

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS, STATE

AND FEDERAL LEGISLATION

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CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL  
OPERATIONS, STATE AND FEDERAL  
LEGISLATION

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December 16, 2025  
Start: 12:15 p.m.  
Recess: 1:32 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 BROADWAY - 8TH FLOOR - HEARING  
ROOM 1

B E F O R E: Lincoln Restler

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Gale A. Brewer  
James F. Gennaro  
Jennifer Gutiérrez  
Shahana Hanif  
Frank Morano  
Inna Vernikov

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING:

Christopher Marte  
Nantasha M. Williams  
Shahana Hanif

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS, STATE  
AND FEDERAL LEGISLATION

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A P P E A R A N C E S

Grace Rauh, Executive Director of Citizens Union

Samantha Sanchez, Policy Manager at Common Cause  
New York

Shawn Alyse Campbell, District Manager of  
Brooklyn Community Board 14

Michelle George, District Manager of Brooklyn  
Community Board 8

Christopher Leon Johnson, self

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FEDERAL LEGISLATION

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SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Testing, testing. This is a microphone check for the New York City Council Committee on Governmental Operations, State and Federal Legislation. Today's date is December 16, 2025. We are currently in 250 Broadway, Hearing Room 1, and this is being recorded by Sergeant Ben Levy.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good afternoon, and welcome to the New York City Council hearing of the Committee on Governmental Operations, State and Federal Legislation.

At this time, can everybody please silence your cell phones.

If you wish to testify, please go to the back of the room to fill out a testimony slip.

At this time and going forward, no one is to approach the dais. I repeat, no one is to approach the dais.

Chair, we are ready to begin.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Good afternoon. I want to apologize for my tardiness, especially to Council Member Brewer, but to everyone. My name is Lincoln Restler. I have the privilege of Chairing the Committee on Governmental Operations, State and Federal Legislation at least for, well, for about 14

more days. We'll see from there. I'd like to welcome my Colleagues who've joined us today. Former Chair of this Committee, Council Member Gale Brewer, our Council Member representing us here at 250 Broadway, Council Member Chris Marte, Council Member Jennifer Gutiérrez of Brooklyn and Queens, but really Brooklyn, and, but really Brooklyn, let's be real, and our bill sponsor today, she's from Queens originally, but she's Brooklyn, just in case anyone was wondering, on the record, and the bill sponsor for today's hearing, my friend, Council Member Dr. Nantasha Williams, and Council Member Hanif, my neighbor, is with us on Zoom. Thank you for joining us, Council Member Hanif.

This is the final Governmental Operations hearing of 202... well, I guess we're doing a vote on Thursday, so it's basically the final hearing of the year. It's our 20th hearing. It has been an enormous privilege to Chair this Committee. I really want to just thank the Speaker and her whole team and the tremendous Staff and all my Colleagues for being wonderful partners in this work. I have greatly enjoyed it.

We're holding a hearing today on Intro. 1493, as noted, sponsored by Council Member Dr. Nantasha Williams, and co-sponsored by 30 of our Colleagues. Intro. 1493 would increase the compensation of elected officials in New York City, the Mayor, the Comptroller, the Public Advocate, members of the City Council, Borough Presidents, and District Attorneys by 16 percent. That's in line with the annual increases in the Mayor's Office over the past five years. Under our City Charter, the Mayor is required, required to appoint a Commission to review the compensation levels of elected officials every four years. It's an obligation that is necessary to ensure that our City Government continues to operate effectively and attract the best and brightest talent. But, of course, Mayor Adams failed to act, so once again, the City Council is stepping up to try to help get the job done. The last Quadrennial Advisory Commission was convened in 2015, when Barack Obama was President, when Steph Curry won his first ring, the year the Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage, and at that point, we were endlessly debating the color of that damn dress. I don't know what color it was. Jen says it was blue. Indeed, over

the past 40 years, since the Quadrennial Advisory Commission framework has been in place, we've never had such a long period of time, 10-plus years, without a Commission being convened. The 2015 Quadrennial Commission, comprised of three individuals, all appointed by Mayor Bill de Blasio and Chaired by the extraordinary Fritz Schwartz, was charged with reviewing the history of elected official pay, the salaries of agency heads and senior staff in City Government, the salaries of elected officials in other major cities, and private and non-profit sector salaries. But we don't need an in-depth study and a 170-page report to understand basic facts. Council Members are currently paid an annual salary of 148,500 dollars. First Deputy Mayor Randy Mastro makes more than double that, 324,144 dollars. Indeed, Mayor Adams' eight, he has eight other Deputy Mayors, if you can believe that. Fabian Levy is a Deputy Mayor, Kaz Daughtry, Suzanne Miles-Gustave, Adolfo Carreon, Jeffrey Roth, Anna Almanzar, Tiffany Raspberry, and Camille Varloc each make more than twice as much as every Member of the City Council. They make 297,012 dollars a year. In FY25, 16,452 employees, 16,452 City employees made more than a

City Council Member. In the Mayor's Office alone, there are 130 staffers who make more than a Council Member, not including the many hundreds of lines, and I mean it, hundreds of lines in the Mayor's Office that are being hidden on agency lines. So this is when somebody works at the, technically is paid by the Department of Environmental Protection but works out of the Mayor's Office so there are many, many hundreds of staffers at City Hall who make consequentially more than the City Council. Salaries of elected officials across the country have also increased on average 36 percent since 2015, more than double what's been proposed by this legislation. Legislators in Los Angeles, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Chicago, and San Diego all make more, and Washington, D.C., thank you Council Member, make more than a New York City Council Member. We've seen similar increases in non-profit and private sector salaries. The salary increase we're discussing is lower than the rate of inflation over the last 10 years, which would have put Council Member salaries at well over 200,000 dollars. It's critical that we convince the best and the brightest, rather than just the wealthiest New Yorkers, to make the decision to

run for public office. It is a profound honor and privilege to serve the City of New York. I can confidently say that not a single one of my colleagues ran for office because of the salary. However, it is a challenging and demanding job. Every single New York City Council Member represents more constituents than the entire City of New Haven. The Borough President of Brooklyn represents more people than the Mayor of Chicago. On any given night, my Colleagues can be found on the scene of fires helping ensure tenants are safe and housed, supporting community members impacted by gun violence, advocating for public benefits to be provided to people in need, or reviewing the 116-billion-dollar City budget line by line. My Colleagues work 24/7 to deliver for our communities.

Under this proposed legislation, a Council Member will make 172,500 dollars. And let me be clear, this is a high salary. There are thousands of New Yorkers, indeed hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers, who are struggling to put food on the table and pay rent today, and every single one of them deserves a living wage. We must continue to fight for higher pay for New Yorkers who need it, like



paraprofessionals, EMTs, non-profit workers, and so many more. But if we want to recruit the best and the brightest to serve in these critical roles and lead our City, we need to ensure the pay is not a deterrent for community leaders with college loans or astronomical daycare costs. The 2022 City Council broke records as the most diverse and the first female-majority City Council in our city's history. It is essential that leaders from underrepresented communities continue to consider public service. The proposed Council Member salary, is still less than an agency head, less than 75 Mayor's Office employees, and it is appropriate and commensurate with the responsibilities of the position. The Charter has limited the Council's ability to act on this legislation between a general election and January 1st, but I hope that the incoming Council will take swift action to resolve this issue. And I hope, moving forward, mayors will appoint a Salary Review Commission every four years, as is required by the City Charter.

