

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
JOINTLY WITH THE COMMITTEE ON
CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

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September 24, 2020
Start: 10:08 a.m.
Recess: 1:45 p.m.

HELD AT: REMOTE HEARING

B E F O R E: Paul A. Vallone,
Chairperson of Committee on
Economic Development

Jimmy G. Van Bramer,
Chairperson of Committee on
Cultural Affairs, Libraries and
International Intergroup Relations

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Inez D. Barron
Robert E. Cornegy, Jr.
Farah N. Louis
Mark Gjonaj
Peter A. Koo
Brad S. Lander
Carlos Menchaca
Keith Powers

A P P E A R A N C E S

Fred Dixon
President and CEO of NYC & Company

Nancy Mammana
NYC & Company Marketing Officer

Gonzalo Casals
Commissioner of Cultural Affairs

Sheelah Feinberg
Deputy Commissioner of Cultural Affairs

Ryan Max
Director of External Affairs

Ellyn Canfield
Executive Director of the Mayor's Office of
Citywide Event Coordination and Management CECM

Stefan Grybauskas
Director of Street Activity Permitting Office
SAPO

Alex Costas
Senior Vice President of Economic Development
Corporation

Wendy Feuer
Department of Transportation Assistant
Commissioner

Sean Quinn
Department of Transportation Assistant
Commissioner

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

Andrew Ronan
Assistant Director Department of Transportation

Anthony Sama
Department of Parks and Recreation Director of
Citywide Special Events

Matt Drury
Director of Government Relations

Bruce Thomas
Deputy Director of Government Relations

Robin Levine
Department of Information and Technology and
Telecommunications Assistant Commissioner

Regina Fojas
Senior Vice president of the Time Square Alliance

Lucy Sexton
New Yorkers for Culture and Arts

Thomas Ferrugia
Director of Governmental Affairs at the Broadway
League

Candice Thompson Zachery
Dance NYC

Vijay Dandapani
President and CEO of the Hotel Association of New
York City

Charles Shaviro
Data Researcher at the Center for an Urban Future

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

Cristyne Nicholas
Chair of the Broadway Association

Amy Roth
CEO of the Whitney Museum of American Art

Siri Horvitz
Director of Government and Community Relations
for Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts

Dhruv Chopra

Lizzy Marmon
Manager of Institutional Giving at the Museum of
the City of New York

Gail Thacker
Artistic Director of the Gene Frankel Theatre

Marc Ribot
Music Workers Alliance

Amy Todoroff
Director of the League of Independent Theatre

Kimberly Olsen
Executive Director of the New York City Arts and
Education Roundtable

Lucy Robson
New Yorkers for Parks testifying on behalf of
Adam Ganser

Tara Gitter
On behalf of Lynn Kelly Executive Director of
Restoration Project

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONT.)

Mallory Markam
Independent Dance Performer and Administrator for
New York Based Contemporary Dance Company, Eric
Taylor Dance

Heather Lubov
Executive Director of City Parks Foundation

Ann Wilson
Senior Director of Planning for Randall's Island
Park Alliance

Towaki Komatsu
US Navy Veteran

Abraham Gross

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SERGEANT AT ARMS: Please start the recording.

Okay, good morning and welcome to today's Remote New York City Council Hearing on the Committee on Cultural Affairs jointly with the Committee on Economic Development.

At this time, would all of Council Members and Council Staff please turn on their videos. To minimize disruption, please place electronic devices on vibrate or silent mode. If you wish to submit testimony you may do so at testimony@council.nyc.gov. Once again, that is testimony@council.nyc.gov.

Thank you for your cooperation. Chair's, we are ready to begin.

CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you. Good morning, thank you Sergeant at Arms and everyone for making it today. Let's begin this hearing [GAVEL].

So, good morning and welcome to the joint hearing between the New York City Council's Committee on Economic Development and Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations. Today is Thursday September 24, 2020 and my name is Paul Vallone and I have the privilege of Chairing the Committee on Economic Development, as well as with my

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4 Co-Chair and friend Council Member James Van Bramer,
5 our esteemed Chair of Cultural Affairs.

6 I would like to send my sincere thanks to members
7 of both committees, the Administration, and the
8 city's official tours and marketing organization, New
9 York City and Company for coming together to hold
10 this important and critical hearing.

11 These are extraordinary times for our city. A
12 prolonged pullout from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic
13 continues to leave its mark in every sector of the
14 city's economy but nowhere is it more pronounced than
15 our tourism, arts, entertainment, and hospitality
16 sectors.

17 Tourists numbers have plummeted since Governor
18 Cuomo declared a state of emergency back on March 7th
19 and has little recovery in the long months since.
20 Hotel occupancy rates fell to just about 15 percent
21 in late March and as of early this month, those rates
22 improve to just 38 percent.

23 Today, we will hear that the rate has dropped
24 even to eight to ten percent excluding the hotels
25 used as shelters with almost 40 percent of hotels not
even reporting. This is a far cry from the city's
typical bus lane hotels where over 93 percent of our

1
2 rooms are occupied on average. The financial loss
3 for the city and our employees that depend on the
4 industry is simply staggering and has never been seen
5 before.

6 The pandemic has shuttered most of the city's
7 world class arts and entertainment attractions. Our
8 remaining restaurants have been surviving on take out
9 or outdoor dining, as long as the weather permits or
10 until another set of permits hinders even the small
11 salvation. Even obtaining permission for outdoor
12 heating lamps become the latest example of the lack
13 of interagency coordination on these levels. Even
14 the Governor's decision to start indoor reduced
15 dining at 25 percent falls short of what is needed
16 for our restaurants and the jobs they provide for us
17 to survive.

18 Overall, the impact to our city's tourism sector
19 has resulted in the loss of over 200,000 jobs since
20 March. New York City & Company, the city's official
21 tourism and marketing agency, has not seen an
22 increase in their budget for over eight years and
23 relies heavily on private funding to complete their
24 critical mission. We have repeatedly asked for
25 increases to this budget and to give the CEO and

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4 President of this company Fred Dixon and his great
5 team the critical resources they need but this has
6 gone to no avail. Now there team has suffered a \$12
7 million loss of its private funding and a \$1 million
8 loss of its city funding.

9 All of its remaining reduced staff continue to
10 suffer salary reductions while this enormous task
11 remains. This past May, to tackle the pandemic, New
12 York City & Company cofounded the Coalition for New
13 York City Hospitality and Tourism Recovery to support
14 the city's recovery efforts and the heads of roughly
15 700 tourist attractions were represented in this
16 leadership.

17 The coalitions roadmap to tourism recovery
18 titled, all in New York City, is designed to act as
19 guidelines for the arts entertainment hospitality and
20 restaurant sectors who can follow to bring tourists
21 back to the city, help get our economy back to work.
22 It looks like the coalition is already entering into
23 the third stage, Rise, Renew, and Recover
24 Revitalization Campaign and we look forward to
25 hearing details on the success of that campaign in
today's testimony.

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4 As Chair of the Economic Development has been and
5 remains a privilege to work with all of the partners
6 in this virtual room today, and to champion what
7 makes the city the greatest of all. New York &
8 Company just last year had record numbers with media
9 campaigns that were over 66 million tourists to our
10 city. However, in just six months we have been
11 crippled by a never ending pandemic that has brought
12 these uncertain times to every sector of our city and
13 beyond.

14 This is why we have repeatedly asked for a
15 guaranteed funding stream and dedicated resources and
16 staff of the administration working with the City
17 Council to support the critical work New York &
18 Company does for our city. It is difficult to
19 envision how this can happen unless the
20 Administration commits to bring additional resources
21 to support New York & Company.

22 Every other major city throughout the world that
23 depends on tourism is facing the same challenge. To
24 survive, we will need to meet that challenge and to
25 commit to bringing even new resources, not hide
behind the financial crisis. This brings us to the
sector today of our tourism and hospitality industry

1
2 and the experience and knowledge that they bring from
3 working with decades of different administrations and
4 what we must address right now to do what is needed
5 to be done to this vital industry.

6 That is why I sponsor Proposed Introduction 1773-
7 A, which would immediately establish an emergency
8 temporary office of tourism recovery directly within
9 the office of the Mayor. The goal of this office
10 would be to facilitate the city's tourism recovery
11 efforts by coordinating across city agencies, City
12 Hall, and the public on all issues relating to city
13 tourism recovery. Assisting local businesses with a
14 tourism recovery efforts, cutting through the
15 bureaucracy of multiple agencies that are already
16 overwhelmed, acting to immediately and continuously
17 interact every sector of the tourism and hospitality
18 partners of our city and keeping the Administration
19 and this Council up to date on those efforts through
20 quarterly reports to the Mayor and Speaker.

21 Notably, this office would cease to exist after
22 five years. My goal with this legislation is to
23 provide an additional and a critical resource within
24 the Administration to directly work with New York
25 City & Company and the coalition of partners that are

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4 represented here today and to kick start support the
5 tourism recovery through the city. We must do more
6 and how we perceive from now will define the future
7 of city's tourism in the hospitality industry.

8 We will also be hearing three of the pieces of
9 legislation today. A bill and a Resolution sponsored
10 by my Co-Chair Jimmy Van Bramer, which he will
11 discuss following these comments and one sponsored by
12 our Majority Leader Laurie Cumbo, which I believe she
13 is here to discuss as well.

14 We hope this hearing will provide both committees
15 with an opportunity to hear the administrations plans
16 to address the city's tourism recovery efforts and to
17 hear from the many advocates in the tourism and
18 cultural affairs sectors on their experiences and
19 struggles operating against the backdrop of our
20 global pandemic.

21 Before I turn the floor over to my Co-Chair, I
22 would like to acknowledge the hard work done by my
23 committee staff in preparation for this hearing. A
24 special thank you to Legislative Counsel Alex
25 Paulenoff, Policy Analyst Emily Forgione, Finance
Analyst Aliya Ali, my Chief of Staff Jonathan Szott

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4 and my Legislative Director [INAUDIBLE 8:01] for all
5 their hard work in putting this hearing together.

6 I would like now to turn the floor over to my
7 friend and dear Co-Chair Council Member Jimmy Van
8 Bramer.

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much Chair
10 Vallone for your leadership and for your
11 understanding that the tourism and really the health
12 and vitality of the City of New York is in large part
13 driven by culture, the arts, artists and the creative
14 class. And that's why all of the pieces of
15 legislation that we are hearing today are of course
16 connected in every way.

17 So, I want to thank you for your proposed piece
18 of legislation which is incredibly important and of
19 course we will talk a little bit about those stemming
20 directly from our committee.

21 My name is Jimmy Van Bramer and I am very proud
22 to be the Chair of the Committee on Cultural Affairs,
23 Libraries and International Intergroup Relations, the
24 Committee with the longest name in the history of the
25 City Council. My pronouns are he, him, and his. And
as my colleague Council Member Vallone noted, there
are three pieces of legislation that both myself and

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Majority Leader Cumbo have introduced that we will be hearing today as well.

The first, Intro. Number 206-A sponsored by myself and about 14 other colleagues of mine is meant to establish an open culture program akin to the open restaurants and open streets programs that we've seen implemented so successfully in our city.

The city has done a great job in responding and creating those open streets and open restaurants programs and moving quickly. We haven't moved as quickly when it comes to responding to the absolute desperation of so many of our performing arts organizations and theater groups, dance companies, and we are seeing the effects that.

So, many cultural organizations, both large and small are literally struggling to survive and if we don't do something drastic to give them the opportunity to perform and to bring in revenue, many in our cultural community will seize to exist. And that is the dire state that we are in. The Met Opera cancellation of the 2021 season got a lot of attention rightfully so. It's an incredibly important institution as someone who loves opera myself, but the truth is there are so many much

1 smaller organizations, much smaller performance and
2 other cultural organizations that have not been able
3 to open their doors, perform, rehearse or gain any
4 revenue since the second week of March.
5

6 Intro. 206-A which we initially proposed in late
7 May is taking too long to be heard but I am anxious
8 to push the Administration forward to doing something
9 that could have a transformational effect on the
10 cultural community.

11 And when you help and you sustain the cultural
12 community in the City of New York, you help and you
13 sustain the tourism industry and you actually sustain
14 our people because in these times, people need to
15 laugh and dance, hear music, sing, and feel joy more
16 than ever. And no one does that better for the City
17 of New York than artists and the cultural community.

18 I also want to say that you know as far as Intro.
19 2060 is concerned, we fully realize that the bill
20 needs to be amended and I absolutely support
21 extending the March 31, 2021 deadline that's in the
22 bill right now and absolutely we need to make sure
23 that cultural organizations can charge for outdoor
24 performances because they need to survive. They need
25 to pay the artists who are actually doing the work.

1
2 So, I'm excited about this particular piece of
3 legislation because it is forcing a question that the
4 city absolutely has to answer, which is how hard will
5 we work to save the arts, save culture and save
6 artists and now is the time. We cannot wait any
7 longer. We all wish that COVID would be gone as soon
8 as possible and that people would be able to fill
9 theaters on Broadway and take in an opera at the Met
10 or sit in a terrific black box theater and see an
11 amazing dance performance.

