

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON MENTAL
HEALTH, DISABILITIES, AND
ADDICTION

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Monday, November 21, 2022

Start: 10:23 a.m.

Recess: 10:33 a.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway Committee Room
16th Floor

B E F O R E: Linda Lee, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Shaun Abreu
Diana Ayala
Erik D. Bottcher
Tiffany Cabán
Shahana K. Hanif
Vickie Paladino
Nantasha M. Williams

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

1 COMMITTEE ON MENTAL HEALTH,
2 DISABILITIES, AND ADDICTION

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2 CHAIRPERSON LEE: Okay. [GAVEL] Good morning
3 and welcome to this hearing of the City Council's
4 Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities, and
5 Addiction. Today the committee will vote on proposed
6 Introduction Number 609 A, sponsored by Deputy
7 Speaker Ayala, which would establish a needle,
8 syringe, and sharps buyback pilot program as well as
9 Proposed Introduction Number 404 A, which I'm proud
10 to sponsor relating to tracking the funds paid
11 pursuant to the New York Opioid Settlement, which
12 would require the agency designated by the mayor to
13 develop and submit reports tracking the funds paid
14 pursuant to the New York Opioid Settlement Sharing
15 Agreement.

16 So I just want to say welcome, especially thank
17 you to all the members who are currently here. We
18 have Deputy Speaker Ayala, Councilmember Cabán,
19 Councilmember Abreu, Councilmember Bottcher,
20 Councilmember Williams, Councilmember Paladino, and
21 Councilmember Hanif. So, thank you all for being
22 here. And I love the fact that we have such a strong
23 attendance on this committee. So thank you all.

24 As discussed previously, in hearings of this
25 committee, in New York City and nationally, opioid

3 overdose is the leading cause of accidental death.

4 Opioid use disorder and related deaths was declared a
5 public health emergency in 2017, mostly due to the
6 mass educational and promotional campaigns of
7 pharmaceutical companies intended to convince medical
8 practitioners and patients that these medications
9 were non-addictive. And as we all know, this
10 campaign was incredibly successful.

11 By 2004, Oxycontin became the leading drug of
12 abuse in the US, and in 2020, almost 75% of overdose
13 deaths involved an opioid. In New York City, opioids
14 are involved in 80% of all overdose deaths. The 2019
15 lawsuit filed by New York Attorney General Tish James
16 was intended to hold these various manufacturers and
17 distributors responsible for the opioid epidemic.
18 Many of these lawsuits and settlements are still
19 pending, but thus far more than \$1 billion dollars
20 has been secured to help combat this crisis.

21 The goal of proposed Intro 404 A is to ensure
22 that the opioid funds allocated to New York City are
23 being used to directly address this massive public
24 health crisis. And for the city to be transparent
25 about how these funds are and will be used to address

3 the epidemic, especially in the communities hit
4 hardest.

5 In closing, I'd like to remind everyone of the
6 importance of these funds, by stating that as of June
7 2022, every three hours... three hours, someone in
8 New York City dies of a drug overdose. That means
9 New Yorkers die of overdose more than homicides,
10 suicides and motor vehicle crashes combined. It is
11 my hope that this legislation will provide New
12 Yorkers with the transparency that they deserve, and
13 the reassurance that the funds are being properly
14 used in a manner that best serves our New York City
15 communities.

16 At this time, I'd like to turn to my colleague,
17 Deputy Speaker Ayala to make a statement on her bill
18 as well.

19 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Good morning, everyone. I
20 really want to address the members of the of the
21 body, and thank you all for your support on 609 A.

22 This bill, you know has received very mixed
23 reviews. And I think that that was the intended
24 outcome. I wanted to make a statement with this
25 bill. I've been in office for five years and for
five years, I have been working on combating the

3 opioid crisis in my district. And I will share with
4 you that in year two, in parts of the South Bronx,
5 that I represent, I had to call in a hazmat team to
6 come in and clean up the thousands and thousands of
7 syringe litter on one residential block that housed a
8 daycare for children with disabilities, a church, and
9 multiple dwellings. And I could not believe that it
10 had just been left that way. And that's what
11 happens. It gets left that way. Right? Because
12 communities of color continuously get, you know, the
13 short end of the stick. And, you know, I... We
14 understand the opioid crisis, and this bill by no
15 way, you know, is going to... is a remedy to the
16 opioid crisis. It is not intended to resolve the
17 opioid crisis. What it is intended to do is to
18 ensure that we do not have needles in public spaces
19 that might... kids, the kids that I represent in my
20 community are not playing in a playground that is
21 littered in syringes. It is a public health crisis,
22 and quite frankly, I'm outraged that we had to get to
23 this point where we had to legislate this. This is
24 common sense. We know that we have a crisis in the
25 city. We know that the syringe litter is... is...
has been problematic for years and yet we have seen