I think it's worth noting that this Commission, which is required by the Charter to be appointed every four years, has been appointed twice

in the last 26 years. So on average, since 1999, we've had two Commissions, two. One in the Bloomberg administration, one in the de Blasio administration, none in the Adams administrations. So there are questions about how well this process, as it was outlined in the Charter 40 years ago, is actually working.

With that, I want to thank the Governmental Operations Committee staff, our Committee Counsel Johari Frasier, who has done a great job taking over this bill; Policy Analyst Erica Cohen for their hard work in preparing for this hearing; my Communications Director, Nieve Mooney; and especially my Chief-of-Staff, Molly Haley, who is absolutely brilliant, and I'm grateful for her hard work.

With that, I will turn it over to my friend and Colleague, our sponsor of today's legislation, Council Member Dr. Nantasha Williams.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you. And the Chair actually really laid out so much, so I'll be extremely brief. And thank you so much, Chair, for taking this up.

The City Charter lays out a clear structure for how compensation for elected officials is meant to be reviewed. That structure begins with the Mayor convening a Quadrennial Commission, a body that examines the data, makes recommendations, and creates a transparent record for New Yorkers. As noted, that Commission has not been convened since 2016, meaning nearly a decade has passed without a full review the Charter anticipates. The legislation introduced acknowledges the gaps and initiates the formal process outlined in the Charter. It does not predetermine outcomes, but ensures the review proceeds on the timeline the Charter anticipates for the following year. The figures referenced in the bill use a cost-of-living benchmark drawn from the recent DC 37 agreement, a series of annual adjustments, 3 percent for 2021 to 2024, and 3.25 percent in 2025, rounded to the nearest 500. Today's hearing provides an opportunity to review the Charter's requirements, the role of the Commission, and the steps that follow so the public can understand how these matters are evaluated. I look forward to today's discussion and to the continued work of the Commission and this body.

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CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you so much,  
Council Member Dr. Natasha Williams, never miss the  
opportunity to recognize her extraordinary  
accomplishment of getting a Ph.D. while serving in  
the City Council.

We've been joined by Council Member Inna  
Vernikov. Thank you for joining us, Inna.

COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: (INAUDIBLE)

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Sorry? J.D.?

COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: You didn't  
recognize my J.D.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: But you didn't get  
the J.D. while serving in the City Council, so that  
was the distinction why we have to especially shout  
it out. But if there's any further degrees that you  
do secure while serving, please let me know.

With that, we'll bring up our first  
panel.

I have to say this, so I'll do it as fast  
as I can. No members of the Administration are here,  
so we're going to open this up to the public. I now  
open the hearing for public testimony. I remind  
members of the public that this is a government  
proceeding and the decorum shall be observed at all

times. As such, members of the public shall remain  
silent at all times.

The witness table is reserved for people  
who wish to testify. No video or recording or  
photography is allowed from the witness table.  
Further members of the public may not present audio  
or video recordings as testimony but may submit  
transcripts of such recordings to the Sergeant-at-  
Arms for inclusion in the hearing record.

If you wish to speak at today's hearing,  
please fill out an appearance card with the Sergeant-  
at-Arms and wait to be recognized. When recognized,  
you will have three minutes to speak on today's  
hearing topic, Compensation of the Mayor, Public  
Advocate, Members of the City Council, Borough  
President, Comptroller, and District Attorneys.

If you have a written statement or  
additional written testimony you wish to submit for  
the record, please provide a copy of that testimony  
to the Sergeant-at-Arms. You may also email written  
testimony to [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov) within 72  
hours of closing this hearing. Audio and visual  
recordings will not be accepted.

For in-person panelists, please come up  
to the table once your name has been called.

Now I will call our first panel, which  
we're going to start with the good government groups.  
So we will invite Grace Rauh from Citizens Union and  
Samantha Sanchez from Common Cause New York to be our  
first panelists today. Thank you for joining us.  
Great. Feel free to testify in whichever order you'd  
like.

All right.

GRACE RAUH: Good afternoon. Thank you for  
having me. My name is Grace Rauh. I'm the Executive  
Director of Citizens Union. I just want to thank you  
all for the opportunity to testify today, and thank  
you, Chair Restler, for your leadership of this very  
important Committee.

For over a century, Citizens Union has  
been dedicated to honest and accountable government  
and fair and open elections. We have participated in  
many past reviews of elected officials' compensation,  
and that experience informs our testimony today. Let  
me be clear at the outset. Elected officials should  
be well paid. Adequate compensation attracts strong  
candidates, allows people who are not wealthy to

consider public service, and reflects the importance of serving the public. Citizens Union has long supported fair pay for elected officials, and there are also legitimate reasons to consider raising salaries now. Elected officials have gone nearly a decade without a pay adjustment, and the cost of living in New York has risen significantly. It is, however, possible to raise salaries through an honest, transparent, and credible process, but the legislation before you today does not do that. For more than 50 years, every increase in the salaries of elected officials in New York City has followed the work of an independent Compensation Commission, which has conducted reviews and issued recommendations on pay. The current proposal before the City Council breaks from that precedent, offers no supporting analysis for the proposed 16 percent increase, and is being advanced in an 11th hour manner to work around the very clear prohibition in the City Charter that bars the Council from raising pay during a lame duck period like the one that we are in. The approach that you all are considering undermines public trust and creates a troubling precedent. Fortunately, you have better options. First, the Council can call on Mayor-

elect Mamdani to convene a Compensation Commission at the beginning of his term. In fact, instead of requiring the incoming Mayor to establish a Commission by the end of 2026, after elected officials received a raise, as this bill is currently proposing, the Council could instead require him to establish a Commission by the end of January 2026.

Second, the Council could amend the law to authorize another citywide elected official to appoint a pay commission if the Mayor fails to do so. For example, the City Comptroller could be empowered to make the appointments if a Commission is not convened by a specific deadline. This would preserve the existing framework while ensuring that the law is followed.

The Council could also consider establishing a one-time City Council-appointed Compensation Commission to operate in 2026. The City Charter explicitly contemplates such a Council-created commission, and similar one-time legislative actions have occurred before. That commission, created now, could begin work immediately and make recommendations before any salary increase takes effect.



1  
2 Finally, the Council could seek a court  
3 order compelling the Mayor to comply with the law  
4 requiring the appointment of a Compensation  
5 Commission. The Council has sued mayoral  
6 administrations in the past for failing to carry out  
7 local laws. That option has been available for  
8 several years and remains available today.

9 None of these require abandoning half a  
10 century of precedent or rushing through flawed  
11 legislation. Council Members can achieve fair  
12 compensation while protecting the integrity of the  
13 salary setting process and maintaining public trust.  
14 Citizens Union stands ready to work with the Council  
15 to achieve that shared goal. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thanks so much.

17 SAMANTHA SANCHEZ: Good afternoon, Chair  
18 Restler and Members of the Committee. My name is  
19 Samantha Sanchez and I'm a Policy Manager at Common  
20 Cause New York, a non-partisan organization focused  
21 on government accountability, transparency, and  
22 ethical governance.

23 Common Cause New York does not oppose  
24 fair and reasonable compensation for public  
25 officials. In fact, we worked for years to support

the last salary increase enacted in 2016, and we generally support periodic reviews of compensation levels, particularly given that no such review has occurred in the past decade. However, we oppose advancing salary increases without review and recommendation from an independent Compensation Commission. For more than 50 years, New York City has relied on independent Compensation Commissions to evaluate salary levels of elected officials. Intro. 1493 would authorize a salary increase without convening a compensation commission. We understand and share the Council's frustration with the failure of the last two mayoral administrations to appoint the required commission. However, self-adjustment of salaries is not an appropriate response to that failure. Allowing elected officials to vote to increase their own compensation, particularly on a retroactive basis, raises procedural concerns and runs counter to longstanding anti-corruption principles that separate compensation decisions from those who directly benefit from them.