12 But the truth is that is probably going to be
13 very hard to imagine anytime soon. So, while we are
14 entering into a cold weather period, this legislation
15 is as relevant as ever because come the spring and
16 summer, we are still going to need this piece of
17 legislation absolutely desperately if cultural
18 organizations are going to succeed.

19 I want to thank Commissioner Gonzalo Casals. He
20 was with us today. The Commissioner of the
21 Department of Cultural Affairs, fellow Queens member
22 of our community in so many ways and thank him for
23 being here and for his efforts and I know how deeply
24 he feels about this issue and the community that we
25 both represent and of course, the connection.

1
2 While the arts first and foremost sustains us and
3 thrives us as human beings, it is also an economic
4 driver for the City of New York and it is one of the
5 largest industries in New York City employing at
6 least 400,000 workers, \$31 billion in wages,
7 generating at least \$110 billion in economic
8 activity.

9 Last year the theater industry alone grows to
10 nearly \$2 billion and generally 15 million patrons.
11 While the dance sector contributed over \$300 million
12 to the city's economy.

13 To put that in context, the theater industry
14 brought to our city revenue roughly equivalent to the
15 GDP of Belize and the cultural community has been
16 gathering every day at 3 o'clock and I want to thank
17 all of you who have joined in support of this bill.

18 I have also sponsored Resolution 1422 which is in
19 support of the Save Our Stages bill both in the
20 Senate and in the House of Representatives
21 establishing a grant program for small live venue
22 operators and talent representatives to address the
23 economic effects of COVID-19. I know there is some
24 state efforts to that affect as well.
25

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4 I also want to and will be recognizing very soon
5 the Majority Leader, recognize her bill, Intro.
6 Number 2034 which she will speak about in much more
7 detail, creating an app to coordinate the use of open
8 space for art and culture programming.

9 And I want to recognize the Members of the
10 Cultural Affairs Committee who have joined us.
11 Obviously, Majority Leader Cumbo, Council Member
12 Gjonaj, and Council Member Borelli.

13 So, with that, I want to thank my staff, my
14 Legislative Director Jack Bernatovicz, my Chief of
15 Staff Matthew Wallace, the Committee's Principal
16 Financial Analyst Aliya Ali, our Policy Analyst
17 Cristy Dwyer, and our Committee Counsel Brenda
18 McKinney for all of their work on these pieces of
19 legislation and I look forward to hearing from the
20 Administration on all of these pieces of legislation.

21 With that, I will hand it over to Majority Leader
22 Cumbo to speak to Intro. Number 2034.

23 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: And if I could just
24 announce that we've also been joined by Council
25 Members Powers, Louis, Koo, Lander and Menchaca, as
well as the Council Members mentioned by Council

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4 Member Jimmy Van Bramer. Majority Leader, it is all
5 yours. Do we have Laurie?

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Hello, can you hear me?
7 Good morning. I want to thank both of our Chairs
8 Vallone and I also want to thank Chair Jimmy Van
9 Bramer for your efforts and support today.

10 I just want to start unrelated to this but very
11 related, as a Black woman here in New York City and
12 in America, just feeling a deeper sense of
13 vulnerability hearing the verdicts and situations and
14 the lack of indictments in the Breonna Taylor case,
15 it is a tough morning for me and I imagine it is a
16 tough morning for Black women across this country and
17 across this nation and it's probably equally an even
18 greater challenge for Black men across this country
19 who are given the task of protecting us, which seems
20 it is an impossibility at this time.

21 And so, as I say it is unrelated, it is so
22 related because it impacts every single thing about
23 our being, our ability to work, our ability to show
24 up and our ability to get things done.

25 So, as this meeting is happening today, I am
hoping in many ways that the arts community can
continue to utilize their voice and their creativity

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4 to bring about the voice of change and justice that
5 we need to see in this country.

6 So, I thank you all and I will continue with my
7 opening statement today but just knowing that my
8 heart is heavy and my voice is weak today.

9 I want to start by thanking Brenda McKinney our
10 talented Committee Counsel who has handled the weight
11 of her position and responsibilities as a mother with
12 seemingly effortless grace. You are an everlasting
13 inspiration to working mothers like myself. And when
14 we think about the ramifications of this global
15 pandemic, we must always consider our cultural
16 organizations.

17 New York City's cultural sector is one of the
18 largest industries in the world and it is the
19 backbone of New York City's economy. Employing over
20 400,000 workers paying over \$30 billion in wages per
21 year and generating more than \$110 billion in
22 economic activity. If just focused on the levels of
23 economics, we recognize that the arts are what's
24 driving New York City. It is why people come here.
25 It's why people are in hotels, why they are in our
cabs, why they are all here eating and dining in our

1 restaurants. Without that level of activity, New
2
3 York cannot succeed.

4 From the start of the pandemic, my team has been
5 so proud of the DCLA's daily culture calls at 3,
6 which at its peak brought well over 300 over city's
7 cultural institutions and local not-for-profits
8 together. This level of unity and strength has been
9 an inspiration to so many. These calls have gained a
10 strong understanding of the challenges that our
11 cultural organizations have and continue to face in
12 light of the global pandemic.

13 We've repeatedly heard one of the several
14 difficulties for these organizations, especially
15 right now is space. It is critical that we have
16 space, so that our voice, our creatively, and our
17 talents can be heard.

18 As a result of COVID-19, our city has made
19 significant innovations to make more efficient use of
20 our public spaces. We have brought outdoor dining
21 onto our sidewalks, enjoyed free healing movement and
22 dance classes in Fort Greene Park and so many more.

23 Intro. 2034 would create a website that would
24 allow organizations to identify and apply for public
25 spaces to feature their programming. Furthermore, a

1 mobile application would be developed to streamline
2 this process, allowing any New Yorker to find
3 cultural programming near them. And that is so
4 critical right now because as Chair Van Bramer has
5 said, we need to be together, socially distance but
6 we need to see one another.
7

8 It is clear now more than ever that it is
9 possible to utilize public spaces for cultural
10 programming. It is also clear that if we do not
11 utilize these spaces, it is unlikely that more than
12 half of these institutions will be around to have
13 another opportunity next year.

14 And I just want to close by saying, it is so
15 critical that we have these spaces because these
16 spaces are going to be what's going to heal. It's
17 going to be what's going to bring about the voices of
18 change. We need those centers where ideas can be
19 exchanged, where people can learn about one another.
20 That they can hear one another's ideas.

21 And so, I hope that we can work with the
22 Administration to realize this. This isn't the type
23 of idea that a dream app or a dream website. This is
24 something that's critical for sustainability and
25 survival for our institutions at this time.

4 I will turn it back over to our Chairs and thank
5 you so much to Chair Vallone and Chair Jimmy Van
6 Bramer. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you Madam Majority
8 Leader and as our Chairs and Council Members have
9 said, this is going to be a very important hearing
10 and if those who are joining us virtually for the
11 first time before the Sergeant at Arms swears in and
12 we start the testimony of the agencies and the
13 Commissioners. Just to kind of give you a quick
14 overview. You are going to hear the testimony now
15 from the different agencies that are involved in the
16 tourism sector and then you are going to hear both
17 from the Co-Chairs, myself and Jimmy Van Bramer and
18 some of the Council Members with some follow up
19 questions.

20 Then you will see the panels start coming. So,
21 you will see five minutes of testimony from the
22 Council Members and then two minutes for all the
23 panelists because at this point, we are over 30
24 different organizations and panels as well.

25 So, that's just a little summary and Sergeant at
Arms, if you can swear in our first panel.

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4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Actually Chair, I'm going to
5 take over and just go over some procedural items
6 first before we have the Sergeants swear anybody in.

7 Thank you Chair's Vallone and Van Bramer and
8 Majority Leader Cumbo. I am Alex Paulenoff, Counsel
9 to the Economic Development Committee of the New York
10 City Council. Before we begin testimony, I would
11 like to remind everyone that you will be on mute
12 until you are called upon to testify. At which
13 point, you will be unmuted by the host. Members of
14 the Administration who are testifying will not be
15 muted during their question and answer portions of
16 their testimony and I will be calling upon the
17 panelists individually to testify. Please listen for
18 your name to be called.

19 The first panelist to give testimony will be the
20 President and CEO of New York City & Company Fred
21 Dixon, as well as New York City & Company Chief
22 Marketing Officer Nancy Mammana.

23 From the Department of Cultural Affairs
24 Commissioner Gonzalo Casals will be providing
25 testimony, Deputy Commissioner Sheelah Feinberg and
26 Director of External Affairs Ryan Max will also be
27 available for questioning.

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4 From the Mayor's Office of Citywide Event
5 Coordination and Management Executive Director Ellyn
6 Canfield will be providing testimony and Director of
7 the Street Activity Permitting office Stefan
8 Gryhbauskas will be available for questioning.

9 Three other agencies will also have
10 representatives available solely for questioning.

11 From the Economic Development Corporation, Senior
12 Vice President of Marketing Alex Costas. From the
13 Department of Transportation Assistant Commissioner's
14 Wendy Feuer and Sean Quinn, as well as Assistant
15 Director Andrew Ronan.

16 From the Department of Parks and Recreation
17 Director of Citywide Special Events Anthony Sama.
18 Director of Government Relations Matt Drury and
19 Deputy Director of Government Relations Bruce Thomas.

20 And from the Department of Information and
21 Technology and Telecommunications Assistant
22 Commissioner Robin Levine.

23 I will call on you shortly for the oath and then
24 again, when it is time to begin your testimony.

25 During the hearing, if Council Members would like to
ask a question of the Administration or of a specific

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4 panelist, please use the Zoom raise hand function and
5 I will call on you in order.

6 We will be limiting Council Member questions to
7 five minutes which includes the time it takes to
8 answer questions. Please note that for ease of this
9 virtual hearing, we will not be allowing a second
10 round of questions for each panelist outside of the
11 Committee Chairs.

12 All hearing participants should submit written
13 testimony to testimony@council.nyc.gov if you have
14 not already done so. The deadline for written
15 testimony is 72 hours after the hearing. The
16 Committee Chair's have also asked me to note for the
17 public that we have a large number of witnesses
18 scheduled to testify today. We expect this to be a
19 long hearing but we will be reviewing written
20 testimony, which is also part of the record in case
21 you need to leave before you are called upon to
22 testify.

23 Before we begin testimony, I will administer the
24 oath. To all members of the Administration who will
25 be offering testimony or will be available for
questions, please raise your right hands.

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4 I will read the oath and then call on each of you
5 individually for a response.

6 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth,
7 and nothing but the truth before these Committee's
8 today and to respond honestly to Council Member
9 questions? President Dixon?

10 FRED DIXON: I do.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chief Marketing Officer
12 Mammana?

13 NANCY MAMMANA: I do.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Commissioner Casals?

15 GONZALO CASALS: I do.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Deputy Director Feinberg?

17 SHEELAH FEINBERG: I do.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Director Max?

19 RYAN MAX: I do.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Executive Director Canfield?

21 ELLYN CANFIELD: I do.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Director Grybauskas?

23 STEFAN GRYBAUSKAS: I do.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Senior Vice President Costas?

25 ALEX COSTAS: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Assistant Commissioner Feuer?

WENDY FEUER: I do.

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4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Assistant Commissioner Quinn?

5 SEAN QUINN: I do.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Assistant Director Ronan?

7 ANDREW RONAN: I do.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Director Sama?

9 ANTHONY SAMA: I do.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Director Drury?

11 MATT DRURY: I do and I will not that Deputy
12 Director Bruce Thomas was called away on an
13 emergency. So, you can get to the next one but
14 Director Sama and I are obviously available.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. I appreciate
16 that. Assistant Commissioner Levine?

17 ROBIN LEVINE: I do.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you all. President
19 Dixon, if you are ready, you may begin your
20 testimony.

21 FRED DIXON: Thank you very much. Good morning
22 Chairman Vallone, Chairman Van Bramer, and members of
23 the Committees on Economic Development and Cultural
24 Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup
25 Relations. My name is Fred Dixon and I am the
President and CEO of NYC & Company. I am joined
today by our Chief Marketing Officer Nancy Mammana.

1 COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT JOINTLY WITH THE
2 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND
3 INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS 29

4 WE thank you for this opportunity to share the
5 impact of COVID-19 on the city's tourism and
6 hospitality industry, what NYC & Company has done to
7 support the industry from the beginning of the
8 pandemic and our efforts to resuscitate the industry
9 as we work towards economic recovery.

10 I would like to provide a quick background on who
11 we are and what we do as an organization. NYC &
12 Company is the official destination marketing and
13 tourism organization for the five boroughs of New
14 York City. We are also often known as the convention
15 of visitors bureau or CVB. Our mission is to
16 maximizes travel and tourism opportunities throughout
17 the city, build economic prosperity and spread the
18 dynamic image of the five boroughs around the world.

19 We are a 501(c)6, private, not-for-profit, member
20 organization and represent the interest of nearly
21 2,000 member businesses and organizations from across
22 the five boroughs. We are governed by an 85 member
23 board of directors, which represents a diverse range
24 of businesses from across the city. Our members
25 range from hotels, cultural organizations,
restaurants and attractions to BIDs and Chambers of
Commerce. Together they fund about half of our

1
2 operations. We also hold a procurement contract with
3 the Department of Small Business Services to provide
4 the City of New York with certain tourism marketing
5 services.

