

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

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CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

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December 18, 2025

Start: 10:33 a.m.

Recess: 10:43 a.m.

HELD AT: 250 BROADWAY - 8TH FLOOR - HEARING
ROOM 2

B E F O R E: Diana Ayala, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Alexa Avilés
Chris Banks
Tiffany Cabán
Chi A. Ossé
Lincoln Restler
Kevin C. Riley
Althea V. Stevens
Sandra Ung

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING:

Yusef Salaam

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2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning. This is a
3 microphone test for the Committee vote on General
4 Welfare in Hearing Room 2, recorded by Tasha Sherman.
5 Today's date is 12-18-2025.

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning, and
7 welcome to the New York City Council vote of the
8 Committee on General Welfare.

9 At this time, can everybody please
10 silence your cell phones, and no one is to approach
11 the dais.

12 Chair, we are ready to begin.

13 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: [GAVEL] Good morning,
14 everyone, and welcome to today's hearing. My name is
15 Diana Ayala, and I am the Deputy Speaker of the New
16 York City Council and the Chair of the General
17 Welfare Committee.

18 Today, our Committee will be voting on
19 Intro. 1366-A sponsored by Council Member Yusef
20 Salaam. This bill would require the Department of
21 Social Services to create web forms for any
22 applications that must be completed by an individual
23 to apply for benefits and services through DSS. The
24 web forms would allow applicants to directly input
25 information and electronically sign applications

online. This bill supports existing efforts by DSS and the New York City Human Resource Administration's, HRA, to make the benefits application process more accessible.

At this time, I'd like to acknowledge my Colleagues who are here with us today, Council Members Riley who's joining us virtually, Cabán, Avilés, Ossé, Restler, Stevens, Ung, and Council Member Banks is on his way so we'll wait for him a little bit.

I'd also like to thank the Committee Staff who worked to prepare this vote, Aminta Kilawan, Senior Legislative Counsel; Nina Rosenberg, Senior Policy Analyst; Justin Campos, Policy Analyst; Elisabeth Childers-Garcia, Finance Analyst; Phariha Rahman, Finance Analyst; and Julia Haramis, Unit Head.

I'd like to give Council Member Salaam an opportunity to speak on his bill.

COUNCIL MEMBER SALAAM: Thank you. Good morning. Thank you, Chair Ayala, and thank you to the Members of the Committee on General Welfare. I want to begin by thanking Chair Ayala for her leadership on issues of access, dignity, and fairness, and for

the Committee's thoughtful consideration of this legislation.

Proposed Intro. 1366-A is about removing unnecessary barriers for New Yorkers who rely on critical benefits and services, especially children, older adults, people with disabilities, and families navigating instability while maintaining strong safeguards to protect safety and program integrity. Too often, accessing benefits through the Department of Social Services requires navigating paper-based systems, in-person visits, and rigid processes that can be difficult or impossible for people with mobility limitations, for caregiving responsibilities and language barriers, or health challenges. This bill modernizes that process by requiring DSS where permitted by state and federal law to provide secure, accessible web forms to allow applicants to apply, sign, and submit applications electronically. Just as importantly, this bill preserves choice. Paper applications will continue to be accepted, and applicants will have the option to complete required interviews by telephone, recognizing that flexible schedules is essential for older adults, people with disabilities, parents caring for children, and

individuals with limited access to transportation. At the same time, this legislation is clear that access must not come at the expense of safety. DSS retains the authority to require in-person interviews when necessary to prevent fraud, address safety concerns, or respond to situations involving domestic violence or unsafe conditions. These safeguards ensure that the vulnerable individuals are protected and that benefits are delivered responsibly. This bill strikes a balance, expanding access while preserving human judgment where risk, coercion, or harm may be present.

I want to thank my Colleagues and my Director of Budget and Legislative Affairs, Mufazzal Hossain, who helped me shape this legislation, and I respectfully urge the Members of the Committee on General Welfare to vote aye on Proposition Intro. Number 1366-A. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you, Council Member Salaam.

Council Member Restler.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you.
Congrats to Council Member Salaam.