The problem before us is not whether compensation should be reviewed or even increased. It is that the current system is not self-executing. For

1  
2 that reason, Common Cause New York urges the Council  
3 to pause consideration of Intro. 1493 and instead  
4 adopt legislation that addresses the underlying  
5 structural issue. Specifically, the Council should  
6 amend the current law to permit the Council to  
7 convene an independent Compensation Commission when a  
8 mayor fails to comply with the requirement  
9 established under Local Law 77 of 1986 to appoint  
10 such a Commission every four years. This approach  
11 would preserve independent review, maintain  
12 continuity with decades of established practice, and  
13 ensure that compensation decisions are made through a  
14 legitimate and accountable process. Thank you for the  
15 opportunity to testify.

16 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Great. Thank you  
17 both for the thoughtful testimony. We really  
18 appreciate it.

19 Happy to open it up to colleagues first,  
20 where I can always talk, as Council Member Braver  
21 knows.

22 We've been joined by Council Member Frank  
23 Morano, the newest member of this Committee who's  
24 been a great addition.

25 Council Member Brewer, you want to begin?

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you very much. I have two questions. One is just to be clear. I think that any discussion of pay raises for Council Members should be attached to increases for Staff. My Staff is really underpaid, and in order to have increases for the Members, I would like to see something more aligned along the same percentage, or whether it is appropriate for Staff. Is that something that you thought about in your discussions? You didn't mention it in your presentation.

GRACE RAUH: I can take it first. I think you raise a really important point. It's not something that we have addressed in our testimony today, but I think that that further makes the case for a paid commission, an outside commission, to assess what is appropriate. They would have the opportunity to take a bigger picture view, both of City Council pay, of pay for Staff Members in the City Council, and as you know, prior Pay Commissions, the most recent one, also proposed reforms, like ending Lulu's in the City Council and making the City Council position a full-time role, which we believe should also be very much part of the conversation. So looking holistically at pay issues across the board

in the City Council is really important, and something that an outside commission would be the appropriate place to do so.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Also, do you think it would be a conflict to have the City Council do its own commission? Would it be better to do the mayor, or you don't have an opinion?

GRACE RAUH: Our priority is, we believe, the Mayor creating the Commission would be the best next step. It it affirms the law that exists right now, but as a secondary measure, we proposed in our testimony that the Council could consider amending the existing law so that if the Mayor does not follow through on their legal obligations to establish such a Commission, then another citywide elected official would be tapped to do so, and to us it felt like the City Comptroller would be an appropriate next person to defer to in the event that the Mayor does not follow through on their legal obligation.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay, I'll jump in.

As I mentioned in my opening, in the last 26 years we've had only two Quadrennial Commissions, one under Mayor Bloomberg, one under Mayor de Blasio,

none under Mayor Adams. There should have been six.

So given the Quadrennial Commission framework has been convened three times as infrequently as it should be, that's a little bit hard to wrap my head around, but given that the Quadrennial Commission has been historically only appointed by the Mayor, is this process broken? Like, do we think that it's time to actually create a new approach for ensuring that elected official compensation is competitive?

SAMANTHA SANCHEZ: So, that's kind of why, that's Common Cause' stance, right? Because the current system is not self-executing and that is an issue, and we do believe in the fact that Council Members deserve to be compensated adequately for all of your hard work and the way that you represent your constituents. It's an honor to be able to witness that. However, the Council should amend the current law to convene an independent compensation commission when the Mayor fails to comply with Local Law 77's four-year requirement. In the solution, it would preserve independent review, prevents future stalemates, and maintains the 50-year precedent. So in the event that the Mayor fails to, then we believe

that it is the autonomy of the Council, if Local Law  
77 is actually amended, to do so.

GRACE RAUH: And I would just point to our  
testimony and recommendations. We would say first, we  
have a new Mayor who's taking office on January 1st.  
I think the City Council would be well-served to call  
on the incoming Mayor to create such a Commission...

(CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: On forward looking,  
but I'm just asking broadly, is the process broken?  
Like it has not been working. Do you think, I  
appreciate your recommendations for moving forward  
and I want to get there, but I just kind of want to,  
as a starting point, we've had two Commissions in 26  
years, they're supposed to exist every four years.  
Common Cause's response was helpful. I'm just  
interested in the Citizens Union's perspective. Do  
you think the current process is broken?

GRACE RAUH: I think the current process  
needs to be amended and updated to reflect the  
reality that we have had now several mayors who have  
not followed through on their legal obligation to  
establish such a commission, which is why we think it  
would be very reasonable for the City Council to

1  
2 update that law and include a measure that says when  
3 a mayor fails to set up a Quadrennial Commission that  
4 then the City Comptroller would be next in line to do  
5 so. And perhaps there could be a series of, you know,  
6 Public Advocate could be next, the City Council  
7 Speaker could be in line as well.

8 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: And essentially,  
9 you're both proposing the same solution, that should  
10 the Mayor fail to convene a Commission in a timely  
11 way as required by law, some other elected official  
12 would, whether it be the Council or the Comptroller  
13 or whoever, would be charged with having to step up  
14 to create that Commission so that this issue is  
15 reviewed on a recurring basis.

16 GRACE RAUH: I think we differ somewhat  
17 slightly in that we wanted to propose a menu of  
18 options to the City Council, so that is one area in  
19 which we agree, but we don't think that is the only  
20 option for you all to pursue... (CROSS-TALK)

21 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: (INAUDIBLE) I mean,  
22 other cities such as Chicago have policies that  
23 automatically adjust salaries based on inflation. Is  
24 that a preferred approach so that we're not, I mean,  
25 this is a political football and it's always



challenging... it always appears self-serving for  
elected officials to be talking about raising their  
own salaries. And so is there a better alternative  
approach than convening these commissions to look at  
things? Is it just to say there should be an annual  
cost of living adjustment for elected officials or a  
biannual cost of living adjustment for elected  
officials so that their salaries remain competitive?

GRACE RAUH: I think what you  
unfortunately lose with just an annual cost of living  
adjustment is the opportunity to look more  
holistically at pay across the City Council, as  
Council Member Brewer raised, the idea of perhaps  
tying a pay raise for elected officials to a pay  
increase for Staff Members. And additionally...

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: History of that ever  
happening before? No.

GRACE RAUH: Not that I'm aware of.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I mean, I love the  
idea, but I just meant to say...

GRACE RAUH: But there is a history of...

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: In the purview of  
the Quadrennial Commissions in the past.

GRACE RAUH: There is a history of the prior Quadrennial Commissions recommending certain reforms to the City Council operations. And so, I think it's more of a holistic approach to have the outside commission examining this and studying it and provides more room for a nuanced conversation beyond simply tying pay raises to cost of living adjustments.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Right. So, you think that would be inadequate if there was just an alternative approach that was focused on cost of living adjustments?

GRACE RAUH: We would recommend that the City Council pursue the Commission and sort of alternatives to have one established before looking at very different structures to consider pay raises.

SAMANTHA SANCHEZ: And Common Cause agrees with that stance.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Right. And my recollection was that the 2015 Commission, which provided or recommended a significant pay increase for Council Members, also recommended severe restrictions on outside income. And I think also that was the time when they reformed the Lulu process and

all that kind of stuff too, which was all very  
sensible and overdue reforms.