6 In March of this year, along with everyone else,
7 our world completely changed due to COVID-19. By the
8 time April came, the NYC travel and tourism industry
9 ground to a complete stop. The city that never
10 sleeps went to sleep. The 400,000 direct and
11 indirect jobs powered by the travel and tourism
12 industry were thrown into limbo, upending the lives
13 and businesses that make New York City so magical.
14 Major events, meetings, conventions, sporting events,
15 performances and concerts were postponed or canceled.
16 Restaurants, retail stores, theaters, cultural
17 institutions and sports arenas shuttered. Hotels
18 closed altogether or transitioned from welcoming
19 guests to housing emergency and frontline workers.

20 Travel and tourism has long been a driver of
21 economic prosperity and urban vitality for New York
22 City. Last year marked the tenth consecutive year of
23 growth in visitor spending, business revenues, job
24 creation, new investments and city tax revenues. The
25

1 pandemic response has taken a noticeable economic
2 toll on our industry's businesses and workers.

3
4 Let me give you a brief overview of the economic
5 costs of the pandemic and subsequent pause we endured
6 due to it.

7 We can expect overall visitor spending in
8 calendar year 2020 to drop by over two-thirds, even
9 as there has been a small pick-up in weekend hotel
10 stays. Last year, visitors spent over \$46 billion in
11 our city. This year, despite a good beginning in
12 January and February, that number is likely to drop
13 to about \$16 billion as fewer visitors have fewer
14 places and activities to spend money on.

15 Additionally, hotel room demand, always a leading
16 indicator, has fallen by about 68 percent since the
17 start of the pandemic response in March 2020. At
18 current occupancy levels, it will be off about 23
19 million room nights compared to calendar year 2019.
20 Moreover, hotel taxes are likely to fall by almost
21 \$500 million compared to calendar year 2019.

22 Given this reduction in visitation and spending,
23 especially by over-night travel and international
24 visitors since March, the city's Leisure and
25 Hospitality sector has lost more jobs than the

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1 Information, Financial and Professional and Business
2 Service sectors combined. In August, Leisure &
3 Hospitality jobs were down 49 percent on average.
4 That represents over 231,000 jobs in New York City
5 but some business sectors even were more hard hit.
6

7 Restaurants and bars, which rely on visitors for
8 about one-third of their revenues, have been the most
9 affected in terms of actual number of jobs, a loss of
10 144,200 jobs as of August, down over 45 percent. It
11 was good news that when seated dining became
12 available, the restaurant sector added back 10,000
13 jobs between July and August this year.

14 On the other hand, the smaller numbers in the
15 Arts, Entertainment and Recreation sector have been
16 harder hit. Six in ten jobs in the sector are
17 supported by visitor spending. As a result, in
18 August, the sector has lost 65 percent of its jobs, a
19 continuing loss of 62,400 positions even as the city
20 has begun to reopen for local residents. Driving
21 much of this is the loss of jobs in the performing
22 arts down 70 percent, a loss of 31,700 jobs. Museums
23 are still off by 44 percent even after beginning to
24 open last month but are still down over 6,300
25 positions.

1
2 Even as the hotels have continued to operate on a
3 limited basis, there has been a loss of almost half
4 the jobs in Traveler Accommodations, still down
5 24,000 positions in August. Therefore, it is evident
6 the value that this industry brings to the city's
7 economic but also the uniqueness of New York City.

8 On a personal note as CEO, I faced tough
9 decisions for our organization. While dealing with
10 the very loss early on of one of our own colleagues
11 to COVID, we had to assess our own fiscal reality as
12 the city's destination marketing organization. In
13 conjunction with the Board leadership and our
14 Executive team, we made difficult decisions that made
15 us leaner and more nimble as the future remained
16 uncertain for our industry and the city overall.
17 Thus, we can relate to our industry partners and
18 members, who faced similar challenges in order to
19 survive. I have to say I am incredibly proud of our
20 staff who quickly pivoted to support the industry and
21 our partners in government, to ensure the city we
22 love survives this pandemic and economic fallout
23 while going through these immensely difficult changes
24 at work and to their personal lives.

1
2 NYC & Company played a vital role in connecting,
3 convening, and supporting critical sectors of the
4 economy from the earliest days of the pandemic. That
5 responsibility addressed five key areas: Supporting
6 City relief efforts; providing advocacy support to
7 the industry; driving immediate local spending
8 through online platforms; making sure we continue to
9 book future group and event business to lay the base
10 for future success, while still planning recovery
11 efforts for the industry.

12 From developing virtual opportunities to support
13 NYC restaurants, retail, and cultural communities to
14 assisting the city's Office of Emergency Management
15 in finding hotel rooms for healthcare workers, NYC &
16 Company continued to be a trusted resources and a
17 pillar of strength for the industry.

18 Our online platforms of Virtual NYC, Shop in NYC,
19 Dine in NYC, and most recently NYC Virtual Field
20 Trips and NYC Virtual Site visits for event
21 organizers served the immediate need of keeping
22 residents and audiences around the world connected to
23 our city through virtual content as stay at home
24 orders were put into place. This allowed us to keep
25 New York City's restaurant, retail, and cultural

1
2 sectors top of mind and gave opportunities for
3 consumers to continue to support business and
4 institutions they loved. As lockdowns began to ease,
5 we pivoted to encourage real in-person engagements,
6 launching a new promotion in support of artists, the
7 creative community and the arts and cultural sector
8 with All in NYC, Public Art Edition.

9 Focused on outdoor experiences it highlights
10 free, public art throughout the five boroughs as one
11 way to begin safely exploring neighborhoods again.
12 As racial unrest enveloped our country, we stepped up
13 and created new content and messaging for our
14 newsletters, website and social media channels
15 dedicated to support for Black-owned businesses,
16 restaurants, venues, and retail shops, throughout the
17 city. We continue the effort today and are expanding
18 it as we go forward.

19 Falling under the Deputy Mayor of Housing and
20 Economic Development's portfolio, we made sure our
21 industry partners received the latest updates from
22 the city and confirmed to her office what was
23 happening on the ground as it pertained to tourism
24 businesses. I was invited to support the Deputy
25 Mayor along with Commissioners Casals and del

1
2 Castillo on the Mayor's Arts, Culture, and Tourism
3 Advisory Sector Council.

4 Even working as a leaner organization today, NYC
5 & Company remains dedicated to revitalizing the
6 city's economy. We rely heavily on our government
7 and industry partners to do so. Therefore, in June,
8 we brought together key stakeholders from across the
9 boroughs, including public health partners to
10 establish the Coalition for NYC Hospitality and
11 Tourism Recovery. The first objective of the
12 Coalition was to create a tourism recovery plan and
13 on July 7th we released "All in NYC, The Roadmap for
14 Tourism's Reimagining and Recovery." Utilizing our
15 strength as the city's destination marketing
16 organization, major components of this plan included
17 our ongoing revitalization campaign, All in NYC, our
18 health initiative, the Stay Well NYC Pledge, tactics
19 for our renewed commitment to diversity and
20 inclusivity, especially in lifting up NYC's BIPOC
21 communities and how putting hyperlocal exploration,
22 along with staycation messaging, will be at the
23 forefront of our initiatives until a time when
24 domestic, and ultimately international travel resume.

1
2 From the onset, we have worked closely with
3 NYCEDC and Small Business Services to engage
4 businesses both big and small to join in this
5 important effort.

6 I will now turn it over to our Chief Marketing
7 Officer Nancy Mammana, to discuss in more detail the
8 All in NYC campaign. Nancy?

9 NANCY MAMMANA: Good morning and thank you for
10 the opportunity to share our work. All in NYC, our
11 new revitalization campaign platform that Fred
12 mentioned, launched alongside our coalition's
13 recovery roadmap on July 7th. It is designed to help
14 New Yorkers reconnect with the city they love and
15 remind them that New York City remains the greatest
16 city in the world. This deceptively simple tagline
17 and idea embodies how New Yorkers feel about our city
18 and is a reminder of all it has to offer. This
19 overall campaign objective is to revitalize New York
20 City by inviting locals first, and ultimately
21 visitors, to reengage with the five boroughs we know
22 and love. The campaign is being implemented in
23 phases with a full funnel strategy. First, awareness
24 followed by our Vibrancy campaign called Neighborhood
25

1
2 Getaways, which involves citywide offers to encourage
3 safe exploration.

4 Later, it will be followed by a Tourism Campaign
5 with timing to be determined, which will first
6 encourage safe domestic travel and then international
7 when borders reopen and travel restrictions allow.

8 We released the All in NYC Business Tool Kit to
9 the public on July 30th. As of yesterday, over 200
10 businesses have gone all in downloading it. This
11 exclusive tool kit helps businesses go all in on the
12 city's comeback by adopting the campaign's branding
13 and rallying cry. It includes comprehensive brand
14 guidelines, custom digital and print assets, and more
15 details on our All in NYC Opening Up social medial
16 initiative designed to promote user generated content
17 created by locals and businesses.

18 This particular initiative showcases the personal
19 stories of New York City's signature resilience by
20 asking residents and people who do business in NYC or
21 own businesses in New York City, to post videos and
22 photos about how they are opening up and how they are
23 All in on NYC and use our hashtag, #AllinNYC. This
24 content shares how they are getting back to work and
25 reopening their doors, as well as what has given them

1 hope over the last few months, and how they will
2 responsibly welcome back guests and why they are
3 proud to call New York City home or the home of their
4 business. As of this week, the total number of All
5 in NYC hashtags is over 3,175 with 475 businesses
6 that have contributed more than 850 stories and
7 counting about how they are open and All in NYC.
8

9 Our new Vibrancy campaign, All in NYC,
10 Neighborhood Getaways, launched on September 15th and
11 is running in the local New York City area, in the
12 Tri-State area and through the Northeast Corridor,
13 with media running on local Broadcast TV, Taxi TV,
14 Facebook, Instagram, Google Search and Programmatic
15 digital advertising as well as in out of home media
16 through JC Decaux and Link NYC. This program is the
17 first of its kind, designed to suit the current
18 moment. It's an invitation to New Yorkers and drive
19 market visitors to safely rediscover New York City
20 with nearly 200 participants to date. This program
21 evolves our New York City Restaurant Week and New
22 York City Must See Week into our largest program to
23 date. The program has more offerings. It includes
24 hotels, restaurants, retailers, attractions and
25 cultural institutions, they are all open to

1 participating and it offers a platform for the
2 breadth of New York City businesses that are open
3 right now.

4
5 It also offers more inclusion. For the first
6 time, we are opening the program to businesses that
7 are not currently members of NYC & Company, to ensure
8 that there is support given to all sectors throughout
9 the five boroughs.

10 It also offers more time. Instead of the usual
11 two or three weeks, the program will run through the
12 end of the year and it potentially can extend into
13 early 2021 depending on the current conditions.

14 It also offers more flexibility. The program
15 will offer further support by offering businesses the
16 ability to create their own offer with minimal
17 guidelines, as well as the opportunity to change
18 those offers along the way.

19 It also offers more targeting. We've improved
20 the functionality on NYCgo.com our website, to
21 facilitate deeper exploration by neighborhood with
22 the goal of encouraging participation in multiple
23 experiences during one trip or outing. Our
24 advertising efforts will also target New Yorkers more
25 specifically, especially in the program's early

1 stages before expanding into the tri-state area and
2 Acela corridor. It is important to note, that all of
3 our messaging and creative reinforce the importance
4 of public health and safe exploration especially mask
5 wearing, which we are showing prominently and social
6 distancing and our photography as well as in
7 compliance with our Stay Well NYC Pledge, which we
8 continue to promote.
9

10 Additionally, our All in NYC Neighborhood
11 Getaways tool kit is now available for use.
12 Mastercard, our global partner, will support the
13 program through a robust digital media campaign as
14 well as a compelling statement credit offer.
15 Registered cardholders will be able to receive up to
16 \$100 in statement credits from qualifying
17 participating businesses that are in the program.
18 The credit provides \$10 back for every \$20 spent on
19 experiences, which include dining, retail, cultural
20 organizations and attractions, or \$25 back on every
21 \$100 spent on hotels. Which is a great encouragement
22 for Stay-cations. It's totaled of up to \$100 in
23 statement credits allowed per cardholder, which is
24 compelling.
25

Participation in the program is free for
businesses to join and sign up is this very simple
process on our website. We welcome additional
businesses to participate at any time.

We are also now producing a series of video
portraits featuring New Yorkers in the business
community who embody the spirit of All in. Through
interviews conducted via Zoom and socially distant
shoots that took place at their place of business,
the series tells stories of people who demonstrate
resilience and compassion for their communities,
reinforcing the foundation of the five boroughs. We
will be releasing these in waves of 5 videos each,
one per borough, in paid social media, starting this
week.

Lastly, we were required by contract with the
city to utilize our international JCDecaux out-of-
home media allocation, so we therefore launched a new
campaign entitled New York City Misses You Too in
order to keep New York City top of mind for those
visitors in Australia, Mexico, Peru, Spain and the UK
this summer and it really acknowledges where we are
at the current state and we are grateful that we were
able to keep that presence internationally.