2 absolutely no planning coming out of City Hall. And
3 so this is the way that we're going to handle it.
4 This is a pilot program. And I again, I know that
5 it's not without controversy, but I think that it
6 will help alleviate a lot of what we're seeing in my
7 community.

8 So thank you all for, you know, taking this leap
9 with me, because I know that it hasn't been easy.
10 But when I tell you that, you know, this can be life-
11 saving, I'm not cutting, so thank you all.

12 And with that... we're not voting yet, right?

13 CHAIRPERSON LEE: Mm-mmm.

14 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: No, yeah. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEE: Thank you so much Deputy
16 Speaker. And before we begin, I'd like to thank our
17 staff, as well as the amazing committee staff that
18 are here Sarah Suture, our Legislative Counsel,
19 Christi Dwyer, Senior Policy Analyst, and Danielle
20 Glance, Finance Analyst. And we're ready to begin
21 the vote.

22 COMMITTEE CLERK: Good morning. William Martin,
23 Committee Clerk roll call vote Committee on Mental
24 Health, Disabilities, and Addiction. Proposed

2 Introductions 404 A and 609 A. The items are
3 coupled. Chair Lee?

4 CHAIRPERSON LEE: Aye on all.

5 COMMITTEE CLERK: Ayala?

6 DEPUTY SPEAKER AYALA: Aye on all.

7 COMMITTEE CLERK: Abreu?

8 COUNCILMEMBER ABREU: Aye on all.

9 COMMITTEE CLERK: Cabán? Sorry.

10 COUNCILMEMBER CABÁN: I'd just like to briefly
11 thank Deputy Speaker Ayala for her leadership here.
12 I don't think it's controversial at all. It saves
13 lives. It's worth doing. And I'm super proud to
14 vote aye on all.

15 COMMITTEE CLERK: Thank you. Bottcher?

16 COUNCILMEMBER BOTTCHER: Aye on all.

17 COMMITTEE CLERK: Hanif?

18 COUNCILMEMBER HANIF: Aye on all. Thank you so
19 much for leading the way.

20 COMMITTEE CLERK: Williams?

21 COUNCILMEMBER WILLIAMS: Prior to coming into
22 government, I worked for the Harm Reduction
23 Coalition, and it's really measures like this that
24 work to solve the issue in a humanitarian way. So I
25

2 want to thank you also for your leadership, and I
3 proudly vote aye on all

4 COMMITTEE CLERK: Paladino.

5 COUNCILMEMBER PALADINO: Well, I turned up.

6 Okay. Now, I have a little bit of a problem with the
7 bill the first one, because I feel that the police
8 need to do their job. And I believe that the
9 sanitation department needs to do their job.

10 And because I'm such a big fan of yours, and what
11 you stand for, I understand you, and I understand
12 what your needs are. And this has been a crisis for
13 way, way too long. So if my vote... vote of aye
14 helps this situation in any way possible, with some
15 common sense and strong-arm tactics now. We need to
16 hold people accountable for what they're doing. A
17 buyback program is not something that I'm fond of,
18 because I don't believe there's any addict who is
19 capable of being able to return the used syringes. I
20 think it's silly. I don't think they're going to do
21 it. However, if I could help move the needle on the
22 record by voting, aye. But we must incorporate
23 strong moves and measures to take in these
24 neighborhoods, because it's absolutely ridiculous.
25 What you said today... As I spoke to you before, but

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3 what you said today moved me that you were only in
4 for year two, and you saw thousands of needles. This
5 is unacceptable. So I do vote aye on all. Thank you
6 very much.

7 COMMITTEE CLERK: Thank you. By a vote of eight
8 in the affirmative. Zero in the negative and no
9 abstentions. Both items have been adopted by the
10 committee.

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date 11/26/2022