

Testimony of Vincent Alvarez  
President, New York City Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO  
before the  
NYC Council Committee on Civil Service and Labor  
regarding  
Support for Striking Members of the  
Writers Guild of America and SAG-AFTRA  
August 1, 2023

Good Afternoon Chair de la Rosa and members of the Council's Committee on Civil Service and Labor. My name is Vincent Alvarez, and I am the President of the New York City Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO. I am here to testify in support of the striking union members of the WGA and SAG-AFTRA. It is the first time in 60 years that both the WGA and SAG-AFTRA have been on strike at the same time.

For the last couple of weeks, approximately 170,000 members of the WGA and SAG-AFTRA have been on strike because the Alliance of Motion Pictures and Television Producers (AMPTP) has refused to negotiate in good faith and meet their demands. AMPTP's refusal to negotiate a fair deal on key proposals, that include wages, residuals, and the use of artificial intelligence, with both unions makes no sense when it has continued to amass close to \$30 billion in profits every year from 2017 to 2021.

Currently, 87% of SAG-AFTRA members are unable to make an annual income of approximately \$26,000. For WGA members, close to half of their members are being paid the minimum rate and writer pay has decreased by 23% over the last 10 years including inflation. Thus, many members from both unions are not making a living wage despite the fantastic profits that AMPTP is generating.

While streaming has continued to become more popular, it has unfortunately led to a drastic decrease in pay for both actors and writers. Traditionally, if a show was syndicated or sold overseas, workers and actors were paid well which allowed them to be financially stable. However, streaming has disrupted that compensation structure where actors and writers are now paid significantly less each time an episode of a show or movie is viewed on a streaming service. This has not only led

to increased financial instability for both writers and actors, but it has also devalued their work.

Rapid technological advancements in generative artificial intelligence and artificial intelligence tools such as ChatGPT are quickly proving they are existential threats to writers and actors. Writers have expressed credible concerns that producers will use artificial intelligence to write scripts or complete screenplays. Actors have also highlighted concerns that generative artificial intelligence would permit producers to use their likeness forever which negates the use of real live actors. The WGA and SAG-AFTRA have made reasonable recommendations to AMPTP regarding consent, compensation, and protections related to the use of artificial intelligence which have been rejected.

We can all agree that the demands put forward by both unions are not only reasonable, but achievable. We all know that writers and actors are overwhelmingly responsible for many of the shows and movies we love. But AMPTP cannot continue to ignore the needs of workers just to appease its shareholders. Workers have a right to equitable pay and safeguards from rapid technological advancements that threaten their livelihoods.

I would like to end by stating that the CLC and our affiliates welcome the opportunity to work with you in supporting WGA and SAG-AFTRA. I encourage you to speak to us regularly and in advance so that we may collaborate in designing the most effective ways to support our fellow union members.

**New York City Council Committee on Civil Service and Labor Hearing  
August 1, 2023**

T2023-3867

*Resolution Expressing unwavering support of striking SAG-AFTRA members in their pursuit of a fair and just contract.*

**City Council Hearing Testimony - SAG-AFTRA President Fran Drescher**

Good afternoon. I am Fran Drescher, the president of SAG-AFTRA.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak to you today.

I am a New Yorker born and raised. As a kid back in Flushing Queens, I always dreamt of being a professional actor someday and a proud member of the Screen Actors Guild. To be a part of the show business community and make a career out of my craft and god given talent was my ambition.

But I never imagined that show business, so romanticized in the movies of the 30's and 40's would in 2023, become a soulless business of greed and disrespect for the performing artist.

The AMPTP has so radically changed the business model that a new structure for the contract is demanded.

We can no longer live on the old residual model and was stonewalled when we followed the money in the new model.

How will anyone ever make their medical coverage thresh hold? They won't be able to.

How are working people supposed to live on 2/3rds less opportunity to make residuals?

How can they think we can accept minimums that are lower in real money than 2020? We must catch up to inflation.

And where do they have the audacity to want a background performer to get paid for one day and they would scan and own their likeness in perpetuity?

We cannot allow big business greed to take away our careers and livelihoods.

And as a last note, the amptp's maniacal corporate culture for greed must stop. Industry profit and doing the right thing on behalf of workers should not be mutually exclusive but go hand in hand as we forge a new definition for success!

**New York City Council Committee on Civil Service and Labor Hearing  
August 1, 2023**

T2023-3867

*Resolution Expressing unwavering support of striking SAG-AFTRA members in their pursuit of a fair and just contract.*

**City Council Hearing Testimony - SAG-AFTRA Executive Director, New York Local, Labor Policy and International Affairs Rebecca Damon**

Thank you to the New York City Council and the Committee on Civil Service and Labor for having us here today. We appreciate your consideration of City Council Members Amanda Farías and Carmen de la Rosa’s resolutions expressing unwavering support of striking SAG-AFTRA members in the pursuit of a fair and just contract. We are grateful that this body has always been a stalwart supporter of the good union jobs created by a robust film, television, and streaming production sector, and I appreciate the opportunity to give some context for what that looks like.

SAG-AFTRA’s TV/Theatrical/Streaming Contracts cover over 200,000 jobs a year for New York Performers. This work translates to approximately half a billion dollars a year in covered earnings for New York Local Performers and makes New York City the second-largest global production hub for SAG-AFTRA-covered entertainment work.

A recent study conducted by the Mayor’s Office of Media & Entertainment found that the entire film and television industry in New York City is responsible for over \$18 billion a year in total wages and over \$80 billion in total economic output. New York City is also home to the two main exchanges where these media conglomerates’ stocks are traded – stocks that in the aggregate reflect a total market capitalization of over \$600 billion.

The studio segments of these media conglomerates are booking annual revenues of over \$120 billion that they generate using our members’ work and netting profits of over \$12 billion a year.

These numbers are fantastic, and you would think everyone would get to ride the wave of success! But the AMPTP corporations changed course without bringing their workers along for the ride. The migration to the streaming business model, coupled with the effects of inflation have eroded the real value of wages under these contracts. The fight for a fair contract is a fight for a living wage. But it is also a fight for agency. With the development of AI producers want to be able to use our members' likenesses however and whenever they want, without additional pay, and certainly without any meaningful consent. We will not stand by why corporations use insidious practices to enrich themselves with no regard for the effects on the workers whose faces and voices they want to steal.

We know this body understands the contributions our members make to the culture of this great city, and your support of SAG-AFTRA in this fight is a sign to working people across the city that their contributions matter.

Thank you.

**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: 8/1/2023

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lewis Edward Thompson

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ BX NY 10466

I represent: SAG-AFTRA

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

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in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Name: Rocky Bowfield

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Name: Jackie Roth

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ John St

I represent: SAG-AFTRA member/disabled

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jenna Kray

Address: Evergreen Ave

I represent: SAG AFTRA

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sade Bess

Address: P.O. Box 328

I represent: SAG AFTRA

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Vincent Alvarez

Address: 350 West 31st St 8th Floor 10001

I represent: NYC Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO

Address: \_\_\_\_\_



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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Name: LAYLA Johnson

Address: Greene Street NYC NY

I represent: SAG/APWA

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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in favor     in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lisa Takeuchi Cullen

Address: 259 Hudson St, suite 700, NYC

I represent: Writers Guild of America, East

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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in favor     in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Name: Rao Rampilla

Address: E. 44th St

I represent: NYC 10017

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in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Erica Saleh

Address: 250 Hudson St, ste 700, NYC

I represent: Writers Guild of America East

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Lowell Peterson

Address: 250 Hudson St, suite 700 NYC

I represent: Writers Guild of America East

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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