So, I conducted a review of City salaries  
in advance of the hearing, and I was surprised by  
kind of the salaries in the Mayor's Office, where  
there are 52 employees that are making over 200,000  
dollars that we know about, which is likely about  
double the number who are working in the Mayor's  
Office making over 200,000 dollars, as I mentioned  
before, because of all the folks who are on agency  
lines who were deployed to the Mayor's Office. Have  
you reviewed Mayor's Office salary increases? I know  
you've got a lot of interest in this issue, but have  
you looked at the increases in the Mayor's Office,  
especially over the last four years, where there have  
been quite extraordinary increases under Eric Adams?

SAMANTHA SANCHEZ: Truthfully, no. That is  
alarming. And you just gave us another issue to  
tackle.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Right. Do you think  
more scrutiny is needed here?

GRACE RAUH: I mean, I think it sounds  
like you've done a good deal of research, and we  
would love to look at it and see what you found,

which I assume, yeah, if you would like to share it  
with us, we'd love to look at it.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Well, we're happy  
to. I mean, I've always been concerned about the  
Mayor's Office practice of hiding staffers on agency  
lines to try and make it appear that the Mayor's  
Office budget is more modest than it actually is. But  
it's been the extreme increases in salaries that  
we've seen under Eric Adams that has been notable. In  
February of '24, Mayor Adams signed a personnel order  
granting all managerial employees, including agency  
heads and Mayor's Office staff, retroactive increases  
of 3 percent from 2021 to 2024, and an increase of  
3.25 percent in 2025. These raises for 10,000  
employees cost the City 2.1 billion dollars. The  
10,000 managerial employees are entirely at the  
discretion of the Mayor. They are his political  
appointees. Do you think it's appropriate for the  
Mayor to give his political appointees a 2-billion-  
dollar salary increase? That got significantly less  
scrutiny than today's hearing topic.

GRACE RAUH: I couldn't respond right now  
without sort of broader context to the specific of  
the question, specific to the question, specificity

1 of the question that you are asking. But broadly  
2 speaking, you know, our message is that we do believe  
3 elected officials, and while it's not the subject of  
4 today, that people who work in public service and in  
5 government should be well compensated. These are  
6 important jobs. We want people to pursue them and to  
7 not have to be independently wealthy to do so. So we  
8 come to the conversation today less concerned about  
9 how high salaries are or aren't, and more about the  
10 importance of having a transparent process for City  
11 Council Members to set their own salaries. That's the  
12 distinction, is that those City Hall employees are  
13 not setting their own salaries.

15 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Well, elected  
16 officials are public servants too. Look, an  
17 administrative assistant in the Mayor's Office who is  
18 making 92,000 dollars in 2021 is now making 108,400  
19 dollars just based off the Mayor's raises. There's no  
20 performance review, no analysis of their work, no  
21 studying of comparable salaries, just blanket across-  
22 the-board pay raises that aggregated to 2.1 billion  
23 dollars that Eric Adams handed out to his political  
24 appointees. If we support raises for these hard-  
25 working servants, it's hard for me to understand why,

1  
2 and indeed, the entire unionized workforce received  
3 similar pay increases during that same period of time  
4 as Mayor Adams negotiated their salaries. Elected  
5 officials and maybe community board district managers  
6 are the only people who didn't get those cost-of-  
7 living adjustments during that same period in all of  
8 City government.

9           SAMANTHA SANCHEZ: With all due respect,  
10 Council Member, I would love to point out that the  
11 two problems that you're kind of putting in front of  
12 us right now, it goes back to a structural issue. Our  
13 stance is that no matter what, there actually should  
14 be a Compensation Commission, regardless of what  
15 level it is, to actually evaluate City employees,  
16 elected officials for their compensation because the  
17 salary gaps that you're naming, it's absolutely  
18 egregious, especially when we have constituents and  
19 fellow New Yorkers that are living below the poverty  
20 line. To see this socioeconomic downfall kind of  
21 falling in front of our eyes, not the best. You're  
22 raising a great point, but it does go back to a  
23 structural issue, and it comes back to the point that  
24 it is a mayoral failing, that we have an opportunity  
25 to amend through legislation, through transparency,

and to kind of give back that trust that a lot of voters have lost in this past administration, unfortunately.

GRACE RAUH: And I would just add that all of the information that you just shared with us about pay levels in the mayoral administration should all be part of sort of the body of research that an outside commission is examining and taking into consideration when making recommendations for City Council pay.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Yeah. No, look. I hear you. The 2015 Quadrennial Commission did a 170-page report. I reviewed it. I have it here. It was fine, and Fritz Schwartz was the head of it, so it was impressive. But in essence, at its core, the key analysis was salary history, pay for comparable elected officials, and economic factors. This is a very basic analysis that is required to be able to ascertain what should the adjustment be for elected officials over a 10-year period of time. It's not rocket science, right? And we've been able to make, I mean, Eric Adams did an across-the-board 2.1-billion-dollar salary increase for his political appointees, which I don't recall any statements from Citizens

1 Union or Common Cause or any good government groups  
2 criticizing. Maybe because you all supported it. I  
3 don't know. I just mean to say we're looking at that,  
4 and you weren't there at the time, so I can't  
5 criticize you for the statement. I can criticize Ben,  
6 but I love Ben, so I wouldn't. Just kidding. Not  
7 kidding about loving Ben. It's all to just say I feel  
8 like there's a disproportionate emphasis here, but  
9 missing the broader point of how salary increases are  
10 happening across City government, and I'm just a  
11 little confused when the analysis is really quite  
12 straightforward and simple. It informed why Dr.  
13 Williams introduced this legislation in this fashion,  
14 and the recommendations and the data that underpins  
15 her proposal that has 31 Council Members co-  
16 sponsoring and support. Are there data points that  
17 we're missing that require a much deeper analysis, or  
18 is it just a process question for you, and you think  
19 it doesn't look right for the Council to be acting in  
20 its own self-interest?

22 GRACE RAUH: I think it doesn't look right  
23 for the City Council to be acting in its own self-  
24 interest. We're also in a period where democratic  
25 norms have been eroded nationally and in Washington,



1  
2 and so we're quite concerned about declining trust in  
3 government, which is also why we feel very strongly  
4 that there is real importance and power in having an  
5 outside commission that is conducting this  
6 independent assessment and making recommendations.

7 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Yeah. I mean, I  
8 guess in the conversations I've had with Dr. Williams  
9 and many of my other Colleagues, it's never popular  
10 to do a pay increase for elected officials. It's  
11 always fraught... and I guess, and I care just as much  
12 as you do about instilling faith and confidence in  
13 New Yorkers in that government is working for them,  
14 and frankly, after these four years of Eric Adams, we  
15 have a lot of ground to make up. But there's an  
16 opportunity for government groups and others to say,  
17 looking at the data, it's clear that an increase is  
18 needed, and one should be addressed swiftly. And I  
19 guess I have heard in the testimony today there's an  
20 openness to the issue being resolved. It's just a  
21 question of how.

22 SAMANTHA SANCHEZ: Yes. And I would love  
23 to actually kind of go back to your previous points  
24 regarding the lack of specificity in the previous  
25 Commission reports, and I think that that's another

1  
2 opportunity for feedback, right, to kind of include  
3 the benchmarks, the information that you're looking  
4 for to actually make a report substantive to you and  
5 your Council Members' liking. There's a lot that we  
6 can do together to actually amend Local Law 77. And I  
7 do apologize that we weren't here before. I've been  
8 here for 10 months, and we are a staff of three.  
9 There are many issues going on in this great State,  
10 but we are here now, and I can promise that moving  
11 forward, the same scrutiny is going to be applied  
12 across the board.

