

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS, STATE
AND FEDERAL LEGISLATION
1
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

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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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2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Testing, testing. This
3 is a microphone check for the New York City Council
4 Committee on Governmental Operations, State and
5 Federal Legislation. Today's date is December 16,
6 2025. We are currently in 250 Broadway, Hearing Room
7 1, and this is being recorded by Sergeant Ben Levy.

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

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

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

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

19 Chair, we are ready to begin.

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

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

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

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2 We're holding a hearing today on Intro.
3 1493, as noted, sponsored by Council Member Dr.
4 Nantasha Williams, and co-sponsored by 30 of our
5 Colleagues. Intro. 1493 would increase the
6 compensation of elected officials in New York City,
7 the Mayor, the Comptroller, the Public Advocate,
8 members of the City Council, Borough Presidents, and
9 District Attorneys by 16 percent. That's in line with
10 the annual increases in the Mayor's Office over the
11 past five years. Under our City Charter, the Mayor is
12 required, required to appoint a Commission to review
13 the compensation levels of elected officials every
14 four years. It's an obligation that is necessary to
15 ensure that our City Government continues to operate
16 effectively and attract the best and brightest
17 talent. But, of course, Mayor Adams failed to act, so
18 once again, the City Council is stepping up to try to
19 help get the job done. The last Quadrennial Advisory
20 Commission was convened in 2015, when Barack Obama
21 was President, when Steph Curry won his first ring,
22 the year the Supreme Court legalized same-sex
23 marriage, and at that point, we were endlessly
24 debating the color of that damn dress. I don't know
25 what color it was. Jen says it was blue. Indeed, over

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

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

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

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

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2 paraprofessionals, EMTs, non-profit workers, and so
3 many more. But if we want to recruit the best and the
4 brightest to serve in these critical roles and lead
5 our City, we need to ensure the pay is not a
6 deterrent for community leaders with college loans or
7 astronomical daycare costs. The 2022 City Council
8 broke records as the most diverse and the first
9 female-majority City Council in our city's history.
10 It is essential that leaders from underrepresented
11 communities continue to consider public service. The
12 proposed Council Member salary, is still less than an
13 agency head, less than 75 Mayor's Office employees,
14 and it is appropriate and commensurate with the
15 responsibilities of the position. The Charter has
16 limited the Council's ability to act on this
17 legislation between a general election and January
18 1st, but I hope that the incoming Council will take
19 swift action to resolve this issue. And I hope,
20 moving forward, mayors will appoint a Salary Review
21 Commission every four years, as is required by the
22 City Charter.

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

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

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

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

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

25

2 The City Charter lays out a clear
3 structure for how compensation for elected officials
4 is meant to be reviewed. That structure begins with
5 the Mayor convening a Quadrennial Commission, a body
6 that examines the data, makes recommendations, and
7 creates a transparent record for New Yorkers. As
8 noted, that Commission has not been convened since
9 2016, meaning nearly a decade has passed without a
10 full review the Charter anticipates. The legislation
11 introduced acknowledges the gaps and initiates the
12 formal process outlined in the Charter. It does not
13 predetermine outcomes, but ensures the review
14 proceeds on the timeline the Charter anticipates for
15 the following year. The figures referenced in the
16 bill use a cost-of-living benchmark drawn from the
17 recent DC 37 agreement, a series of annual
18 adjustments, 3 percent for 2021 to 2024, and 3.25
19 percent in 2025, rounded to the nearest 500. Today's
20 hearing provides an opportunity to review the
21 Charter's requirements, the role of the Commission,
22 and the steps that follow so the public can
23 understand how these matters are evaluated. I look
24 forward to today's discussion and to the continued
25 work of the Commission and this body.

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

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

9 COUNCIL MEMBER VERNIKOV: (INAUDIBLE)

10 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Sorry? J.D.?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

18 If you have a written statement or
19 additional written testimony you wish to submit for
20 the record, please provide a copy of that testimony
21 to the Sergeant-at-Arms. You may also email written
22 testimony to testimony@council.nyc.gov within 72
23 hours of closing this hearing. Audio and visual
24 recordings will not be accepted.

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

4 Now I will call our first panel, which
5 we're going to start with the good government groups.
6 So we will invite Grace Rauh from Citizens Union and
7 Samantha Sanchez from Common Cause New York to be our
8 first panelists today. Thank you for joining us.

