith, personal conscience, and religious convictions.

During the pandemic, I worked tirelessly in EMS Operations, often putting in 12-16 hour days in person, despite a challenging 5-hour commute from Queens to Staten Island. I viewed COVID as EMS's 9/11, and I was proud to be an essential first responder, helping fulfill my duties on the frontlines.

Despite all my dedication and sacrifices, I faced significant challenges after losing my job. My unemployment benefits were denied multiple times and never approved. I even struggled to find work for over six months until the private sector mandate was lifted in November 2022.

It pains me to see that in this great city, the violation of religious freedoms has occurred. New York City and the FDNY seem to have forgotten my years of service and the lives I helped save. They have overlooked the sacrifices I made, such as performing CPR on a hospital cop in cardiac arrest while off duty and with a broken wrist.

But I take solace in knowing that God sees everything. I urge you to do the right thing and reinstate not just me, but all those who have who have dedicated years of service to NYC and have been unfairly affected by the DCAS waiver policy. The DCAS waiver requirement is an unfair barrier for us to return to work and must be abolished.

In closing, I am reminded of the words in 2 Corinthians: "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;" I believe that with your help, justice will prevail, and we will see a victory.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony.

*Written Testimony
March 17th, 2024*

It has been 1 year, 8 months, and 11 days since the New York City Fire Department ripped the rug from underneath me and turned my entire life upside down.

My name is Michelle Lee. I was terminated from the City of New York Fire Department on July 6th 2022 due to the COVID-19 vaccination mandate and the City's unreasonable denial of my religious exemption. Prior to my termination, I was a Fire Protection Inspector and Chief's Administrative Aide with the FDNY's Bureau of Fire Prevention's District Office Headquarters. I began my career conducting fire inspections out of the District Office in commercial and residential buildings across NYC and later, laterally moved to an administrative position where I would receive reviewed architectural plans from the Plan & Review Unit and facilitate the scheduling of inspections with the corresponding units, among many other duties.

I graduated top of my academy class as Valedictorian. The Department even posted about me and my achievements on their Instagram page on February 20th, 2019.

I ask for the City Council to seek clarification of the difference between last year's numbers and this year's numbers of budgeted Fire Protection Inspectors, as at last year's hearing, held on March 13th, 2023, it was stated that the Bureau of Fire Prevention was budgeted for 573 positions, while there were only 331 active Inspectors. This year, it was stated that Inspectors are currently at the budgeted headcount of 377; only 46 more than they had active in March 2023.

At the hearing on Friday, Fire Inspector and Union Representative Michael Reardon requested the need for additional Fire Protection Inspector classes between 2024 and 2025. In light of this obvious need for additional manpower, my question is why haven't the City reinstated its' well-experienced terminated members now that we are two years past the mandate's initiation and the pandemic, itself, is well over?

Additionally, in February 2023, the City presented their terminated employees with an unlawful waiver to notarize and sign in order to request reinstatement. The stipulations of this waiver included waiving our civil service rights; which was not elaborated on to clearly indicate what rights in particular we would be giving up. It also required dropping any current litigation that we had against the Department for reinstatement, while also agreeing to not bring any future litigation against the Department, or any city or elected official pertaining to our termination. The waiver states that after notarizing and signing, it is still not a guarantee that one will be reinstated, as it shall be left to the Department's discretion to reinstate an individual or not.

At last year's hearing held on March 13th, 2023, Councilwoman Joann Ariola asked Commissioner Kavanagh "how many members that were terminated, resigned, or retired have returned to the Department now that the mandate has been lifted?"

In response, the Commissioner stated "we're still in the midst of processing folks so when we're close to done, or done, we can give you the total numbers. I should say that in most cases we are looking to bring people back, except in some extenuating circumstances. Most people we hope to bring back. So we can give you the exact numbers once we've worked through the paperwork for everyone who has applied".

A year later, this remains to be untrue.

No one has been reinstated after signing the waiver, which Ms. Kavanagh casually refers to as "applying".

I am asking the City Council to hold the Department accountable and require that they provide quantitative data and disclose the number of individuals who actually signed this waiver, and of these individuals, the number of those who were officially reinstated to their former titles and the number of those who were not.

And most importantly, this waiver presents a blatant, disrespectful, and intentional obstacle to members who are genuinely and sincerely seeking to be restored to their prior titles. I am asking the City Council to please assess this urgent and long overdue issue and take any and every avenue that is within your authority to have this waiver be rescinded as a prerequisite to reinstatement.

As a side note to these primary concerns of mine, I would also like to address one of the main issues that was discussed at Friday's hearing: ***Lithium Ion Batteries.***

As a former Fire Protection Inspector and Chief's Administrative Aide with the FDNY's Bureau of Fire Prevention's District Offices, I have a deep understanding of Firematics and Fire Prevention and have conducted hundreds of inspections in residential buildings across the city. I have heard all of the ideas and approaches taken to minimize the number of lithium ion battery fires across the city, and I have long thought of a very simple solution to help decrease these numbers drastically.