13 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Yeah. Look, I  
14 appreciate it. I think that, in general, Citizens  
15 Union and Common Cause have the best attendance  
16 record at the GovOps Committee. We always appreciate  
17 your participation and your insight.

18 I'd like to just open it up. I would like  
19 to recognize Council Member Jim Gennaro of Queens and  
20 offer Council Member Williams the opportunity to ask  
21 some questions.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Yeah, no, just a  
23 statement that, like, I get it. It's completely the  
24 process. I think for our class of Council Members, I  
25 think it's also a timeliness thing that gets

overlooked, and I am a hopeless believer in  
democracy, but oftentimes it's very hard to be  
deliberate in democracy, and it takes a lot of time,  
and so that's just the only thing I want to add.  
Like, I completely get it, and I understand, and  
having commissions certainly are better for public  
consumption, but the public has always been upset  
about any raise, no matter how the raises have come,  
and, you know, there could be an argument on the  
timeliness. Maybe this is something that should have  
been taken up, but, you know, I think for most of the  
Council, we're coming into our final term, and these  
commissions historically have taken time, and so this  
is why we try to find some form of a happy medium  
where it's, you know, being intentional, not even  
looking back the 10 years. Because if we look back 10  
years, it would go much higher in terms of what was  
proposed, but really only looking at the last four  
years, and being really sensitive to the raises that  
City workers have received over the last four years,  
and using the same mechanism that they use, but to  
also say that this shouldn't be in replace of a  
commission, that we still do believe that a  
commission should be created. So, no question, I just

wanted to say that I do understand the dynamic, and I do get what you're saying about process, and completely understand. It's just, I think for many Colleagues, timeliness of the commission and the commission's work is probably what the issue is as to why we've tried to find this sweet spot.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I had one question that I just want to ask before passing it over to Council Members Morano and then Brewer.

So, if a commission were convened, whoever it may be appointed by, as we could talk through the different permutations, do you believe, based on your analysis in advance of this hearing, that compensation should be adjusted for elected officials when the commission recommends it, or prospectively for the next term?

GRACE RAUH: We think the gold standard is prospectively for the next term. That is the law. If you all were in the State Legislature, or were serving in Congress, any pay raise that you all were contemplating would need to be prospective.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: The 2015 Quadrennial took effect immediately, right?

GRACE RAUH: Correct. So as I said, that would be the gold standard. It is not required by law in New York City for elected officials, but just noting that our State Constitution, as well as federal one, does require sort of, yeah, if you were in Congress, if you were in the State Legislature, you would be required to only approve a prospective pay increase.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: But none of those guys got term limits.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: That was a good point.

SAMANTHA SANCHEZ: I will take back that question and formulate a better response.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I appreciate it. I just think it's worth noting a prospective pay increase that would take effect in 2030 means that a 15-year period elapsed without any change in the compensation level for elected officials across the City of New York. And when you look at, I mentioned the salaries of people like Randy Mastro, who makes 324,000 dollars a year. The Chancellor makes well over 400,000 dollars a year. Every other Deputy Mayor in the City of New York makes twice as much as City

Council Members. But if you look at other cities, like Los Angeles, where Council Members make 231,000 dollars a year, San Diego, little San Diego, where people make 173,000 dollars a year, the sixth borough in Philadelphia, where it's 158,000 dollars a year. These are all cities that are substantially smaller than New York City, but where compensation for the elected officials is substantially higher. So, you know, I just understand, you know, why that is a best practice, and there's a good argument that this issue could have been addressed three months ago that could have taken effect for the next term and been handled in a different way. But as I've mentioned, I don't know, seven times in the span of this 45-minute hearing, we've had, you know, Quadrennial Commissions convened sporadically, and it seems to me that the process is broken. And you both proposed a series of reforms that could either be one-time solutions or ongoing solutions for how to ensure that the commissions are actually convened and making recommendations so that we don't have this kind of political football every so often.

And with that, I will pass it to Council Member Morano and then Council Member Brewer.

COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and our friends in Yonkers, Miami, and Hudson County, New Jersey take issue with you characterizing Philadelphia as the sixth borough rather than their communities. Thank you both for being here... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: (INAUDIBLE) folks in Puerto Rico or the Jamaican Republic.

COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Exactly. And thank you for your testimony.

Just to follow up on what the Chairman asked about the question of prospectivity, even if a commission were convened tomorrow, would Citizens Union and Common Cause generally support retroactive raises, or do you believe compensation changes should be always prospective to preserve public trust?

GRACE RAUH: I am about six months into my new role at Citizens Union. My understanding is the last Quadrennial Commission, we were very firmly in support of those raises being prospective, which was not what was ultimately adopted. I think that that is a best practice, certainly, and part of that is so that when elected officials go before the voters, voters understand that there is a pay raise on the

line. That is something that they can take into account when they are determining who their local elected officials are.

SAMANTHA SANCHEZ: Can you repeat the question one more time?

COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: My question was about if these raises were to be retroactive or not. Let's say we do fix the process in a manner, and let's say there is a commission convened tomorrow, should the raises be retroactive to, say, January 1st, or should they just be prospective? Not necessarily for the next Council, but for the next paycheck.

SAMANTHA SANCHEZ: I don't think we actually have a problem with retroactive pay, but moving forward, we would love to establish a standardized practice so that this issue doesn't occur again.

COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Would you agree that allowing Mayors to ignore the commission requirement for a decade, and then bypassing it entirely, weakens respect for the Charter itself?

GRACE RAUH: Yes.

SAMANTHA SANCHEZ: Yes.



COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: If the Council could only act on one thing in the new year, either fixing the commission law or raising salaries, which would you both prioritize?

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Respectfully, I think both can be accomplished by fixing the process.

SAMANTHA SANCHEZ: Agreed.

COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: So, it's fair to say that both Common Cause and Citizens' Union's position is not never raise salaries, but fix the system first, then let an independent body guide those decisions.

SAMANTHA SANCHEZ: Yes, absolutely, because all of you deserve to be paid adequately. It is an honor to be a public servant, and these problems that we've had with the past administration have been egregious, and it has degraded public trust, and it is a noble calling. Yes, you all deserve to be paid as such.

GRACE RAUH: We believe elected officials should be well paid. We think it's really important to have adequate compensation to attract strong candidates, and ensure that we don't only have people

who are wealthy who feel like they can run for public office.

COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Lastly, are there any suggestions that you'd make for a future Charter Commission beyond your suggestions of if the Mayor doesn't panel a commission, then the Comptroller gets to, then the Public Advocate gets to, are there any sort of mandates that would allow this commission not to be optional? Because it seems like it's a crummy situation we're all in, because multiple mayors have just chosen to ignore the requirement to appoint a Quadrennial Commission.

SAMANTHA SANCHEZ: This would be one of many Charter revisions that we would want to see implemented.

GRACE RAUH: The current legislation, the current law, clearly needs more teeth to compel the mayor to create such a commission. We think sort of setting up, amending the law to authorize another citywide elected official could provide the needed pressure on whomever is the Mayor of New York to fulfill their legal obligation. And then we also think, we're having this conversation now, it's been 10 years since the City Council has had a pay raise,

the City Council is filled with elected officials who are extremely influential, and the City Council could, and likely should, be calling on the next Mayor who takes office in January to follow through on this and create such a commission. So, I think far too much time has lapsed, clearly there needs to be structural amendments made to ensure we're not in a position like this.

One final question if I may, Mr. Chairman. I apologize.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: You certainly may. You have no reason to apologize.

COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Let's say there were an instance where there was, hypothetically, a Mayor and a City Council that were very hostile towards one another, that were at loggerheads. And the Mayor, yeah, exactly, the Mayor would appoint a Quadrennial Commission, but he would stack this Commission just with folks that didn't believe the City Council deserved a raise or believed they deserved a raise of one dollar. Would that be a better situation as opposed to simply indexing elected officials' salaries to inflation?

GRACE RAUH: It would obviously be very disappointing, and frankly, a break with historic precedent were a Mayor to create kind of a sham pay commission. We have thankfully not seen something like that, at least to my knowledge in the 50 years that we've had these pay commissions, so that would be hugely disappointing. And I should note, though, that the final decision, the final vote is made by the City Council. So we have had situations where the recommendations by the outside pay commission were not adopted in their entirety by the City Council, and the prior Commission actually suggested a pay raise that was lower than what the City Council ultimately adopted.

COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you, Council Member Morano.

Council Member Brewer.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you. One question is, if there is a commission, obviously pay raises is one topic. Are there other topics similar to the, in the past, the Lulus and the outside income that you think should be included? In other words, is

there something else that you think should be policy-wise included?

SAMANTHA SANCHEZ: Truthfully, Common Cause would need to review further, but that's a great question.

GRACE RAUH: I don't have a specific example to provide right now, but I think the idea of a more holistic look at compensation could take other issues into effect, into account.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Also, do you know, obviously Lincoln Restler did some homework, but do you know if other cities have done such increases without a commission? The reason I ask, it's okay to ask the State Legislature and Congress and throw them in the bucket, but they do not have term limits. It's slightly different, and they're also two and not four years, so it's a different, in my opinion, scenario. I didn't know if there are other cities that have done something similar. Los Angeles is very different. Nine members. They have a lot more power than we do here in terms of mayoral control. It's a slightly different model, but I just don't know if you know of others that have increased their salaries

without a commission. If there is a commission, first  
of all, in their bylaws.

GRACE RAUH: Our understanding, our  
research has found that in 11 states, legislator  
salaries are tied to external factors like State  
employee salaries, median income, cost of living, and  
that it is structured to allow for automatic  
increases.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Like a CPI kind of  
situation.

GRACE RAUH: Yes, as well as decreases. So  
automatic increases or decreases without legislation,  
and again, that's my understanding that the Chicago  
City Council is structured in a similar way, so there  
is sort of a different approach that some states and  
cities have taken.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: So, sensibly, that  
could be something that a commission could recommend  
or not recommend and could, in fact, be taken up by  
the Council or not. This kind of, I would say,  
structured response in terms of salaries.

GRACE RAUH: Yes, they could consider  
that.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you, Council  
Member Brewer.

I do have one other topic. I just would  
like to, if I may, dig in to better understand  
Citizens Union's recommendations so I just understand  
how it would work, if that's okay. And then I, unless  
Council Member, oh, we lost Council Member Gennaro,  
so he's not going to ask any more questions. Unless  
Council Member Williams has more questions. Do you  
have questions for us, Jim?

COUNCIL MEMBER GENNARO: No.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay. Good.

So, the idea to call on the Mayor to  
appoint a commission in January, is that like we  
would propose legislation that would dictate that he  
has to convene a commission by January?

GRACE RAUH: So, yes, you could certainly  
pass legislation. I mean, we were sort of citing the  
language in the current bill before you that does  
call for the incoming Mayor to establish a  
commission, but by the end of 2026. So, one  
suggestion would be to amend the current bill to  
remove the pay increase entirely from it and update  
it to say that the incoming Mayor would be required

to establish a Pay Commission by the end of January 2026. We threw that out as a, you know, potential date to show that there is urgency behind the need to have this addressed.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: And every Quadrennial Commission, all of the appointees have been done by the Mayor. Is that dictated by the Charter?

GRACE RAUH: That is my understanding.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: And so, if a different elected official were to be convening a salary advisory commission, that would presumably require a Charter Revision Commission?

GRACE RAUH: I want to just amend what I said and then may have clarification. It's not in the Charter. It's legislation. The Charter speaks to the prohibition on any pay increases for the City Council during this lame duck period, but the actual structure of Quadrennial Compensation Commissions is set by legislation, so it could be updated and amended via legislative change.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: So, we could make a legislative change without a Charter Revision Commission amending Ad Code 3-601A to allow other



1 elected officials to potentially convene commissions?

2 Okay.

3  
4 And the City Council convening a one-time  
5 commission, you also think would not require a  
6 Charter Revision Commission? It's something that we  
7 could take legislative action on?

8 GRACE RAUH: That is our belief and  
9 understanding, that legislative action could be taken  
10 to advance a one-time Council-appointed commission.

11 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay, I mean, I  
12 think that the reality that I think Council Member  
13 Williams and I have tried to articulate here today is  
14 that salary increases for elected officials is always  
15 an uncomfortable conversation, and it's not a  
16 politically popular one, and it's fraught in a  
17 variety of different ways. We certainly appreciate as  
18 well as anybody how many of our constituents are  
19 struggling, and when we're talking about putting  
20 additional taxpayer dollars into paying fellow  
21 elected officials better, it's a hard conversation.  
22 And yet, the recommendations that are being  
23 considered here would basically, I mean, it's through  
24 a commission process where there's some basic review  
25 of the facts that I think we already know today. It

1  
2 gives a veneer of independence to a process, to an  
3 outcome that's nearly predetermined based on the  
4 simple math that we all know. So, I guess it's just  
5 that veneer of independence you think creates  
6 credibility to the salary increase that would not  
7 exist if this was handled exclusively through  
8 legislative action.

9 GRACE RAUH: Ideally, it's more than a  
10 veneer of independence. And so any future commission  
11 sounds like they would benefit greatly from the  
12 research that you have already conducted in  
13 connection with this Committee. But it is possible  
14 that that commission may look further to other cities  
15 and states to do a comparison of pay, look perhaps at  
16 different models for future pay increases, and may  
17 take into account potential reforms to the structure  
18 of the Body of the City Council that could be paired  
19 with pay increases. So I mean, in the context of what  
20 you described with the level of pay increases that  
21 many appointees in City Hall have received, it is  
22 possible... (CROSS-TALK)

23 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: (INAUDIBLE)  
24 appointees by Eric Adams totaling over 2.1 billion  
25 dollars. I just want to... it's 131 times the amount...

1 oh, let me... excuse me. Let me actually do this. I did  
2 the math on this. I just wanted to give this to you  
3 because I think it's important. The pay increase that  
4 we saw by Eric Adams for his political appointees in  
5 total is 131,000 times as much as the equivalent  
6 increase for elected officials' salary, 131,000 times  
7 more. Got zero attention, zero interest from any  
8 press or stakeholders as far as I can recall, and yet  
9 this is the focus. But by all means, I didn't mean to  
10 interrupt.  
11

12 GRACE RAUH: Well, the pay increase that  
13 you all have on the table right now is 16 percent. In  
14 the context of what you have shared today, it is  
15 possible that a Pay Commission might recommend a  
16 higher increase than what you all are contemplating.

17 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: That's right. I  
18 mean, and just to give the math, the pay increase,  
19 according to the fiscal estimate that the Council's  
20 Finance Division did, was that this would be a total  
21 impact on the budget of 1,649,900 dollars in FY27.  
22 Again, Mayor Adams' pay increase was a 2.1-billion-  
23 dollar impact on the budget.