1 We would like to thank Chairman Vallone for
2 providing a terrific All in NYC video spotlighting
3 his district. We hope you will join him in providing
4 your own personal social media post showing your
5 commitment to being All in for NYC and encouraging
6 businesses and organizations to be All in as well.
7 We would be happy to send the link to the tool kit
8 afterwards. I will now turn it back over to Fred.

9
10 FRED DIXON: Thank you very much Nancy. As you
11 all can see, NYC & Company has gone All in for NYC to
12 boost our industry and stimulate demand from the
13 audience at hand using a targeted hyperlocal approach
14 while bracing for unpredictable months ahead. While a
15 significant number of small businesses, attractions,
16 cultural and hotels either remained opened or are
17 struggling to open now, there are still integral
18 segments of our industry that cannot or have not been
19 able to reopen including many of our city's most
20 storied sectors like Broadway, performing arts,
21 nightlife, music and sports venues, in addition to
22 large-scale public events and major conventions and
23 tradeshows.

24 Until the public health guidance and protocols
25 are released so these sectors can safely reopen, a

1 full economic recovery will be virtually impossible
2
3 to attain. Without these vital demand generators,
4 the full allure of New York City as a destination
5 will remain absent.

6 For those of us watching the national and global
7 picture on travel and tourism, we know that this will
8 be a long road back, especially challenging for large
9 city destinations. We understand this is a marathon
10 not a sprint and are steeled for the long fight ahead
11 to recovery. In the meantime, we believe
12 demonstrating the strength and vitality of New York
13 City through the All in NYC campaign will maintain
14 the integrity of the city's brand, so when it is safe
15 to do so, our 67 million annual visitors will begin
16 to return and be welcomed once again to experience
17 our city's rich and diverse offerings.

18 In regards to Proposed Intro 1773-A, while we
19 appreciate the intent of this bill, given the city's
20 current fiscal situation, it is our understanding
21 that creating a new Mayor's Office would generate
22 unplanned costs for the city. Therefore, it would
23 make compliance by the Administration and NYC &
24 Company impossible.

1
2 However, I would defer to the Administration to
3 discuss the state of resources available with the
4 City Council. From my organization's standpoint, the
5 proposed office does seem duplicative to what NYC &
6 Company has always done and continues to do even in
7 the pandemic, so we will continue to focus on our
8 published recovery roadmap.

9 I said at last year's hearing that tourism is
10 often the forgotten economic engine for the city.
11 These hearings provide an opportunity to display
12 briefly the accomplishments of the tourism industry
13 and NYC & Company, and how all in we are for New York
14 City.

15 Thank you for allowing us the time to testify.
16 Nancy and I are happy to answer any questions you may
17 have.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you President Dixon.
19 We will now move to Commissioner Casals for
20 testimony. Commissioner Casals, you may begin.

21 GONZALO CASALS: Good morning everyone. Before I
22 start with my testimony, I just want to clarify that
23 the Cultural free call was self-organized by the
24 sector not by DCLA. That makes it even more
25 important and it is because of the passionate

1 dedicated leaders that we have in our sector that
2 that call continues to happen every day.

3
4 Good morning Chair Van Bramer, Chair Vallone and
5 members of the Committees. Thank you for the
6 opportunity to testify on the cultural sector impact
7 on reopening New York City. I am joined today by
8 Deputy Commissioner Sheelah Feinberg and External
9 Affairs Director Ryan Max.

10 In recent weeks, the reopening of cultural
11 organizations have lifted the spirits of all New
12 Yorkers. I have been visiting museums, zoos, gardens
13 and historic houses all over the city. It has been
14 inspiring to witness and hear stories of people
15 visiting the reopening of cultural organizations. It
16 brings them a sense of normalcy and makes them feel
17 connected to their fellow New Yorkers.

18 I've been to the [INAUDIBLE 48:19], the Bronx
19 Zoo, MoMA PS1, which I had the pleasure of seating
20 with Chair Van Bramer and many others. All these
21 places are loved by their communities and the
22 reopening has marked a major milestone in our economy
23 from our ongoing public health crisis.

24 For people who are worried from lockdown and
25 commits their social connections that make New York

1 such a vital place, it's been restorative to have our
2 cultural spaces returned to us. I thank the cultural
3 workers who kept these spaces going and have taken an
4 incredible curve to reopen them with the safety of
5 visitors and staff front of mind.
6

7 We have worked closely with our colleagues at New
8 York City & Company on the campaigns All in NYC and
9 Virtual New York NYC to promote cultural programming
10 that's happening both in person and online. In
11 embracing virtual programming and hyperlocal
12 communities, organizations have found new audiences.
13 This is why we are supportive of the cultural
14 community as it sticks to programming public spaces.
15 It gives artists places to present work and perform.
16 It gives residents local access to cultural activity,
17 which is so important for the health and wellbeing of
18 our communities.

19 Last week, as part of our technical assistance
20 programs, we hosted a webinar which brought together
21 many of the agencies presence to these hearings,
22 including parks, transportation and citywide events,
23 and management. The seminars remind the cultural
24 leaders of the process for putting on live events and
25

1 public spaces in compliance with public health
2 regulations.

3
4 Over 400 people watch the webinar live and it is
5 now available to be online. We have gotten great
6 feedback and we thank the presenters for their time
7 and their expertise. Cultural groups have already
8 been organizing amazing work in New York public
9 spaces. Queens Museum has partnered with the city on
10 planning a series of outdoor art making workshops in
11 October. The workshops will serve the families
12 visiting the museums which they operate out of their
13 facility in Flushing Meadows in Corona Park.

14 Magic in Plain Sight by Target Margin Theater is
15 a series of free socially distance programs happening
16 in parking lots, storefronts, and other locations
17 across Sunset Park in Brooklyn.

18 [INAUDIBLE 50:32] popular Wellness Wednesday's
19 invite local businesses like restaurants, dens and
20 studios and make our park radio to promote wellness
21 activities as part of the community and agricultural
22 program which has been providing fresh produce to
23 residents throughout the pandemic.

24 Despite massive hardship, cultural organizations
25 have been engaging new audiences online and in their

1 neighborhoods, and of course in public spaces. We
2 are grateful to them and all for the work. Digital
3 programming helps sustain many of us through the
4 spring and the return of a live cultural activities
5 since we have been working in New York City. From
6 hyperlocal to regional to global, their work is being
7 endured by audiences across the world in these new
8 platforms.
9

10 I look forward to working with the Council to
11 support cultural groups for this ongoing challenge.
12 Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and I
13 am happy to answer any questions you may have.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Commissioner
15 Casals. I will now turn to Executive Director
16 Canfield for her testimony. Executive Director
17 Canfield, please begin when ready.

18 ELLYN CANFIELD: Thank you. Good morning Chairs
19 Van Bramer and Vallone, Majority Leader Cumbo and
20 Members of the Committee. Thank you for the
21 opportunity to testify on permitting opportunities
22 for cultural organizations, an issue dear to all of
23 us.

24 My name is Ellyn Canfield, I am also a resident
25 of Queens in multiple ways. I am the Executive

1 Director of the Mayor's Office of Citywide Event
2
3 Coordination and Management CECM, which oversees the
4 Street Activity Permitting Office, which many of you
5 know as SAPO. I am joined by my colleague Stefan
6 Grybauskas, Director of SAPO.

7 CECM serves as the broad umbrella overseeing and
8 coordinating events and other temporary uses of
9 streets, plazas, sidewalks and parks. WE are the
10 one-stop-shop for guidelines and permissions from
11 agencies who ensure events are safe and positive for
12 New Yorkers and visitors. From NYPD, FDNY, DSNY to
13 DOB and DEP. SAPO grants permits for streets,
14 sidewalks and plazas, including signature events like
15 the New York City Marathon to the smallest
16 neighborhood block party.

17 In a typical September, my office would be
18 wrapping a busy summer of music festivals, street
19 fairs and parades. This year was a bit different.
20 As soon as the pandemic hit and we made the difficult
21 but necessary decision to cancel event permits, my
22 team pivoted to providing interagency coordination to
23 facilitate the quick construction and maintenance of
24 hospital extensions, dozens of testing sites,
25 temporary morgues and now, vaccine trial sites.

Aside from immediate COVID response, we've mobilized streets and parks in brand new ways to support the priorities of reopening our city. Currently, we have reviewed over 475 outdoor learning sites with DOE in parks and streets, in addition to over 10,200 open restaurants and 79 miles of open streets.

In addition, we are currently permitting event and activations for hundreds of community organizations, non-profits and of course, cultural organizations. The Mayor's Executive Order regarding event permits allows for small events. For streets, they must be one block or less and not interfere with open streets, outdoor learning, or other permits. And for parks, they must not interfere with the public's use of a park. In addition, the Governor's Executive Order regarding nonessential gatherings makes it clear that events of this type must not exceed 50 individuals at any one time.

We recognize these limitations are discouraging to those who are desperate to bring back performances and celebrations. The reality is that the opportunities we can safely offer are geared towards visibility, engagement, and of course, entertainment.

1
2 Just this week, we issued permits for the
3 Philharmonic to host pop-up performances in plazas
4 throughout the city, a jazz trio to provide music for
5 clients for a meal at the Bowery Mission and a non-
6 profit arts organization to hold a musical press
7 conference in the heart of Time Square. We're even
8 working on a pop-up drag show, stay tuned.

9 As long as the event is free and open to the
10 public, these permits are free for the applicant.
11 While the Mayor's Office and myself are undeniably in
12 support of the cultural organizations utilizing
13 parks, streets, and plazas, I would like to address
14 Council Member Van Bramer and Council Member Cumbo's
15 legislation, Intro.'s 2034 and 2068 which may be
16 duplicative of efforts the city is already taking.

17 To speak to Intro. 2068, I believe that our
18 existing permitting process is the safest, most
19 efficient and equitable way for all individuals and
20 organizations to secure public space.

21 We are committed to working with you and our
22 fellow agencies in making sure the information about
23 obtaining permits is as streamlined and accessible as
24 possible. My office serves as a hub for any
25 applicant interested in applying for a permit and DPR

1 has a similar shop with their Special Events office.

2 We both have staff available to answer truly any
3 incoming email or phone call within 24 hours and are
4 here to help organizations throughout the process.

5 It's actually very unusual for permits to be denied
6 by either office, we almost always find a way to make
7 an event come to life, even under our current COVID
8 mitigation limitations.

9 We will continue to work with the DCLA and others
10 to host webinars, attend meetings, and craft
11 resources to help cultural organizations navigate use
12 of public space. In addition, we are happy to present
13 this information to any of our constituents.

14 Regarding Intro. 2034, both parks and SAPO
15 currently utilize mobile friendly online application
16 forms and stand ready to provide translation and
17 accessible application alternatives to those who may
18 need it. In addition, there would be an additional
19 cost associated with creating a new mobile app.

20 The online application form for both agencies
21 populates our Citywide Event Management System, which
22 allows us to coordinate with all of our support
23 agencies, DOT, NYPD, FDNY, DSNY, as well as to
24 identify and mitigate conflicts with existing open
25

1 streets, outdoor learning and outdoor dining. Using
2
3 our existing application system is critical to
4 maintaining safe and equitable use of public spaces.

5 In closing, I look forward to working with the
6 Council and our sister agencies in continuing to
7 support cultural organizations in utilizing streets,
8 plazas, and parks. We all long for the moment we can
9 sit in a darkened theater and wait for the curtains
10 to open, but in the meantime, we have some beautiful
11 stages across our city, and we will support our
12 beloved institutions in keeping the show going.

13 Thank you.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Executive Director
15 Canfield. I will now turn it over to questions from
16 the Chairs. Panelists from the Administration,
17 please stay unmuted if possible during this question
18 and answer period.

19 A reminder to Chairs Vallone and Van Bramer, that
20 you will be in control of muting and unmuting
21 yourselves during this question period. Chair
22 Vallone, please begin.

23 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you Alex and thank
24 you to the panelist who just testified, Fred, Ellyn
25 and Commissioner.

1
2 I mean there is so much to dive into and we are
3 all united in making this great city shine again.
4 So, what we're going to do is Jimmy and I will talk
5 about the state of cultural affairs and tourism, look
6 at the bills that are here and respond back and forth
7 with questions. I will kind of look at the then and
8 now comparison from last year to now. The reality of
9 the budget constraints and the different challenges
10 of interagency coordination and the future of our
11 recovery in tourism, and Jimmy is going to take care
12 of the cultural side of that.

13 What I would like to do is quickly allow our
14 wonderful Majority Leader, since she's got
15 multitasking going on, a chance to do her questions
16 now on her bill, so that she can go to her next
17 hearing.

18 So, Laurie, if you would like to jump in now
19 before Jimmy and I start, that would be great.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Thank you so much. This
21 is a pleasant surprise to be able to be I guess fast
22 tracked in this way. So, I thank you so much Council
23 Member Vallone.

24 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Jimmy and I know.
25

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I just wanted to start in
3 with – I guess, I would like to start with the
4 Commissioner. I wanted to know as far as what the
5 Department of Cultural Affairs, how are smaller
6 organizations at this time – how are they fairing in
7 the reopening process knowing that their capacity is
8 far more limited than larger organizations?