I thought of this approach to thwart fatal events like the deadly Bronx fire that killed 17 people on January 19th, 2022 at the Twin Parks North West high-rise apartment building. My approach can help to prevent both of these types of dangerous fires.

Commissioner Kavanagh mentioned their blindspot, which is not being able to access apartments in residential buildings. My approach can specifically target this blindspot. Had I still been in my position in the FDNY, I could have taken steps to see if my approach could be implemented.

Councilwoman Ariola stated that *“in order for [any agency] to operate at a high level, they must retain valuable employees”*. And unlike how the common colloquialism goes when it comes to “working a job”, I know that I am more than “just a number”. I provide real value.

And in hindsight, I am sure that we can all agree that valuable members of the Department should have never been terminated in the first place, but instead should have been accommodated, rather than losing our entire livelihoods and having to wonder how we will care for ourselves and our families with each passing day.

Please, I implore you, hold the FDNY and the City of New York accountable for the unfair drudgery that they have relentlessly dragged us through for over three years total.

We want to work.

When they help us and bring us back, the Department and New York City’s public will be helped and made better for it in return.

Thank you.

My name is Tim Heaton and I WAS a lieutenant for the FDNY until terminated on July 6th, 2022 for refusing to get the covid vaccine.

I feel like this is deja vu as I have testified to this matter and these facts several times over the past two years. All to no avail.

I was tempted to review my previous testimony and attempt to enhance it in such a way as to sway the decision makers that are keeping me from returning to the job I once knew and loved.

But I realize that would most likely be in vain as none of the decision makers actually care about me nor my fellow former employees who have been fighting for reinstatement for more than two years. Ever since we were all unceremoniously placed on leave without pay(LWOP) on November 1st 2021 and then subsequently terminated without cause.

The Mayor rescinded the vaccine mandate more than a year ago but we still haven't been returned to work. So that either makes the Mayor incompetent or a liar.

The FDNY has said I may return to work BUT only if I sign a "waiver of my rights". One full page of lawyer-ese gobblydygook essentially saying everything was my fault.

I have asked this before. If the FDNY and the City did nothing wrong, as they continue to claim, then WHY do I need to sign a waiver of my rights????

This year I should be celebrating my 25th anniversary with the FDNY and my fourth year as a Lieutenant. That date is fast approaching and I feel no closer to a return to work than this time last year when I was sure a return was imminent as they had allowed some to return to work without signing the waiver and I was convinced I was next. Sadly, that is not so.

The FDNY continues to drag their feet in allowing us to return to work. And the City, and Mayor Adams, continue to fight us in court, even hiring an expensive outside law firm to fight our legal attempts at returning to work.

I am pretty sure the outside law firm is much more expensive than allowing us to return to work EVEN with full back pay and seniority!! So the question remains why the lies and stone walling??

I actually don't have any idea. I am continually notified of the manpower needs of the FDNY as I get messages on a daily, sometimes more than once per day, that there are spots that need covered with members on overtime. I unfortunately am sitting at home unable to work any of the vacant spots because I refuse to sign a "waiver of my rights". I have watched enough lawyer/court shows to know to NEVER sign such an open ended, all encompassing document.

I want to thank Councilwoman Ariola and the other City Council members who have seen the wrongness in the actions of the FDNY and Mayor Adams and continue to strive for what is right and returning us to work.

I wish I could thank the unions or the Chiefs but their lack of leadership over the past few years has been utterly disappointing. Not one staff chief who stood up for themselves has also stood up for the members affected by this ridiculous mandate. Not one member of the boards of either union has taken a stand in any way to advocate for these members to be returned to work. Instead, it seems, they just

want us all to go away so they can move onto the next contract or union grievance.

To say I am surprised by all of this would be a huge understatement. For twenty years I heard stories of staff chiefs who left the job in protest over a particular affront to the members of the FDNY. And of the unions, who time and time again over several decades were the standard bearers for their members that all the other unions sought to emulate. Instead we have a void in leadership that was unfathomable, at least to me, just a few short years ago. Today it is the norm instead of the rare exception.

So I will close my testimony with this. I left the FDNY on principle. I plan to return to the FDNY on principle. I don't know if this hearing will lead to that outcome or if I will have to wait for the courts to continue to rule in our favor until there is no more courts for the City to appeal to.

But I know I will be back someday because as Justice Thomas said "Right is right, even if you stand by yourself" Fortunately, I do not stand by myself but with hundreds of FDNY members and thousands of people who have stood triumphant against the tyranny of the covid mandates and the lunacy that has been exposed since. We know we are ALL on the right side of history. And soon we will ALL be vindicated!!