24 Okay. With that, any other questions for  
25 this panel?

Thank you for coming and having a really productive dialogue. You guys made very thoughtful arguments, and I really appreciate you taking the time. Thank you both.

GRACE RAUH: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: We are now going to hear from a couple District Managers. Thank you for making the trip. Brooklyn District Managers, my favorite kind. Michelle George from Brooklyn Community Board 8, and Shawn Campbell from Community Board 14. And feel free to testify in whichever order you prefer. Good afternoon. 1:13. It's been a day.

MICHELLE GEORGE: Good morning.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Good morning, Ms. George. Oh, good afternoon.

MICHELLE GEORGE: Good afternoon. Good afternoon, Chair Restler and esteemed Council. My name is Michelle George, District Manager of Brooklyn Community Board 8. I support Intro. 1493, the local laws in relation to compensation for the Mayor, Public Advocate, Members of the City Council, Borough Presidents, Comptroller, District Attorneys, but my support is based on a personal request. I believe that the justification for the legislation aligns

with pleas of community boards city-wide over the years for a baseline budget increase because we have not had one in greater than 20 years. Like Council offices, over the years, the responsibilities, workloads, and public expectation of these roles for community board staff have continued to increase. Unfortunately, our budgets have not, thus eliminating our ability to pay our staff accordingly, recruit more talent, and move with the times to utilize current and modern technologies. Unlike the Council, however, most community board staff is only two to three people, meaning that there are fewer of us than in Council offices to accommodate the expanding needs of our communities, many of us with over 100,000 residents. As Council Members rely on their staffers to help pull the load and minimize burnout of the actual elected official, so do we at the community board level and need resources to minimize our burnout. All district office staffs require full-time focus, significant oversight of the volunteer membership to ensure they have what they need to engage the needs of the community, and constant engagement with complex issues that affect New Yorkers, such as the City of Yes initiatives and in

1  
2 Brooklyn Community Board 8, the complex Atlantic  
3 Avenue Mixed-Use Plan, known as AAMUP, that grew out  
4 of Brooklyn Community Board 8's M-Crown, M-Crown  
5 proposal. Due to the budget constraints, our current  
6 salary levels no longer align with the realities of  
7 the work or the technology that is needed to meet the  
8 needs of our communities post-COVID and even  
9 otherwise. Intro. 1493 brings the salaries of our  
10 legislative body up-to-date in a responsible way, and  
11 as such, I advocate for community board's funding to  
12 be added to this legislation or create a separate  
13 legislation for us in this vein so that community  
14 boards can experience the same benefits in a  
15 responsible, respectful, and humane manner. The  
16 increase for our baseline budget will accommodate  
17 rising inflation and the cost of living in New York  
18 City, as well as the (TIMER CHIME) level of continued  
19 education and commitment required to serve our  
20 districts and residents effectively. Thank you for an  
21 opportunity to testify.

22 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you so much.

23 SHAWN ALYSE CAMPBELL: I'll get it right  
24 this time. Good afternoon, Chair, Council Members,  
25 and those assembled here. My name is Shawn Alyse

Campbell. I'm the District Manager of Brooklyn  
Community Board 14, and I am here today to speak and  
acknowledge the justifications noted in the  
memorandum of support of this Intro. I note that this  
16 percent pay increase, the first in 10 years, is  
described as updated, an updated compensation meant  
to address the increase in responsibilities,  
workload, and public expectation of the roles of this  
and adjacent public bodies in order to serve  
effectively. I also want to note that the salary  
alignment and the mechanisms proposed to ensure  
compensation safeguards requiring the mayor to  
convene a compensation advisory commission and to  
ensure the transparency and predictability going  
forward is included in the justification memorandum.  
As evidence of my agreement of these tenets is the  
very testimony that I presented before this Body back  
in the spring in support of budget increases for  
community boards. We offered precisely the same  
reasoning and suggested very similar procedural  
mechanisms to secure our stability going forward as  
well. Our proposal was for about an 18 percent  
increase to make up for a 20-year lack in increases  
over that same time. We wish the best outcome for the

Members of the Council, and I hope that these principles, these tenets that are aligned in this proposal be applied to service local communities as we move forward in a new administration. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you so much to you both.

Just to educate the members of the public and this Committee, how many years have each of you been working as district managers?

MICHELLE GEORGE: Well, Michelle George, I've been working for Community Board 8 since 1989, 36 years. I've been District Manager for the last 16.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: That's amazing. Wow. Jerry Esposito's got nothing on you. That's great. Thank you for your service.

And Shawn.

SHAWN ALYSE CAMPBELL: 14.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: You both have been doing this for a long time. True experts. And just help us a little bit further. Could you educate us on the small, as you testified to, community board offices, the folks who work for you, assistant district managers and other staff, are unionized members of DC 37?



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MICHELLE GEORGE: Yes.

3

SHAWN ALYSE CAMPBELL: Yes.

4

5

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: And are district  
managers unionized?

6

MICHELLE GEORGE: No.

7

SHAWN ALYSE CAMPBELL: No.

8

9

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: And when there are  
across-the-board pay increases for management staff  
at city agencies, do the district managers benefit  
from that?

10

11

12

SHAWN ALYSE CAMPBELL: We benefited from  
the MPOs.

13

14

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: The MPO, when was  
that?

15

16

SHAWN ALYSE CAMPBELL: It was last year  
and it was retroactive, it was like 3.5 for one  
segment of time and then it decreased for the other  
segments of time coming forward.

17

18

19

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CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay, great.

21

So, if there was a consideration in the  
future to adjust elected official salaries based on  
inflation or cost of living increases, would it be  
sensible to also include district managers as a part

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of that process or would you think that should be  
handled differently?

SHAWN ALYSE CAMPBELL: So, I think there's  
a few different ways of going about it, and what I'd  
like to say is that a baseline budget increase for  
the agency would have empowered the board to give  
merit increases. At this point in the CB14 Brooklyn  
budget, I would not be able to offer either of my  
staff a merit increase like ever again. So we would  
depend on the collective bargaining increases that  
they get to retain them. Because they're both  
brilliant and talented, I foresee a time when they  
will be attracted to other jobs.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Got it.

MICHELLE GEORGE: And at Community Board  
number 8, my staffer who's a community coordinator,  
she has a really good salary. I can't even hire  
another full-time staffer, so I have a college aide,  
a part-time college aide. It's really difficult.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: So, and just to put  
a finer point on it, when you all get those, when the  
MPO happened, did that come out of the community  
board? No, it was separate and apart from the  
community board budget.

SHAWN ALYSE CAMPBELL: It augments the budgets, which is why if you look across community boards, we're supposed to have the same budget, but there's some variability based on the percentages affecting different baselines differently.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Got it. And if somebody's been there for a long time, then it's like, got it. Okay, that's all very helpful. And I'm grateful for your testimony.

Do you have any questions? Council Member Gennaro, Council Member Brewer?

Council Member Brewer followed by Council Member Morano.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I just want to say I am 100 percent and we've been dealing with this issue since '19, I don't know, long time, 2002 for me, and I feel strongly that you need more money. So I don't know that it'd be part of the elected officials' discussion in terms, but I think that this City Council should be much more aggressive. I think I've said this in the past, Mr. Chair, that we should have more aggressive support for the community boards. I allocate funding because nobody else is doing that for my boards. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: For the record, we have, as one of our 20 hearings over the last two years, we had a hearing focused on reforms to community boards. We passed a number of important pieces of legislation to support community boards, and I strongly agree with you that more resources are needed to support our community boards.