9 So, I really wanted to understand how within the
10 Department of Cultural Affairs realm, how smaller
11 organizations are fairing during this process of
12 reopening.

13 GONZALO CASALS: That's a very interesting
14 question and we are seeing a couple of things
15 happening. Of course, cultural organizations are
16 allowed to reopen and we are seeing that larger
17 organizations are being able to react to the
18 opportunity to reopen faster. With that said, at the
19 same time, we are seeing that smaller organizations
20 because they are leaner and they are much more
21 flexible are able to adapt to new business models
22 that could operate with the restrictions that are
23 brought by the pandemic.

24 However, what makes a big difference and you can
25 see it on the report that we put together after our

1 survey at the beginning of the pandemic, it is that
2 the smaller cultural organizations, the cultural
3 organizations that are led by POC and folks or they
4 are culturally specific have been the hardest it
5 because most of their support comes from foundation
6 and government plans.
7

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Given those different
9 dynamics in terms of the financial model of those
10 organizations that we know that a lot of them are
11 very government foundation corporate heavy and a lot
12 of those resources have dried up. What has been the
13 plan to sure up many of those organizations and to
14 make sure that they sustain and survive during this
15 time?

16 GONZALO CASALS: So, in the plans that we have of
17 the public funds that my agency receives every year
18 and working closely with them and Chair Van Bramer,
19 we put equity lens in the way we want to distribute
20 these funds. Again, on the prioritizing smaller
21 cultural organizations and we created two family
22 things. They are specific around COVID relief to
23 support organizations that operate in hardest hit
24 neighborhoods by the pandemic but also supporting
25 communities that have been hardest hit and then

1 another one that is around arts location, which is
2
3 another idea that had been hardest hit by the budget
4 process and we want to support those organizations.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: So, there is a COVID
6 relief funding mechanism that's in place?

7 GONZALO CASALS: So, Majority Leader, I don't
8 know if you remember, in addition to the funds that
9 we received which was called the Cultural Development
10 Fund, we support a line item that was called SIA
11 Social Impact for the Arts, that was for specific
12 neighborhoods that we felt they needed more support.
13 We are replacing that for both COVID relief and arts
14 location and lives.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: And when will those funds
16 be available to those organizations?

17 GONZALO CASALS: Well those are part of the
18 process that we do in distributing funds, in which 80
19 percent of those funds are coming in the late fall
20 and then the 20 percent comes after they provide a
21 service. They are committed to provide in the
22 summer.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Okay, so this is not
24 necessarily new funding, it's just funding that's
25 being allowed to be redirected for a new purpose?

1
2 GONZALO CASALS: What we're doing is the funding
3 that we distribute every year has been rethought with
4 an equity and lens in mind.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Now, let me just ask you
6 this question, along with that, with the distribution
7 of these sorts of funds, will the organizations be
8 able to access those funds in the fall or will they
9 be awarded in the fall?

10 GONZALO CASALS: They would be getting the 80
11 percent of you know, the full designation in the late
12 fall.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Okay. So, getting closer
14 to asking questions about the legislation that is put
15 forward, how now do you see organizations and smaller
16 organizations accessing the ability to have
17 accessibility to open spaces to do work? So, I'm
18 really excited about how quickly the restaurant
19 industry was able to transition in terms of
20 recognizing that they couldn't have indoor dining,
21 that they were able to transition very rapidly and
22 quickly to outdoor dining and to utilize spaces and
23 to have the infrastructure done to do that. Has
24 there been a similar model for smaller cultural
25 organizations to snap into programming in that way?

1
2 GONZALO CASALS: Yes, that model has existed for
3 many years, which is working with both SAPO and Parks
4 Department in getting permits to access those spaces.
5 And because of the situation, working with closely
6 with those two agencies, we were able to, as I
7 mentioned in my testimony, do a refresher for
8 cultural organizations on how to access those spaces.
9 And it has been extremely welcomed by the sector.
10 The possibility to clarify exactly who do you go to
11 when you need to activate one of these spaces and we
12 want to continue to support those organizations
13 throughout the fall to do the work.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: So, if I were a small
15 organization in Brooklyn New York and I want to do
16 some outdoor programming, maybe not necessarily in
17 Brooklyn New York. Maybe I say, I want to do a five
18 borough event. Is there a central place right now
19 that's easily accessible where I could see and point
20 to all of the accessible places in the five boroughs
21 to easily be able to say, I want to have it in this
22 part. I'd like to have something at this museum. I
23 would like to go to Snug Harbor, then I would like to
24 go to the Bronx Zoo, then I would like to go to
25 Cuyler Gore Park. Like, is there something that

1 would allow you to be able to say very easily without
2 having to go to multiple websites and places, this is
3 the one-stop shopping for DOT plazas. This is one-
4 stop shopping for park spaces. This is one-stop
5 shopping for other larger cultural institutions,
6 let's say, like the Brooklyn Museum or the Met that
7 may have accessible spaces that they are saying,
8 we're able to allow our steps to be utilized for an
9 event, that sort of thing?
10

11 GONZALO CASALS: So, I'm going to give you a
12 short answer and then you know, refer to my
13 colleagues in the other agencies but you certainly
14 have a one-stop shop for everything that's parks and
15 you certainly have a one-stop shop for everything
16 that is public plaza's and streets and you know, open
17 public spaces.

18 When you mention the other cultural organizations
19 that think doesn't exist because we see them as
20 private property, right on each of them, they relate
21 to their partner with other cultural organizations in
22 different ways. But like I said, you know, probably
23 both Ellyn and Anthony I think is here for Parks,
24 could speak a little bit more about you know, the
25 process for permitting in parks and streets.

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1
2 ELLYN CANFIELD: Certainly, thank you so much
3 Commissioner, happy to jump in. Thank you Council
4 Member Cumbo, I am very excited to talk about this
5 and also incredibly empathetic to the desire of
6 applicants to access something very quickly. Just,
7 we understand just the word application, sounds
8 onerous and open restaurants had such a unique
9 opportunity in that their footprint was immediately
10 available and assigned to them. Restaurants have a
11 storefront, that space in front which works for the
12 kind of service they deliver. It was immediately
13 identified in addition to the parking spaces in front
14 of them, which for the most case are commercial
15 parking spaces, not residential parking spaces.

16 So, when we talk about cultural organizations
17 having some sort of spaces designated to them. As we
18 know, many small cultural organizations might not
19 even had a brick and mortar office or a storefront.
20 So, giving that sort of automatic space is just not
21 possible.

22 When it comes to identifying the spaces that are
23 possible, as Commissioner said, there are really just
24 two, two agencies, parks, streets and plazas. So,
25 SAPO and parks, that's it. There is no additional

1 needing to go to DOT, nobody else. The second you
2
3 come into contact with our agencies, you have someone
4 walking you through the process of any additional
5 permits that are needed to make sure your event is
6 safe and I know we all want that.

7 So, for example, something taking place in a
8 street or checking with MTA to make sure that buses
9 are rerouted if needed or working with the Fire
10 Department to make sure they can access the space, as
11 well as if they need to reroute any of their spaces.
12 We are working with DEP to make sure that the
13 generators are certified.

14 So, while none of this sounds fun, we actually do
15 that work. We work with applicants to check every
16 box that's needed.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I'm sorry to interrupt you
18 because Council Member Vallone has informed me that
19 there are many panelists that wish to speak and I
20 don't want him to regret allowing me to go ahead of
21 the Chairs.

22 So, I guess I want to like narrow in on the point
23 that I'm trying to understand as well. So, part of
24 this legislation would be able to bring that one-stop
25 shopping into one place and to streamline

1
2 accessibility but also in educating, informing and
3 promoting and hopefully, this would be a way that you
4 know, for the outer boroughs as well in terms of NYC
5 & Co. Something like this could be everlasting, that
6 there is an attractive streamlined way for you to see
7 throughout the five boroughs at any given time. All
8 of the dynamic programming that is happening in
9 public outdoor spaces readily at your fingertips.

10 So, like for me as a mom of a three-year-old,
11 I've grown a bit tired of going to the same park all
12 the time because that's really the only thing that I
13 know about. But it would be great if I could look on
14 a site and say, oh, let's go to the Bronx today, they
15 are having this, let's go here. All of these public
16 programs are in our plazas and right here at our
17 fingertips.

18 You know, our local BID business association is
19 having a street fair on this. You know, there is no,
20 as far as I can understand way for you to be able to
21 easily and in an attractive way – because it can't
22 just only be informative, it also has to be
23 attractive as well as promotional and exciting and
24 sexy and fun and all of those sorts of things.

1 COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT JOINTLY WITH THE
2 COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND
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4 GONZALO CASALS: Majority Leader if you will, I
5 think we're talking about two different things. One,
6 is the permitting process in which would allow for
7 all that programming to happen and the other one is
8 the collection of that information you know, and the
9 marketing of everything that is happening outdoors.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: That's right. So, I want
11 both. All in one place and then I will turn it back
12 over to the Chairs because I do have some time to be
13 on this call, because I would like to get more in
14 terms of questions related to the cost of developing
15 the app.

16 So, I will turn it back over to my Chairs and I
17 am here.

18 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you Madam Majority
19 Leader Laurie. So, to give us some perspective, I
20 think what we had done in our last hearing was to
21 focus with James Patchett and EDC as to the city's
22 primary focus of healing and getting New Yorkers
23 healthy to deal with the pandemic and clearly, these
24 conversations that we are having today, we have had -
25 wanted to have them, Jimmy and the rest of the
Council earlier but there is, needed to get through

1 this first phase, which is basically a lot of it is
2 still happening.
3

4 So, EDC and I know that Alex is here as a major
5 part of coordinating those phases of recovery for the
6 city and those phases of recovery for the city are
7 often determined for dictating by what happens up in
8 Albany and with Governor Cuomo and the state.

9 So, what I would like to do but I know you are
10 there at the panel but also with Alex, is how do we
11 see the phase from recovery and testing to rapid
12 testing, students going back to school? All of that
13 has basically brought the city to a stop needed to
14 happen but I believe most interests at this point you
15 are saying, we need to kickstart the next phase.

16 I just wanted to hear what that next phase and
17 when do you envision that to happen?

18 FRED DIXON: Thank you Chairman.

19 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: We've also been joined by
20 Council Members Barron and Moya.

21 FRED DIXON: Thank you Chairman Vallone for the
22 question, I will be happy to start off. From NYC &
23 Company's perspective, restarting tourism is a
24 gradual phase by phase process. You know, we
25 recognize the need to fish where the fish are as they

1 say and instead of travelers having to potentially
2 come from around the world right now would border
3 closures quarantine requirements.
4

5 Many airlines have actually taken down their
6 routes. So, I mean, our capacity and infrastructure
7 for travel has been greatly diminished at this point.
8 Opportunities are really hyperlocal and regional.

9 The other challenge is the quarantine
10 requirements and to your point, you know, its been
11 terrific in keeping us safe and we absolutely support
12 the proper public health protocols going forward.
13 Just recognizing that as those quarantine
14 requirements change day by day, it limits the
15 opportunity for people to plan in advance and we see
16 it as a real challenge to work around as we go
17 forward.

18 So, in many ways, we are in full mode of
19 promoting local and tristate visitation. There are
20 some challenges, of course still you know, we have to
21 acknowledge the economic realities with a large
22 number of the tristate population still unemployed.
23 You know, the discretionary income is still you know
24 a real question mark and we also recognize you know
25 that there are some image issues too. You know,

1 without Broadway open for example, you know, we like
2
3 to often say you know, New York City is not a
4 consolation prize without Broadway. But for so many
5 people, they look at the performing arts in
6 particular as a real symbol for the city.

7 So, promoting the arts and cultural things that are
8 open especially the small businesses which we all
9 care so much about and really need them to survive to
10 maintain the character of our city and its dynamism.
11 You know, it is going to be a case by case situation.
12 We remain challenged on the big event front,
13 commission and trade shows, we are seeing them
14 canceled now into the first quarter of next year
15 because of the limitations on gatherings.

16 So, it's a multifaceted answer and we just have
17 to navigate it one piece at a time.

18 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: I think that's exactly
19 right Fred and I think that's why we're challenged
20 with that multifaceted determination - we are, sorry,
21 I heard something.

22 ALEX COSTAS: That was my son, I apologize.

23 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: That challenge is relenting
24 really. I mean, between federal state guidelines and
25 restrictions, even the quarantine, if anyone comes to

1 New York City or New York State has to quarantine for
2
3 14 days and we will hear from those in the hotel
4 industries that that is crippling anybody's ability
5 to come.

6 So, how can we have someone as a quote tourist
7 for a business meeting, convention if they have to
8 commit to confirm to stay for 14 days. It just
9 doesn't happen. So, there needs to have that
10 coordination. How are you handling that decision
11 making process when it comes to New York State?

12 Fred, that would be for you and actually any of
13 these questions, Alex, I know Alex is there from EDC,
14 so if we can unmute Alex Costas during this, so that
15 he can jump in from EDC's perspective. But my
16 question is the challenges we are facing and when New
17 York State makes a decision that affects this great
18 city and every other city. How is that coordination
19 handled? Are you getting the input you need?