As a dedicated paramedic serving within the FDNY for seven years, I maintained an exemplary record marked by a steadfast commitment to professionalism and patient care. Throughout my tenure, I upheld the values and responsibilities inherent to my role, never encountering disciplinary action or reprimand.

Regrettably, in November of 2021, I faced an unforeseen challenge when placed on involuntary leave without pay due to my decision not to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, as mandated by the FDNY. Subsequently, in February 2022, I was formally terminated from my position. This termination was conveyed through official documentation, unequivocally indicating the cessation of my employment.

Compounding the distress of termination, I encountered further adversity in the processing of owed compensation and accrued vacation time. Despite waiting until June for disbursement, these essential funds were swiftly diverted to address accumulated debts, exacerbating financial strain.

In March of 2023, a glimmer of hope emerged with the prospect of reinstatement; however, this opportunity was contingent upon acquiescence to a waiver falsely asserting resignation from my position. Firmly committed to the integrity of truth and accuracy, I declined to sign the waiver, resolute in preserving the factual circumstances surrounding my departure.

In summation, my tenure with the FDNY was defined by unwavering dedication and a steadfast commitment to service. The inaccuracies and misrepresentations surrounding my termination and subsequent attempts at reinstatement underscore the importance of upholding truth and integrity within our professional endeavors.

For three (3) years, I was an FDNY Fire Protection Inspector (FPI), consequently forced out of my career for exercising my Constitutional Religious Right to reject the Covid vaccine mandate countermeasure. It had taken me decades to climb out of poverty (tooth and nail) to become financially self-sufficient via my fire department career. It took the Fire Department less than a year to dismantle all the progress made, because they relied on state-paid biased false information, misinformation, and disinformation about the 'Covid Science'.

I went from being considered for 'Inspector of the Year', passing the Supervisory exam, \$60,000+ in annual salary, two (2) weeks banked sick leave, \$15,000 in the bank, and financially helping others, to visiting the weekly food pantry, pawning my jewelry, and borrowing money to make ends meet. Adding insult to injury, the FDNY offered my job back under unfair stipulations. I would have to waive my Civil Service rights to hold FDNY accountable for wrongful termination, and I would have to start over at bottom salary, if, and only if, FDNY decided to rehire me.

We as Peace Officers swore to uphold the US Constitution but were unduly forced by the government to break our oaths. The first Amendment stipulates the right of all Americans to exercise their religion freely without being coerced to satisfy a religious test as a qualification for public office. The invisible fine print allowed governments arbitrarily to usurp our fundamental God given rights.

We unvaccinated who worked throughout the duration of the pandemic are no longer considered essential frontline workers, but are cast aside like used toilet paper. We are still suffering the negative effects of the mandates although other fire department personnel have had their religious accommodations approved or have been reinstated with back pay. Three (3) NYC judges have determined this to be the just action to remedy the "capricious and arbitrary" mandate imposed by the city; so do I.

Now that the mandate is over and my life has been thoroughly uprooted, I am doing my best to sustain some semblance of financial stability by intermittent babysitting --employment age discrimination exists even though it is unlawful. The past three years of mental anguish, undue hardship, and social injustice has been harrowing and I demand to be made whole. In light of FDNY's current deficit of Fire Protection Inspectors, you need to reinstate the former FPI's who want their jobs back and to make whole those who do not.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

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Name: Laura Kavanagh

Address: Fire Commissioner

I represent: FDNY

Address: _____

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Name: Chief John Hodgens

Address: Chief of Department

I represent: FDNY

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Name: Lizette Christoff
Address: Deputy Commissioner of Management
I represent: and Budget
Address: FDNY

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Name: Nafeesah Noonan
Address: Associate Commissioner of Workforce
I represent: Development
Address: FDNY

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Appearance Card

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Name: Nancy Carbone

Address: _____

I represent: Friends of Firefighters

Address: 199 Van Brunt St. Brooklyn, NY 11231

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Name: Zach Iscol

Address: _____

I represent: NYCEM

Address: _____

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Date: _____

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Name: Christopher Blanca

Address: _____

I represent: NYCEM

Address: _____

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

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Name: Christina Farrell

Address: _____

I represent: NYCEM

Address: _____

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Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: 3/15/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Michael Tracey

Address: 125 Maiden Lane N.Y., NY

I represent: UFOA

Address: Same as above

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Helen NORTHMORE

Address: _____ 10301

I represent: PUBLIC

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. YES Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 03/15/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MICHAEL REARDON

Address: _____

I represent: FDNY FIRE PREVENTION

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Chief Daniel Flynn

Address: Chief Fire Marshal

I represent: FDNY

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Chief Michael Fields

Address: Chief of EMS

I represent: FDNY

Address: _____

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