When I worked in the de Blasio administration in his first term, there was a meaningful commitment of resources to community boards, but I don't think there's been any real commitment since.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: That was my commitment.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I'm sure that was. All the good things happen thanks to Gale Brewer's smart advocacy, and we're grateful for it.

SHAWN ALYSE CAMPBELL: Right on.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Council Member Morano.

COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Well, first of all, thank you both for your service. As a long-time member of my Community Board, I recognize the difficulties and the challenges and the incredible

work that district managers do, and thank you for your testimony. I completely agree with you and Council Member Brewer, and it's one of the reasons that I've used my discretionary budget to supplement some of the shortfalls in things that the community boards need.

A couple of quick questions. Talking about money and compensation. There have been proposals from time to time to provide a small stipend for individual members of the community board. I'm curious what impact you think that would have on each of your boards if something like that were to be implemented.

MICHELLE GEORGE: You know, I struggled with that. I think this is a commitment, a local commitment. I personally don't think the stipend would be good, because I think the board members will show up just to get paid, because if you're really committed to doing this work, you'll do it whether you're getting paid or not so we struggle to have quorums sometimes. I don't know that they would... I know that they would come just for the money. They would just come just to get the stipend. That's

Community Board 8's members. I'm not sure it would be  
a good thing for us.

SHAWN ALYSE CAMPBELL: Yeah. It sort of  
diminishes the nobility of volunteerism so I'd be  
concerned about that. I'm not sure exactly what  
proposals you're referring to because some of them  
have been to offset childcare costs or caring for a  
member at home. I know that in the Charter, I said I  
know, and then I said that questioningly. I believe  
that in the Charter, there's some note about  
compensation for travel. So perhaps if there was a  
fine enough point on it, and it was a finite amount,  
it might be worthy of consideration. But paying for  
volunteer time sort of, it goes against the  
definition of volunteer time.

COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Not directly  
related to the financial issue, but potentially  
something that could make each of your roles more  
burdensome and more important and possibly deserving  
of more money, is we are coming up against the first  
community board members that are going to be term  
limited. The voters of New York City, against Council  
Member, then-Borough-President Brewer's advice,  
decided to implement a Charter change that term-

1 limited the community boards. I'm curious, what  
2 impact do you think that, whether it's financial or  
3 functionally, the term limits are going to have on  
4 each of your community boards?  
5

6 SHAWN ALYSE CAMPBELL: May I? Huge. It's  
7 already impacting the day-to-day, the amount of  
8 management to bring people up to speed. Community  
9 Board 14 also has a transition committee, an ad hoc  
10 transition committee, that's trying to ensure that  
11 the turnover and knowledge is sort of supported with  
12 mentors to incoming board members, but it's really  
13 big. The amount of work that we have to do to  
14 administer and recreate committees is big. It's  
15 impactful.

16 MICHELLE GEORGE: And for Community Board  
17 number 8, the first round of board members to be term  
18 limited out are the members who have been on the  
19 board the longest so we're losing all that history.  
20 It's going to be definitely challenging for Community  
21 Board 8.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: My final question  
23 is, I've proposed legislation, which 19 of my  
24 Colleagues have co-sponsored, that would give Council  
25 Members the authority to appoint half of the

community board members, rather than just make them recommendations that the Borough President has to appoint. I'm curious, since you're on the ground and dealing with these members firsthand, how do you think that reform, if it were implemented, would impact the work that you're doing?

SHAWN ALYSE CAMPBELL: I think we would feel the difference less in Brooklyn, where there has been a history of the three, and then I know the one before that, the three Borough Presidents who've served while I've been there have always been so respectful of the nominations that it feels as though they're appointments so I don't want to speak for other boroughs. But I think in Brooklyn, it would be a little less noticeable.

MICHELLE GEORGE: I agree.

COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you. The nicest thing that was said about Eric Adams this entire hearing.

With that, thank you both for being here. I really appreciate it. I'm just kidding. I'm not kidding. I'm not. It was an accurate statement. Gale thinks I should be nicer. She's probably right.



Thank you both for being here. We really appreciate it. Thanks for the thoughtful testimony.

The final panelist for the day, and a frequent flyer at this Committee and many others, Christopher Leon Johnson. Thank you for joining us, Chris.

CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Yeah. Hello, Chair Restler, everybody else. My name is Christopher Leon Johnson. I'm here to show support for this bill. But I want to make this clear that anytime the non-profits say that we have to form commissions and panels, you have to call their stuff BS. Because all they care about is trying to find a way to stay in business. And what I heard from the Citizen Union is just an example of the reason why the non-profit industrial complex need to be abolished in the City of New York. There should be a non-profit that should fully support this bill. Because one of their former Chair for the past three years (INAUDIBLE) is a person that you guys hate. Randy Mastro, who is the, if they want to say this is bad ethics, they let one of the most unethical people be the Chair of the Citizen Union so the way they're approaching this is ridiculous. They should be fully supporting this 100

percent. Now, when it comes to community boards, what I heard from Ms. Michelle George, I didn't like what she said about, oh, like, people should not be, people, rank and file members should not be paid a stipend. They should be paid. Another problem is that you have district managers that believe that they should all get paid the money, 123,000 dollars a year while everybody else suffers. We should all be able to get, people in the community board should all get paid for what they do. Because a lot of them have to represent the city in certain things, especially Community Board 6 in Brooklyn. So, I think it shouldn't be one person makes all the money while everybody else suffers. I think everybody should get a fair share in the City of New York. We have a Mayor that's coming in that believes in an affordable city, and the way you start with an affordable city is by making sure everybody gets paid the money that they deserve to get paid. I know next year they're trying to push for 30 dollars an hour when it comes to workers, and that should be the start. And I'm saying right now that I believe that the City Council need to make it where that the Members of the City Council, like the staffers of ALE, should start

1 getting paid a decent wage. So I support this bill  
2 100 percent. You guys deserve your wages. You guys  
3 deserve it. I appreciate it. I support your bill, but  
4 I think that the City Council, starting with you, Ms.  
5 Nantasha Williams, should admonish Citizens Union for  
6 saying that they should go through panels and forms  
7 and you should admonish Mr. Michelle George for  
8 saying that she should only get paid the money while  
9 everybody else in the community board suffers, all  
10 the volunteers suffer. So like I said, this is great.  
11 This is long overdue. Forget all panels. Forget all  
12 commissions. Just pass this bill and tell Zohran  
13 Mamdani to not veto this bill. He deserves his wage  
14 too. He's going to be a great Mayor. And I believe  
15 that with this next Speaker, this is going to restore  
16 a lot of trust in the government. I think you should  
17 be the Finance Chair. You should try to apply for the  
18 Finance Chair. I mean, you start this bill, you  
19 should at least apply to be the Finance Chair. You  
20 know what I'm saying? So that's all I got to say. You  
21 know, I support it 100 percent. I'll submit more  
22 testimony. And thank you so much.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Chris, can you  
25 put that on social media because that's not what you

said. You said you were against the bill on social  
media.

CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Yeah, I know. I  
saw the bill. I'll switch it up... (CROSS-TALK)

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: (INAUDIBLE)

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: He switched it up  
and then said you should be Finance Chair. It sounds  
like a...

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: I appreciate it,  
Chris... (CROSS-TALK)

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Good testimony.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Yeah. Great  
testimony today. Yes, I love that.

CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: With that, thank  
you. That's it. We're good. Chris, thank you for  
being with us. We appreciate it.

I want to thank all my Colleagues for  
being with us. And I want to say this is the briefest  
GovOps hearing that we've had in two years. And I  
hope everyone has a wonderful rest of your afternoon.

[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 28, 2025