9 Great. Feel free to testify in whichever order you'd
10 like.

11 All right.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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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

2 the last salary increase enacted in 2016, and we
3 generally support periodic reviews of compensation
4 levels, particularly given that no such review has
5 occurred in the past decade. However, we oppose
6 advancing salary increases without review and
7 recommendation from an independent Compensation
8 Commission. For more than 50 years, New York City has
9 relied on independent Compensation Commissions to
10 evaluate salary levels of elected officials. Intro.
11 1493 would authorize a salary increase without
12 convening a compensation commission. We understand
13 and share the Council's frustration with the failure
14 of the last two mayoral administrations to appoint
15 the required commission. However, self-adjustment of
16 salaries is not an appropriate response to that
17 failure. Allowing elected officials to vote to
18 increase their own compensation, particularly on a
19 retroactive basis, raises procedural concerns and
20 runs counter to longstanding anti-corruption
21 principles that separate compensation decisions from
22 those who directly benefit from them.

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

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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?

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

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

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

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

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

21 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay, I'll jump in.

23 As I mentioned in my opening, in the last
24 26 years we've had only two Quadrennial Commissions,
25 one under Mayor Bloomberg, one under Mayor de Blasio,

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2 none under Mayor Adams. There should have been six.
3 So given the Quadrennial Commission framework has
4 been convened three times as infrequently as it
5 should be, that's a little bit hard to wrap my head
6 around, but given that the Quadrennial Commission has
7 been historically only appointed by the Mayor, is
8 this process broken? Like, do we think that it's time
9 to actually create a new approach for ensuring that
10 elected official compensation is competitive?

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

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2 that it is the autonomy of the Council, if Local Law
3 77 is actually amended, to do so.

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

9 (CROSS-TALK)

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

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

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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

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

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

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

19 GRACE RAUH: Not that I'm aware of.

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

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

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

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

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

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

18 SAMANTHA SANCHEZ: And Common Cause agrees
19 with that stance.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Well, we're happy
5 to. I mean, I've always been concerned about the
6 Mayor's Office practice of hiding staffers on agency
7 lines to try and make it appear that the Mayor's
8 Office budget is more modest than it actually is. But
9 it's been the extreme increases in salaries that
10 we've seen under Eric Adams that has been notable. In
11 February of '24, Mayor Adams signed a personnel order
12 granting all managerial employees, including agency
13 heads and Mayor's Office staff, retroactive increases
14 of 3 percent from 2021 to 2024, and an increase of
15 3.25 percent in 2025. These raises for 10,000
16 employees cost the City 2.1 billion dollars. The
17 10,000 managerial employees are entirely at the
18 discretion of the Mayor. They are his political
19 appointees. Do you think it's appropriate for the
20 Mayor to give his political appointees a 2-billion-
21 dollar salary increase? That got significantly less
22 scrutiny than today's hearing topic.

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

2 of the question that you are asking. But broadly
3 speaking, you know, our message is that we do believe
4 elected officials, and while it's not the subject of
5 today, that people who work in public service and in
6 government should be well compensated. These are
7 important jobs. We want people to pursue them and to
8 not have to be independently wealthy to do so. So we
9 come to the conversation today less concerned about
10 how high salaries are or aren't, and more about the
11 importance of having a transparent process for City
12 Council Members to set their own salaries. That's the
13 distinction, is that those City Hall employees are
14 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,

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.

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

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

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

2 Union or Common Cause or any good government groups
3 criticizing. Maybe because you all supported it. I
4 don't know. I just mean to say we're looking at that,
5 and you weren't there at the time, so I can't
6 criticize you for the statement. I can criticize Ben,
7 but I love Ben, so I wouldn't. Just kidding. Not
8 kidding about loving Ben. It's all to just say I feel
9 like there's a disproportionate emphasis here, but
10 missing the broader point of how salary increases are
11 happening across City government, and I'm just a
12 little confused when the analysis is really quite
13 straightforward and simple. It informed why Dr.
14 Williams introduced this legislation in this fashion,
15 and the recommendations and the data that underpins
16 her proposal that has 31 Council Members co-
17 sponsoring and support. Are there data points that
18 we're missing that require a much deeper analysis, or
19 is it just a process question for you, and you think
20 it doesn't look right for the Council to be acting in
21 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,

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

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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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

12 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: That was a good
13 point.

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

16 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: I appreciate it. I
17 just think it's worth noting a prospective pay
18 increase that would take effect in 2030 means that a
19 15-year period elapsed without any change in the
20 compensation level for elected officials across the
21 City of New York. And when you look at, I mentioned
22 the salaries of people like Randy Mastro, who makes
23 324,000 dollars a year. The Chancellor makes well
24 over 400,000 dollars a year. Every other Deputy Mayor
25 in the City of New York makes twice as much as City

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: My question was
8 about if these raises were to be retroactive or not.
9 Let's say we do fix the process in a manner, and
10 let's say there is a commission convened tomorrow,
11 should the raises be retroactive to, say, January
12 1st, or should they just be prospective? Not
13 necessarily for the next Council, but for the next
14 paycheck.