20 FRED DIXON: Thank you Chairman Vallone, I wasn't
21 sure if that was all the question. We are working
22 closely with you know, the state authorities to get
23 clarification on the quarantine orders in particular
24 and as the phases reopen as most everyone on this
25 call has experienced, you know, there are multitude

1 of questions that need to be answered about the
2 specifics of the language and how it applies
3 particularly for tourism, you know, when you are
4 dealing with groups and you are dealing with people
5 that are traveling from a far, there is a lot of
6 nuance that has to be weighed out.

8 But we have had a good relationship in terms of
9 communication with the state on those issues. The
10 two Chairs of the New York Forward group have come
11 and spoke to our coalition. So, that's been helpful.
12 We do continue to flag the challenges that the
13 quarantines represent. You know, of course, public
14 safety first but they remain hurdles.

15 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Have we had any input or
16 similar jurisdictions and or city's or countries that
17 have started to relax their quarantine that has
18 assisted in their tourism recovery efforts that we
19 could try to [INAUDIBLE 1:19:12]?

20 FRED DIXON: Thank you for the question Council
21 Member. The issue there is the target is moving.
22 Right, you know, we have you may know NYC & Company,
23 we have sister partnerships with Madrid and with
24 London and Manchester and Tokyo and Shanghai. And
25 you know, in talking with our peers around the world,

1 you know, they are in various stages of locking back
2 down or opening back up and this uncertainty is
3 causing real challenges for them.

4
5 You know, it's interesting to note here in the
6 U.S. of course, New York was the unfortunate
7 epicenter of the situation obviously and we were very
8 concerned early on that that reputation was going to
9 linger with us.

10 You know that people would say, oh, I don't want
11 to go to New York because that was where COVID was.
12 The sad reality is that it is now everywhere, so that
13 mantle is no longer just on us. So, we are less
14 concerned about the long term affects there, but if
15 you look at for example, the state of California or
16 the state of Florida, they never instituted any
17 quarantine requirements.

18 So, they have infinitely more opportunities.
19 Now, it's not my place to question the public health
20 wisdom of that but it does create a challenging
21 environment, especially for event organizers. We've
22 seen meetings and events move to states where there
23 are less requirements and that is beginning to happen
24 in certain ways. And so, we will continue to be
25 challenged as long as that is the case.

CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Well, and I think that's that ongoing challenge and I think the first hearing and part of today was to basically highlight the work that you have done with EDC to bring the safe measures that we have and to thank the staffs that have done that because we couldn't even have this conversation if we haven't gotten the percentages to where we are and I think that's why you are feeling the New York City diehard passion to say, let's get this thing going. We've done what we need to do and that involves everyone that's here and all the passion that we have.

Part of that recovery plan that you mentioned that you have phased out, so much of that is dependent on every one of the sectors that are here today. So, whether it was hotels, the restaurants, artists, Broadway and I know Charlette's saying, well I don't agree with you on your description of how Broadway moves as a city and how they are all interconnected. What I am hearing and what the Council Members are also hearing is that there is the macrolevel and the microlevel and if the microlevel is okay, if we are going to do an open streets program, then how do we actually establish it? And

1 when the restaurants are given that opportunity, the
2 ability to coordinate through and without agencies
3 and guidelines and permitting and the realities of
4 how a street is closed and who is the police
5 protection for that street, who gets the barriers,
6 and who maintains and monitors that. It's just one
7 example of the direct line of communication that is
8 needed in order to make these new ideas succeed.

9
10 And I can tell you first hand that the first -
11 Jimmy and I had districts that had some of the first
12 opening of the Open Streets program and we had it on
13 Bell Boulevard. And as wonderful as it was, it was
14 chaos in the first weekend or two on trying to figure
15 out the responsibilities of all that and the
16 restaurants were very happy to have that opportunity
17 but there was not the guideline that city agencies,
18 not New York & Company, because again, this is
19 getting into procedural guidelines of what happens -
20 they are not going to call New York City & Company,
21 they are going to call our office. They are going to
22 call sanitation; they are going to call NYPD. The
23 are going to call DOT, they are going to call
24 buildings departments and figure out what the hell
25 they have to do to make it a success.

1 That's the challenge now as we start to look at
2 these recovery plans even for open heaters for
3 restaurants and for Broadway and having a requirement
4 that says only 50 people can meet in all convention
5 spaces. While we have Marriott with thousands of
6 people but they are limited to the same 50 person
7 limitation that a little restaurant has in their
8 basement.
9

10 That is a pinpoint example of we can't have that
11 type of decision making and have the city handcuffed
12 trying to recover and reopen with that type of vision
13 and that doesn't involve in my eyes for a new
14 [INAUDIBLE 1:23:45]. That comes from the
15 Administration, that comes from a city agency who is
16 listening to the folks that are here today. So, what
17 Jimmy and I want to do is hear those voices and they
18 are going to give those stories as to some of the
19 ones that we just mentioned, as to the limitations
20 that they are facing based on that.

21 So, my thought would be on the budget aspect of
22 that. I mean, last year you had record numbers of
23 the 66 million tourists. It was amazing the amount
24 of - I believe we are the fourth largest economic
25 generator income for the city now. How are we able

1
2 to transition to this years budget fiscal impact and
3 complete the vision that you rightfully put forth for
4 this? How are we going to be able to do that for
5 you?

6 FRED DIXON: Thank you for the question Chairman.
7 There are number of questions around the fiscal
8 challenges that remain and to your point, you know,
9 because of our public/private nature, we have lost
10 about 60 percent of our private dollars and they
11 typically account for about half of our funding. So,
12 there is no question that the fiscal challenges will
13 be with us into the near term. And we do see this as
14 a long road to recovery. You know, you looked at
15 some of the estimates from different experts in the
16 field, whether it's the hotel sector or it's the
17 airline sector and they seeing this being a two,
18 three, even four year recovery process to get back to
19 where we were in 2019. It will take a prolonged
20 effort to get there and I would love to talk with you
21 more about that offline and of course, we need to
22 defer to our colleagues in the Administration on
23 budgetary matters but there will be a need that will
24 be with us for quite some time.

4 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: So, do you think based on
5 that reality, the smaller budget we're going to have,
6 that we should be investing everything we can to save
7 tourism or we should cut back?

8 FRED DIXON: Thank you for the question Chairman.
9 The reality is every destination in the country is
10 going to be restarting at the same time. I mean,
11 we're already seeing significant investment happening
12 whether it is Florida, whether it is areas in the
13 Southwest, California, that are beginning to ramp up
14 their messaging. The consumers are going to have a
15 lot of choices. I feel very strongly that travel
16 will return at the right moment. I am very bullish
17 on travel industry. I know everyone on this call
18 probably feels the need to get out of their apartment
19 and to go somewhere when it is safe to do so, when
20 you feel comfortable.

21 So, I think there is going to be significant pent
22 on demand at the right point. Being able to attract
23 those travelers to our destination is going to
24 require competitive budgeting. And to be able to do
25 that safely, you know, I think there is more
conversation that will need to be had but we are
going to be in a really challenging environment to

1 capture the travelers that are willing to move in the
2 beginning and then to secure the business back in the
3 New York City for the long term.

4 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: You know, and I agree with
5 you 100 percent and that's why I think whether it's a
6 bill like today or hearings today, it's supporting
7 that vision and what the Council can do to partner.
8 And unfortunately, the Council Members that are here
9 today and we are often unable to provide that direct
10 source of support whether financially or
11 legislatively. Or through getting a dedicated stream
12 of employees under staff or resources to New York &
13 Company and to this sector and to cut through the
14 bureaucracy and the red tape that so many of our
15 businesses are faced with or whether it's an
16 unrelenting - that is why and that's to the heart of
17 why we proposed the legislation today in 1773 and I
18 will come back to that. But to cut through and to
19 speed and to give your great team the additional
20 resources and a dedicated staff on the Administration
21 level to listen to each of the groups that are going
22 to come and the advocates to speak is so critical
23 now. And in my eyes and I believe you are going to
24 hear from everyone else's eyes, this is not the area
25

1 to cut back on. We need to strive and thrive as
2
3 Jimmy said. To bring and support our cultural
4 affairs and especially within our tourism.

5 I would like to, before I turn it over to Jimmy,
6 you know, we can't get into all of that and we're
7 going to let the Council Members after Jimmy Van
8 Bramer have their time to ask some of the questions
9 like Majority Leader Cumbo did. But is there any
10 other areas that you would say Fred that within the
11 city that have been hindering our impacting tourism,
12 that we as Council Members and as legislatures could
13 assist you? One of the areas that come to mind is
14 obviously quality of life, right. So, the tourism,
15 where a tourist or a family or someone wants to have
16 a convention and come here, they want to experience
17 the quality of life that once existed here in New
18 York City that is now very difficult to obtain.

19 How are you able to weigh through quality of life
20 issues and getting the support of community and civic
21 groups and the NYPD and when there is an issue on a
22 particular area to address that?

23 FRED DIXON: Thank you for the question Chairman
24 and those are important issues that affect not just
25 visitors but New Yorkers every single day and we

1 believe in supporting our government partners like
2 the Council and the Mayor's Office and providing you
3 all with as much research and insight as to what is
4 happening on the ground and we will be happy to
5 continue to do that.

6
7 I know many of our private industry partners are
8 on the call today and will be testifying and can
9 speak more specifically to those issues but we
10 provide opportunities for our members and partners to
11 hear directly from agency heads and elected officials
12 to connect those communication channels and we've
13 been successful in doing that so far. We know the
14 challenges are many but I would need to defer to the
15 agencies who work on those issues every day to answer
16 that more specifically.

17 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you Fred for your
18 testimony. I look forward to as always working with
19 you and your team and we will circle back after Co-
20 Chair Jimmy Van Bramer has his questions now. Thank
21 you.

22 FRED DIXON: Thank you Chairman.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much
24 Chair Vallone and I want to start off by saying that
25 I believe that every single person representing every

1
2 single agency here wants the cultural community to
3 succeed and thrive. But I have to say that the
4 status quo isn't good enough. That the City of New
5 York isn't doing enough to save our cultural
6 organizations and institutions, particularly those
7 small ones.

8 Fred said before, 70 percent of performing arts
9 jobs have already been lost, right. Nearly 250,000
10 jobs in the cultural sector alone, and while I
11 understand that there are existing permitting
12 application processes and agencies that do some of
13 this work, there is no question in my mind that we
14 have to do more and we have to do better and we have
15 to do it faster to save cultural organizations and
16 institutions when they are literally at the brink of
17 dying as an organization as an institution. And
18 again, all due respect to everyone on this call but
19 Ellyn at SAPO talked about the most equitable way of
20 doing this and I think the most equitable way of
21 establishing a permitting process that is easy, quick
22 and free, that gets more artists back to work and
23 allows organizations to perform and charge for that
24 work is to have a self-certification process just
25 like open restaurants. I have heard from many of my

1 restaurants, who were thrilled that when the Mayor
2 created the program and the city created the program,
3 that they went on to the website, filled out the
4 application, and literally within minutes got back
5 the approval, so that they could start to set up
6 their outdoor seating.
7

8 And while I understand the logistics are somewhat
9 different, particularly as someone mentioned, some of
10 our, many of our smaller cultural organizations don't
11 have brick and mortar space, but that's not a reason
12 not to do open culture. That's a reason to do open
13 culture because they don't have a venue and they need
14 a space to perform, rehearse and charge for
15 performances, so that they can pay artists and we can
16 get some of that 70 percent of performing artist who
17 are out of work back to work.

18 So, I just want to challenge the notion that the
19 city is doing all it can and that we can do more.
20 That's what open culture is about. That's what this
21 bill is about and you know, SAPO Parks have processes
22 and you know, the jazz trio performing and the pop up
23 philharmonics are great but what many of our
24 organizations desperately need is a program. Is a
25 path forward is stability, is the ability to plan a

1 series of performances, dare I say a season of
2 performances because that's how so many of our
3 cultural organizations operate and to be able to
4 start to that outdoors. Yes, everyone knows it must
5 be done safely but that it be done quickly and that
6 we get back.
7

8 Fred also talked about giving people a reason to
9 visit New York City. It's also giving people a
10 reason to stay in New York City. Is having the
11 ability to look forward to a dance performance in a
12 park, a ballet on an open street or in a public
13 plaza. We can do those things. I know we are doing
14 some of it but there is no question that we could do
15 more of it. We could do it more quickly and we could
16 make sure that this application process is as
17 streamlined as the open restaurants and these
18 organizations can start to promote the performances
19 that they want to have.

20 So, I just want to ask Commissioner Casals, I
21 know that we are working together all of these
22 agencies and I know that we are granting some permits
23 and some performances are happening but could we be
24 doing more and could a program like Open Restaurants,
25 if it were to be translated to open culture, allow

1 more performances to happen more quickly and allow
2
3 for us to allow people to charge and pay artists and
4 isn't that what we really want to happen at the end
5 of the day?

