

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

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April 27, 2023
Start: 10:57 a.m.
Recess: 11:03 a.m.

HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Diana Ayala, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Crystal Hudson
Linda Lee
Lincoln Restler
Althea V. Stevens
Sandra Ung
Nantasha M. Williams

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING:

Public Advocate Jumaane Williams

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: This is a microphone
3 check for the Committee on General Welfare. Recorded
4 on April 27, 2023, located in Chambers, by Nazly
5 Paytuvi.

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

9 At this time, please silence all
10 electronic devices.

11 Chair, we are ready to begin.

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

17 Today, our Committee will vote on two
18 bills. The first bill, Proposed Intro. 190A is
19 sponsored by the Public Advocate. This bill would
20 require the Department of Homeless Services to
21 produce a statement of rights for persons living in
22 shelter which would inform shelter clients
23 experiencing homelessness about the rights related to
24 their housing situation and the services available to
25 them. While there are various rights for individuals

2 and families experiencing homelessness enumerated in
3 statutory language, case law, and regulations,
4 greater protections are needed to ensure that those
5 experiencing homelessness are aware of these rights.

6 The second bill that we are voting on
7 today, Proposed Intro. 704A, is sponsored by Council
8 Member Abreu and would require the Human Services
9 Administration, HRA, to provide landlords the option
10 to accept rental assistance payments from HRA via an
11 electronic bank transfer. In the year 2023, this
12 option should already be made available to clients.
13 This would also further incentivize landlords to
14 accept the CityFHEPS voucher and potentially help
15 reduce the source of income discrimination.

16 I want to thank the advocates and the
17 individuals with lived experiences that informed and
18 helped us shape these pieces of legislation.

19 At this time, I'd like to acknowledge my
20 Colleagues who are here today, Council Members
21 Stevens, Ung, Lee, Williams, Hudson, and Restler.

22 I would also like to thank the Committee
23 Staff who helped work to prepare this hearing today,
24 Aminta Kilawan, Senior Legislative Council, David
25 Romero, Legislative Council, Julia Haramis, Principal

2 Finance Analyst, and finally my Staff, Elsie
3 Encarnacion, Chief-of-Staff.

4 I would now like to turn it over to
5 Public Advocate Williams for remarks on his
6 legislation.

7 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Thank you so
8 much. Much appreciated. As mentioned, my name is
9 Jumaane Williams. I'm the Public Advocate of the City
10 of New York.

11 I want to thank Chair Ayala and the
12 Members of the Committee on General Welfare for
13 holding this vote.

14 In winter 2020, there were nearly 80,000
15 people unhoused in New York City, the highest number
16 in the City's history. As of January 8, 2023, there
17 were 67,880 homeless children and adults living in
18 the shelters managed by the City's Department of
19 Homeless Services and thousands more living in
20 shelters managed by other city agencies. I want to be
21 clear that the arrival of new and aspiring New
22 Yorkers, asylum-seekers, exacerbated a problem that
23 existed long before they were here. The day before
24 the first bus came, there were 50,000 people in the
25 shelters, there were almost 10,000 women and

2 children, and many of them had been there for years.
3 The City's current efforts to combat homelessness are
4 clearly not working. The system as it stands now is
5 at best inefficient and at worst inhumane. We know
6 the solution to homelessness is not in the
7 (INAUDIBLE) shelters. It is more permanent,
8 affordable, income-targeted housing. For adults,
9 young people, and families experiencing homelessness,
10 the path to housing assistance is filled with red
11 tape, confusing and sometimes conflicting
12 requirements, stress, and suffering. For people with
13 disabilities, mental health, or other medical needs
14 and people whose first language is not English, this
15 process is especially difficult. While some
16 experiencing homelessness may be lucky enough to have
17 an advocate or a social worker to guide them through
18 the shelter system, most are expected to navigate the
19 process on their own.

20 For these reasons, I introduced Intro.
21 190 which would require the Department of Homeless
22 Services to produce a statement of rights for people
23 experiencing homelessness. This document which DHS
24 will be required to make available on their website
25 and to shelters and to social services offices for

2 distribution to people experiencing homelessness
3 would inform people experiencing homelessness about
4 their rights and services available to them. This
5 includes, but is not limited to, the right to
6 shelter, access to legal services, the right to
7 request an interpreter and translation services, how
8 to file a complaint, educational options for
9 children, the right to vote, housing and financial
10 assistance, protections against discrimination, and
11 the right to request accommodations for disabilities.
12 In addition, this document would include the rights
13 of people in shelters including the right to meet
14 privately with advocates and legal representatives,
15 be placed in a room with a person who identifies as
16 the same gender, a private room with a lock for
17 families experiencing homelessness, a secure locker
18 for single adults experiencing homelessness, access
19 to bathrooms, access to washing machines and dryers
20 or to money for laundry, access to space and
21 equipment to bathe and change babies and small
22 children, and meals and accommodations for dietary
23 needs and restrictions.

24 This legislation is vital at this moment
25 in time as it brings together existing rights under

2 one section in the City's Administrative Code and it
3 codifies existing case law. The congregation and
4 posting of rights enable people experiencing
5 homelessness and advocates to easily access and be
6 informed of their rights.

7 Again, I want to thank all my Colleagues
8 who sponsors and the City Council as a whole and this
9 Committee. This is a critical piece of legislation. I
10 look forward to it passing today. Thank you very
11 much.

12 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you so much,
13 Public Advocate Williams. We really appreciate your
14 partnership.

15 At this point, I would like to turn it
16 over to the Clerk to do the roll call for this vote.

17 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Thank
18 you. Good morning. William Martin, Committee Clerk.
19 Roll call vote Committee on General Welfare. Items
20 are coupled. Chair Ayala.

21 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Aye.

22 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Hudson.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Aye.

24 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Lee.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER LEE: Aye.

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2 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Restler.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Aye.

4 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Stevens.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Aye.

6 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Ung.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER UNG: Aye.

8 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Williams.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Aye.

10 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: By a vote

11 of seven in the affirmative, zero in the negative,

12 and no abstentions, both items have been adopted by

13 the Committee.

14 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you. With that,

15 this hearing vote is closed. [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 May 3, 2023