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

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

24 GRACE RAUH: Yes.

25 SAMANTHA SANCHEZ: Yes.

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

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

8 SAMANTHA SANCHEZ: Agreed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

17 GRACE RAUH: The current legislation, the
18 current law, clearly needs more teeth to compel the
19 mayor to create such a commission. We think sort of
20 setting up, amending the law to authorize another
21 citywide elected official could provide the needed
22 pressure on whomever is the Mayor of New York to
23 fulfill their legal obligation. And then we also
24 think, we're having this conversation now, it's been
25 10 years since the City Council has had a pay raise,

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

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

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

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

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

16 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you, Council
18 Member Morano.

19 Council Member Brewer.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Like a CPI kind of
11 situation.

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

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

23 GRACE RAUH: Yes, they could consider
24 that.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. Thank you.

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2 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you, Council
3 Member Brewer.

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

12 COUNCIL MEMBER GENNARO: No.

13 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay. Good.

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

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

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2 to establish a Pay Commission by the end of January
3 2026. We threw that out as a, you know, potential
4 date to show that there is urgency behind the need to
5 have this addressed.

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

10 GRACE RAUH: That is my understanding.

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

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

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

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2 elected officials to potentially convene commissions?

3 Okay.

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

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.

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...

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

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?

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

6 GRACE RAUH: Thank you.

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

14 MICHELLE GEORGE: Good morning.

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

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

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

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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

2 Campbell. I'm the District Manager of Brooklyn
3 Community Board 14, and I am here today to speak and
4 acknowledge the justifications noted in the
5 memorandum of support of this Intro. I note that this
6 16 percent pay increase, the first in 10 years, is
7 described as updated, an updated compensation meant
8 to address the increase in responsibilities,
9 workload, and public expectation of the roles of this
10 and adjacent public bodies in order to serve
11 effectively. I also want to note that the salary
12 alignment and the mechanisms proposed to ensure
13 compensation safeguards requiring the mayor to
14 convene a compensation advisory commission and to
15 ensure the transparency and predictability going
16 forward is included in the justification memorandum.
17 As evidence of my agreement of these tenets is the
18 very testimony that I presented before this Body back
19 in the spring in support of budget increases for
20 community boards. We offered precisely the same
21 reasoning and suggested very similar procedural
22 mechanisms to secure our stability going forward as
23 well. Our proposal was for about an 18 percent
24 increase to make up for a 20-year lack in increases
25 over that same time. We wish the best outcome for the

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

6 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Thank you so much to
7 you both.

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

11 MICHELLE GEORGE: Well, Michelle George,
12 I've been working for Community Board 8 since 1989,
13 36 years. I've been District Manager for the last 16.

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

17 And Shawn.

18 SHAWN ALYSE CAMPBELL: 14.

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

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2 MICHELLE GEORGE: Yes.

3 SHAWN ALYSE CAMPBELL: Yes.

4 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: And are district
5 managers unionized?

6 MICHELLE GEORGE: No.

7 SHAWN ALYSE CAMPBELL: No.

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

12 SHAWN ALYSE CAMPBELL: We benefited from
13 the MPOs.

14 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: The MPO, when was
15 that?

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

20 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Okay, great.

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

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

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

15 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Got it.

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

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

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

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

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

13 Council Member Brewer followed by Council
14 Member Morano.

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

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

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

14 COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: That was my
15 commitment.

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

19 SHAWN ALYSE CAMPBELL: Right on.

20 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Council Member
21 Morano.

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

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

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

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

25

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

17 MICHELLE GEORGE: I agree.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MORANO: Thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

2 getting paid a decent wage. So I support this bill
3 100 percent. You guys deserve your wages. You guys
4 deserve it. I appreciate it. I support your bill, but
5 I think that the City Council, starting with you, Ms.
6 Nantasha Williams, should admonish Citizens Union for
7 saying that they should go through panels and forms
8 and you should admonish Mr. Michelle George for
9 saying that she should only get paid the money while
10 everybody else in the community board suffers, all
11 the volunteers suffer. So like I said, this is great.
12 This is long overdue. Forget all panels. Forget all
13 commissions. Just pass this bill and tell Zohran
14 Mamdani to not veto this bill. He deserves his wage
15 too. He's going to be a great Mayor. And I believe
16 that with this next Speaker, this is going to restore
17 a lot of trust in the government. I think you should
18 be the Finance Chair. You should try to apply for the
19 Finance Chair. I mean, you start this bill, you
20 should at least apply to be the Finance Chair. You
21 know what I'm saying? So that's all I got to say. You
22 know, I support it 100 percent. I'll submit more
23 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

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

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

6 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: (INAUDIBLE)

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

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

12 CHAIRPERSON RESTLER: Good testimony.

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

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

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

22 [GAVEL]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date December 28, 2025