6 GONZALO CASALS: Yes, we could be doing more and
7 we are doing more. I just want to bring a couple
8 notions to this conversation that might help us
9 figure out what's the best solution for these and
10 number one, and I just want to if you allow me to get
11 personal for a minute, I got sick with COVID in early
12 March and I was sick for five weeks to have been in
13 the hospital. And I don't want any of us to forget
14 you know what New Yorkers went through at the height
15 of the pandemic and I want to remind all of us that
16 the decision priority is still the safety of New
17 Yorkers. Right, and as we continue to keep you know
18 the curve of the pandemic very flat, one of the
19 reasons we are keeping it really flat is because we
20 are being extremely careful in how do we reopen and
21 with the COVID.

22 Number two, the challenge that we are up against
23 and specifically with performing arts organizations,
24 is that the experiences that they offer are unique.
25 When we were able to get museums and zoos and

1 botanicals reopened, it was mostly because they were
2 happening outdoors. When we were able to get in the
3 museums reopened, it was because the experience
4 regardless of the offering, the experience that they
5 were offering, it was very much the same. The
6 possibility of being outdoors with a controlled
7 number of people in each gallery space, socially
8 distanced and following all the CDC and state
9 protocols.
10

11 In many conversations that I am having with the
12 performing arts sector is what is the model that we
13 can create in the meantime while we cannot be all
14 sitting in a theater together watching a performance
15 and the challenge is that you know, is just we're not
16 able to find exactly what that experience looks like.

17 And so, when you are talking about self-
18 certification and again, I'm going let you know, my
19 colleagues and the agencies respond to that but the
20 biggest challenge of self-certification with
21 performing arts is that each and every one of the
22 programs are being proposed for permitting look very
23 different.

24 Unlike you know, a restaurant that can take you
25 know, the front of their sidewalk and they all look

1 the same right. You know, it's tables, you know,
2 socially distance, a certain amount of people. When
3 we talk about performing arts, it's crowd control.
4 The expectation of how many people is going to
5 gather. There are so many variables that it becomes
6 very difficult not to treat them on a case-by-case
7 basis.

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, Commissioner,
10 needless to say we are friends for a long time and I
11 am grateful that you are recovered and looking really
12 good in your library there.

13 I do want to just say that while we are obviously
14 very different than restaurants, I am glad you still
15 acknowledge that we can do more and we can do better
16 and we can do faster. No one wants anyone to be
17 endangered but we are already doing some outdoor
18 performances but we just need to do more. We need to
19 better and faster and streamline this in a way that
20 gives us the ability to put more people back to work
21 as fast as possible. And you know if the city isn't
22 ready to provide additional financial support to our
23 cultural organizations and doesn't have the ability
24 to do so, although I believe that we could find a way
25 to do that, we would just have to do some other

1 things and prioritize culture and the arts over the
2 NYPD, for example, but I will say that in the absence
3 of that commitment to political will to provide
4 literally life sustained grants, not loans but grants
5 to cultural organizations that we have to find a
6 better way to allow artists and cultural
7 organizations to get back to work and to make money
8 and provide. Because — and I'm a huge supporter of
9 the open restaurants and I am a huge consumer at the
10 Open Restaurants program, but the artists and the
11 cultural community is just as important and generates
12 so much revenue. And linking its tourism gives
13 people and will give people a reason to come back to
14 the city and because we all are experiencing some
15 friends and colleagues who are leaving the city
16 reasons to stay in the city.

18 So, I would hope the Administration would work
19 with us to create a program that is sustainable,
20 workable and safe and that we get everyone back to
21 work. That's what open culture is all about and I
22 certainly heard from so many folks, whether it is
23 from League of Independent Theaters and other small
24 nonprofit cultural organizations that we aren't doing
25 enough and the city has not prioritized this as much

1
2 as it should have and that's my job to push harder,
3 push further and demand more for this community that
4 I represent and I know that you love Commissioner
5 Casals just as much as I do.

6 And if someone on the panel wants to talk about
7 the Save our Stages resolution and the importance.
8 Obviously, you know, Broadway is incredibly important
9 and generates enormous revenue and brings lots of
10 people to our city but all of our stages do. All of
11 our performing artists do, whether it's the Chocolate
12 Factory Theater in Long Island City or the biggest
13 Broadway show currently going.

14 So, I know Fred or Gonzalo wants to speak to the
15 importance of the Save our Stages legislation going
16 through the federal government and how we as a city
17 desperately need that.

18 FRED DIXON: Thank you Chairman. This is Fred, I
19 will be happy to go first and we share your passion
20 for the recovery of the arts and cultural
21 organizations and we see it in our research. We hear
22 it you know, from our trade partners and the media.
23 You know, the intense focus on the recovery of the
24 arts and culture sector and we've recognized that as
25 such an integral part of the fabric of the

1 destination of New York City, when we talk about just
2 travelers. You know, it is integral to their desire
3 to come to the city. Broadway is often at the
4 forefront of that. You are absolutely right; it
5 extends to every stage of every size and we applaud
6 the Save or Stages legislation and we support its
7 passing and we stand ready to support it in any way.
8 But I would need to defer to our friends in the
9 Administration on other thoughts.
10

11 GONZALO CASALS: I echo everything that Fred just
12 said and a reminder that by early May the cultural
13 sector had lost half a million dollars in revenue
14 alone and we're looking forward to another survey at
15 the end of the year because it continues to fall.
16 All this to say that this is problem that is much
17 larger than the City of New York and the State of New
18 York and we need to continue to advocate in front of
19 the federal government. Not only to support our
20 cultural organizations but support local
21 municipalities to bring back the work that city's
22 like New York have been doing for so long.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I am going to end here
24 and throw it back to Chair Vallone and our
25 colleagues, but I just want to once again state

1 unequivocally because you know, someone mentioned the
2 phrase before about cultural performances not
3 interfering with the use of public parks. This would
4 be an ideal use of public parks and public space.
5 This is exactly why we have public parks and public
6 plazas and public spaces and open streets is for
7 people to feel alive and for people to be entertained
8 and at a time when we are desperate, desperate to
9 dance and sing and laugh and feel some joy that we
10 would allow the cultural artists and sector to do
11 that work. Yes, safely first and foremost. I
12 believe we can do more and we must do more and this
13 bill, these bills are ways of pushing this
14 Administration to doing more and taking this more
15 seriously and prioritizing this sector, just as we
16 rightly did our restaurants and small businesses.
17 And that's been a great success. The let's make
18 getting the cultural community back to work an
19 equally great success. That is something we have to
20 do.

22 With that, I will have more questions later but
23 thank you and back to you Chair Vallone.

24 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: See and that's why we are
25 so lucky to have had almost 12 years Council Member

1
2 Jimmy Van Bramer leading Cultural Affairs because of
3 that passion. However, I don't think you want me to
4 dance but other than that, I think we definitely do
5 want everybody to get back to dance and singing.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Paul, it might be very
7 entertaining to watch you dance though, I'm just
8 going to say.

9 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: I've been married 26 years,
10 I think my wife might be too, we'll see. And
11 Commissioner, I do feel for what you went through.
12 My entire family went down in March and April and I
13 think that's why this hearing is such a delicate
14 balance between the health and safety of our New
15 Yorkers at getting our economic engine going and why
16 you will hear also the need to get it going.

17 So, what I would like to do now is have the
18 Council Members who have been waiting and have their
19 hands up, so I'm going to turn it back to our
20 Legislative Counsel and Committee Council Alex
21 Paulenoff to call on our Council Members and then
22 Jimmy and I will wrap up with a second round with the
23 panelists and then we want to hear from those that
24 are affected, folks that are waiting so we can hear
25

1
2 their story. So, that those are the answers that we
3 can give today.

4 So, Alex, I will turn it back to you.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Chair. I will now
6 call upon Council Members in the order that they have
7 used the Zoom raise hand function.

8 If you would like to ask a question and you have
9 not used the Zoom raise hand function, please do so
10 now.

11 Council Members, you will have a total of five
12 minutes to ask your questions and receive an answer
13 from the panel. The Sergeant at Arms will keep a
14 timer and will let you know when your time is up.
15 Once I have called on you, please wait until the
16 Sergeant has announced that you may begin before
17 asking your questions.

18 First, we will hear from Council Member Powers
19 followed by Council Member Gjonaj. Council Member
20 Powers, you may begin.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Thank you. I'm so
23 excited for this hearing and I do believe that this
24 is something that we all aspired to do earlier but
25 now we are really seriously thinking about the future

1 here of tourism. My office in Midtown and
2
3 undoubtedly things have been changed in terms of the
4 real life. I want to thank Fred and everybody else
5 for their work to bring - to try to make sure people
6 understand that New York is still a destination and
7 even locally here, we have to be doing our domestic
8 tourism and visiting new neighborhoods and seeing new
9 sites here and I wanted to you know, before I only
10 have a few minutes because I have to run and I
11 apologize. But I wanted to A. echo my support for -
12 I have my Save your Stages face masks that I wore to
13 work today and I could not say any stronger or louder
14 how important that piece of legislation is. And I
15 want to thank Council Member Van Bramer for his
16 Resolution which I am signing onto and it is imminent
17 and I really ask all of us to direct our efforts. We
18 have a number of venues here who are on the call
19 today and for myself, I know some others on this call
20 as well. That is where we go to get our mental break
21 is go to see live music and live performances,
22 Broadway as well and I really encourage everybody to
23 go and look up that piece of legislation and call
24 your legislature and ask him to sign on to it.

1
2 So, I am directing you to go do something to
3 another legislature but I really hope we pass that
4 Resolution. It is a really, really good one. So,
5 thank you to Chair Van Bramer.

6 I'm going to ask this question just to Fred. I
7 mean, just on the same topic, maybe you can give us a
8 direction. I know we are not a health expert but you
9 know, I think one of the challenges here for a lot of
10 the live performances and also, I want to just add
11 one thing because I really agree with what Chair Van
12 Bramer said which is like anyway we can use outdoor
13 space, parks or anything to sort of lead the way when
14 it comes to the rebuild around the arts when it's the
15 time when we should be doing anything we can.

16 Fred, maybe you can just give us some insights on
17 what you are seeing in other city's but also what
18 your expectations here is like. It is going it seems
19 to me still far away from when I will be able to walk
20 into a performance venue but what are you seeing or
21 what is kind of your belief in terms of when you
22 think we will be able to tell other folks to be able
23 to come to New York City or even local New Yorkers
24 and be able to go see a live performance in an indoor
25 venue?

1
2 FRED DIXON: Thank you Council Member Powers for
3 the question and for your support always and I share
4 your need to do that. You know, I mean, there is no
5 tourism recovery without arts and culture recovery.
6 I mean, it is as simple as that. I think New York is
7 the arts and culture capital of the world and we have
8 to nurture that industry back to health to make sure
9 that the tourism recovers.

10 You know, as you said, I'm not a public health
11 expert, so it's difficult for me to say. The one
12 thing I will point out is that it is creating a
13 challenging environment as other destinations across
14 the country begin to reopen. You know we saw just
15 last week in Miami has now moved to 50 percent
16 capacity for performing arts venues and night life as
17 well by the way in theaters.

18 So, of course they don't have the scale and scope
19 of the industry that we have in New York but I know
20 it's a source of frustration for our partners in the
21 arts of every size when they see other organizations
22 being able to move ahead. Of course, time will tell
23 if that was the right decision or not. You know, we
24 have to maintain safety as the first priority but we
25 are watching those issues closely and we are actually

1
2 doing some surveys right now to understand you know,
3 what is holding consumers or individuals back from
4 the tristate region for coming into the city and we
5 feel pretty strongly that it will say that it's the
6 demand generators that they are missing, right. It's
7 performing arts especially, but it's arts
8 organizations you know, of all size but especially
9 performing because we're seeing of course the visual
10 arts or the museums and of course being able to
11 reopen now to some degree.

12 So, it remains really challenging. It is
13 difficult to say. You know, we absolutely support
14 the Save or Stages legislation. We also implore the
15 senate to pass additional relief bills for nonprofit
16 organizations in particular which many of the arts
17 organizations are. So, I would defer to other in the
18 Administration for their thoughts.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Okay, I will just ask one
20 more question and then I will hand it back over. I
21 mean, just can you outline some strategies the
22 Council can take now. I mean, in addition to some of
23 the bills we have here today to help in the recovery
24 and rebuild and for sure I think one of them is just
25 public messaging. Like, I do think public education

1
2 is safe to take and people should feel safe on it. I
3 think the city is the rhetoric around the city's sort
4 of being anarchist jurisdiction I think certainly is
5 ridiculous, it doesn't help but you know, beyond that
6 can you tell us some strategies we should be looking
7 at and employing here as we talk about rebuilding?

8 FRED DIXON: Thank you for the question Council
9 Member. I would just say you know; Council Member
10 Vallone has already submitted his video showing how
11 he is all in for NYC. I mean, you pointed it out.
12 You know, there is a continuing wave of negative you
13 know, publicity coming at us from across the country
14 in a variety of ways. It is important to remind the
15 world right now and we need everyone to be All in on
16 New York City that we are now the safest place in the
17 country from a COVID perspective. I think sharing
18 that is really important in how folks who are able
19 and we have to recognize that some people in our
20 community are more impacted by COVID-19 and are not
21 comfortable getting out and we have to recognize
22 that. But those that are, you know, using their
23 social media, using their voice to say how they are
24 All in for New York City. You know, we have to show
25 the world that the city is reconnecting with itself

1 and express our vibrancy as it rebuilds to the world.