I just wanted to take a minute to thank the Deputy Speaker for her leadership of the General Welfare Committee, particularly her leadership on FEHPS issues to ensure that New Yorkers in need of housing are able to actually afford it, but on the full range of issues that this Committee has oversight, I just think you've done a superb job, and you've brought lived experience, keen policy insight, and profound integrity to this work, and you've been wildly effective. We're going to miss you enormously in this role and in the Council as a whole, and I'm really grateful for your service. I'm also, I just, you did something which is pretty unusual in politics, in government. You gave up turf and shifted ACS to the Youth and Children's Services Committee under Chair Stevens' leadership, which I really think was the right decision for the Council, but took like, it was just an unusually humble thing to do, so I'm grateful for that as well, and it speaks to your character, and I really appreciate everything that you have done to help me be a better Council Member and help support vulnerable New Yorkers, so thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you.

I just wanted to say very quickly before we take the vote that this is my last time on this Committee, and it has been, I mean, I've had the time of my life. This has been one of the best experiences ever. Even Chairing the Mental Health Committee, I've learned so much, but I've also learned a lot about myself and, you know, how important it is to share your story, and sometimes when you're running for public office, it's difficult to kind of undress yourself in front of millions of people because, you know, we've been conditioned to keep our private business private, and to be able to share that, right, there's a vulnerability that lies within that, but it's also been so important because so many people, you know, I run into in the streets and the trains, and when I used to take the trains, I don't want to lie here and somebody say, I've never seen her in the train, she's always driving, but I have taken the trains, but even when I've been campaigning, people, you know, primarily like young women, will come up to me and thank me for sharing my stories on domestic violence, for sharing my stories on, you know, being in shelter, for talking about the struggles about being a single mom and raising a

child with a disability. All of those things, you know, because it's important that people see themselves reflected in government, that we are not just sitting here because, you know, we went to an Ivy League school and we read about an issue and we really care about it, which I, you know, I'm all for that as well, but that some of us really reflect those struggles, that we've been through them, we understand them, we see the nuances and the holes in government that don't allow us to properly provide services in the way that they were intended to, the communities that need them the most, but I would be remiss if I did not add that I could not do that by myself. There are so many people behind me that, you know, really have supported me and helped me to make sure that I look good and sound good, so I really want to, you know, give a round of applause to my team and the General Welfare Committee. Thank you, guys, so much. You guys have been fantastic and without you I am nothing. And to my Colleagues, it's been really, really wonderful working with you, even when we're fighting each other and even when we're... I love all of you. You guys bring so much, you know,

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2 experience to this body, and I am really excited for
3 what's to come for all of you as well next year.

4 And with that, Billy, last time.

5 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Thank
6 you. It's been an honor.

7 William Martin, Committee Clerk. Roll
8 call vote, Committee on General Welfare. Proposed
9 Introduction 1366-A.

10 Chair Ayala.

11 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I vote aye.

12 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Riley.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: I vote aye.

14 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Thank
15 you.

16 Cabán.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Aye.

18 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Avilés.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: I vote aye, and
20 I'd like to tell the Deputy Speaker that it has been
21 an honor to work with her and you make us proud.
22 Boricua Strong, thank you.

23 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: I want to
24 hear you say it again. I'm sorry. Thank you.

25 Ossé.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER OSSÉ: I vote aye.

3 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Restler.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Aye.

5 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Stevens.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: I vote aye, and
7 it has been an honor to serve with my mentor and I
8 will take all the jewels you gave me. Love you.

9 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Ung.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER UNG: I vote aye.

11 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Thank
12 you. I got you.

13 Banks.

14 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Aye on
15 all, and to Diana, thank you for your wise counsel,
16 and it was definitely a privilege and a pleasure to
17 serve under your leadership.

18 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Thank
19 you.

20 With a vote of nine in the affirmative,
21 zero in the negative and no abstentions, item has
22 been adopted by the Committee.

23 Madam Chair, that is a full Committee.

24 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: And with that, we tap
25 out for the last time. [GAVEL]

C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date December 29, 2025