2 That's what is going to encourage people to come
3 back.

4
5 COUNCIL MEMBER POWERS: Got it. Well, I have
6 lots of places I would love to advertise, so let me
7 know when I need to do my video. Anything you guys,
8 you feel like you need from the Council to help
9 really lead the charge for folks to feel safe to be
10 here but also you know, just to get around the city
11 and go see new places and the opportunity to do that.
12 We stand here in support and like I said, Save our
13 Stages, Save our Stages.

14 It is so very important. I want to thank all the
15 venues who are here today. A lot of them jumped on
16 last minute today to come and testify. I know they
17 are really hanging out and I want to thank them all
18 for their time today. So, thank you everybody.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Council Member
20 Powers. We will now turn to Council Member Gjonaj
21 for questions. As a reminder to the other Council
22 Members, if you do have questions, please use the
23 Zoom raise hand function. Council Member Gjonaj, you
24 may begin.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Thank you. I want to
3 thank the Chairs and all of you that are testifying
4 and it really sounds like we don't have a
5 comprehensive plan when our of default is safety of
6 New Yorkers and budget cuts. And I say that with the
7 understanding of safety and how important it is but
8 when we are opening up schools, our transit from
9 buses and trains are open and even airlines where I
10 recently traveled and now we have even partial indoor
11 dining, I think we have to start stepping away from
12 that's it's about the safety. And we have to start
13 focusing on this new world and shaping this new
14 normal, whatever it may be because I truly do believe
15 open restaurants, open retail, open arts can be done
16 safely in this city.

17 So, whether it be save our stages, save our
18 parks, save jobs, save small business, it all
19 translates to save our city, our neighborhoods and
20 communities. It really comes down to save New York
21 City and economy, which sets us apart from any other
22 city in this country.

23 In a recent meeting with Commissioner Castillo of
24 the Mayor's Office of Media, we discussed how we can
25 build traffic and business to not only local mom and

1 pop shops but also the arts. Subsequent to the
2 conversation, I started the process to introduce
3 legislation will educate people on the benefits of
4 shopping local and the impact that it will have on
5 our local economy and I just want to point out, I
6 study in Chicago firm that for every \$100 spent at a
7 local business 68 remain in the city while only \$43
8 out of every \$100 spent on a chain retailer and I
9 can't even think of what Amazons of the world are
10 taking out of our local economies.
11

12 Plus, shopping local is a multiplying effect.
13 Other studies have found for every dollar that
14 someone spends locally, it generates \$6 for New York
15 and I am sure some of you are more familiar with the
16 studies.

17 That's a turn of 600 percent, in real terms that
18 means more money for local jobs and an increase in
19 tax revenue for the city and state, which would start
20 answering some of the deficit problems that we have
21 in our budget.

22 Every dollar that we invest in opening our
23 business will contribute to our tax base. So, when
24 are we going to start thinking out of the box? And
25 I'm looking at you Fred in particular. I'm looking

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1 at EDC and all of those of you that spent day in and
2 day out making sure that our economy is healthy. We
3 have a big responsibility here. I'm not relying on
4 this Administration; I'm relying on all of the
5 expertise on this Committee to come up with real ways
6 and real plans. We need to look at how we refer to
7 the open restaurants. Why can't that be applied to
8 all retail shops? A similar program for
9 entertainment and our arts. I can vision outdoor
10 events in tented areas at the Bronx Zoo and Botanical
11 Gardens in Pelham Bay which is the largest park in
12 New York City. And we can do it safely to more
13 efficiently utilize sidewalk and outdoor space that
14 will deal with the impact of reduced track and
15 tourism. Can't wait for tourism to rebound.

17 I think you said it Fred, where you fish where
18 the fish are. Well New York City has 8.6 million
19 residents. That's a healthy barrel of fish to be
20 looking at and the educational component of staying
21 local, shopping local. Keeping every dollar within
22 our community is where I am headed.

23 So, the question is, the benefits are clear.
24 What are we going to do as a city to help boast the
25 local economy and businesses for the residents and

1
2 the limited number of tourists that are coming to New
3 York City due to this pandemic? And I am hopeful
4 that I can get some real answers and it shouldn't be
5 about safety and budget. Every dollar we invest in
6 reopening our businesses will yield us a return.
7 That's not a familiar strategy to many of those that
8 work for this Administration.

9 There is a return on every dollar that we put
10 into this system when it comes to small businesses
11 and that includes our arts and culture. Thank you.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Council Member
13 Gjonaj. We will now turn to Majority Leader Cumbo
14 for question. Majority Leader Cumbo, you may begin.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Thank you. I just wanted
17 to further explore Gonzalo, excuse me Commissioner,
18 in terms of issues around private sponsorship or
19 support for the arts. So, for example, have there
20 through the Black Lives Matter movement or other
21 corporations where I'm hearing a lot in terms of
22 celebrities and those sorts of things, have there
23 been other entities where we have been able to engage
24 in public/private partnerships in order to shore up
25

1
2 the arts to create somewhat of a very real relief
3 fund for many of those organizations?

4 GONZALO CASALS: Not that I am aware of with a
5 private individual owners. We have been using the
6 survey that we created to gauge the impact of COVID
7 on our cultural organizations as a way to advocate
8 both with the state, with the federal government and
9 also with the private foundations. And you can see
10 both the largest foundations are based in New York
11 Fort and Melon continue to invest in COVID relief in
12 our city.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I think from my time in
14 the Council, I have seen those types of
15 public/private partnerships. I think we have to go
16 more proactively in terms of really trying to create
17 that type of fund that would produce those types of
18 opportunities.

19 I also wanted to ask with Fred Dixon as well,
20 have there been any concepts in terms of thinking
21 about how to take the restaurant outdoor dining
22 program and partner it with outdoor cultural
23 programming, so that a restaurant perhaps and a
24 cultural organizations within that vicinity or within
25 that borough could partner and we figure out some way

1 that that could also be funded or sourced in some
2 sort of partnership way. Has that thought been
3 brought to the table?
4

5 FRED DIXON: Thank you Council Member for the
6 question. It is great to see you. Yes, absolutely,
7 and in fact early on in the pandemic, we engaged in
8 conversations with the cultural community through our
9 coalition and steering committee and directly with
10 other constituents to talk about how that can happen.

11 We agree there is tremendous allure and avail in
12 the outdoor opportunities for arts and culture. And
13 I will just point everyone back to our roadmap for
14 recovery. If you haven't had a chance to see it yet,
15 you can find it on our website at nycgo.com/recovery
16 and you will see many of these pieces outlined in the
17 plan. We publish it on July 7th and we in fact, as
18 Nancy alluded in our presentation, you know, our
19 global payment partner Mastercard has stepped up in
20 remarkable ways to help fund the All in NYC
21 Neighborhood Getaways plan, promotion rather, that we
22 launched last week and it is the most comprehensive
23 local promotion NYC & Company has ever done in our
24 history and it is incredibly expensive and we are
25 providing cash back, statement credits for anyone to

1
2 get out and support the arts locally, restaurants and
3 certainly hotels and retail.

4 And a lot of that is focused of course on small
5 businesses and small arts organizations that are
6 open. We also have geared our website. If you
7 explore at nycgo.com, you can find out what is open
8 today and you can find out what is available around
9 it to help, we recognize the need to create
10 itineraries right. So, if you are drawn for one
11 particular reason, whether it is a public art piece
12 or a performance, that you need to know what's open
13 around it so you can make it all into one trip.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Let me just interrupt
15 there. I think we need to make it more of a real
16 structured program. I think that that's really
17 definitely one way to go about this, to make it a
18 real partnership that's easy to navigate. I also
19 wanted to ask, are you familiar with an initiative
20 within the Council called the Theaters of Color
21 program, Fred?

22 FRED DIXON: Yes, yes I am Council Member.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: So, when an initiative
24 like that exists because frankly we all know when we
25 are talking about culture and the arts and even small

1 businesses, the numbers are staggering when we talk
2 about how it is going to impact communities of color.
3 How do you see in terms of tourism, how do you work
4 and navigate with those types of organizations and
5 initiatives similar to that in order to boost those
6 types of organizations within New York City's tourism
7 plan?
8

9 FRED DIXON: Thank you for the question Council
10 Member and we would love to talk to you more about
11 that offline because I recognize that it is probably
12 a longer conversation but we have prioritized Black
13 owned businesses in our content. Just of late
14 actually and we have a strategy we are about to put
15 in place to elevate that even more with new dedicated
16 content. And there is a tremendous opportunity to
17 tie those theaters and those organizations into the
18 larger promotion as they are able to reopen and I
19 would love to explore that more with you.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I would really like to
21 explore that because in my time, I've never really
22 seen the city promote and bolster those organizations
23 of color, particularly theaters, visual arts faces
24 and many others and I think now is a critical time to
25 be able to find those types of partnerships where we

1
2 could work with an initiative like the Theaters of
3 Color and we can work with many of our visual art
4 spaces to partner them with restaurants. To partner
5 them with outdoor spaces. Like, it has to be far
6 more robust and I think that the City of New York
7 could greatly benefit from promoting its
8 organizations of color on the same level as many of
9 our mainstream institutions that the city is more
10 identified for.

11 So, this is a tragedy that we are experiencing
12 but it's also an incredible opportunity to finally
13 uplift those organizations. And we have to do it
14 quickly because organizations like the Theaters of
15 Color, those types of initiatives have been around
16 for some time. We have not explored how to
17 adequately lift them up and raise them up to the
18 level that they could sustain themselves, especially
19 during a time when the economy is challenged. But
20 also, so that they could thrive and they could add
21 further to the identity and why people are coming to
22 New York City.

23 And those are all my questions. Thank you.

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4 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you Majority Leader.

5 Are there any other Council Members with their hand
6 up Committee Counsel?

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Seeing no additional Council
8 Members with their hands raised. I will turn it back
9 to the Chairs, Chair Vallone.

10 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you Alex and I can
11 see the unity here on us trying to speed through into
12 this recovery and to make sure that we get the
13 resources we can.

14 I'd like us to unmic Alex Costas from EDC. EDC
15 is our ultimate landlord of city property and has an
16 extremely large budget compared to the other folks
17 that we're talking to. Alex, what is your vision
18 here on partnering with the road to the recovery for
19 tourism and what EDC's role will be in that recovery?

20 ALEX COSTAS: Sure, thank you Chair Vallone and
21 again, echoing Fred's sentiments. Thank you for your
22 All in video, it's a great way to showcase the ways
23 we can go out and enjoy the city safely. I think
24 that we're happy to do.

25 So, as mentioned, the earlier, you know, first
and foremost, we are all committed to making sure

1
2 that the city does recover and rebound as quickly as
3 possible.

4 You touched on it earlier, EDC's focus you know
5 right from the start was on health and response.
6 Whether it be manufacturing PPE all the way up to
7 now, setting up a new lab facility to increase the
8 speed at which test results get back. At the end of
9 the day, you know, health is going to be the start to
10 all of this recovery.

11 We've been working in lock step with Fred, Nancy
12 and Team at NYC & Company to push the All in NYC
13 message out there. Our audience is typically the
14 business audience, so you know, corporations,
15 academic institutions, and we have taken the really
16 terrific rally and cry of All in NYC and brought that
17 to our audience. So, that is taking the form of you
18 know, hundreds of phone calls or over 100 phone calls
19 with different organizations from BIDs to academic
20 coalitions to trade associations to real estate
21 firms, corporate firms, to share the All in NYC
22 message. Because what we ultimately want to do from
23 our perspective is restore the confidence in optimism
24 in New York City as a kind of place to do business.

1
2 If businesses feel comfortable having their firms
3 here and expanding here, they will employ people here
4 and those folks will become local New Yorkers who
5 will go to the restaurants, go to the shops, go to
6 Broadway shows, and kind of add to the vitality that
7 the city you know, is known for.

8 So, what that has turned into and how that has
9 materialized, we, over the past few weeks have had a
10 blitz of activity around All in NYC. It started off
11 with a bell ringing at the New York Stock Exchange,
12 kind of signifying that the city is rebounding back.
13 We lit up a lot of the skyline last week again to
14 show the city's resiliency and desire to kind of come
15 out of this better and stronger. We have had calls
16 with all these different companies, they are going to
17 their social media channels, sharing the All in NYC
18 messages. They are drafting op eds about why their
19 industries - there was a great op ed piece by the
20 President of Ace University that talks about how New
21 York City will always be the best campus for students
22 around the world because you know, the kids that go
23 to college and graduate school in New York City are
24 the folks who will be founding new businesses. Who
25 will be leading the business of tomorrow and we want

1
2 to remind the world; this is still place to always
3 come and get your education.

4 Where people are creating their own content, they
5 are talking about how their own industries are all
6 in, why they will never leave. We are creating
7 content on our own to showcase small businesses and
8 how they are pivoting and recovering and we're going
9 to be rolling out you know, a small campaign to
10 attract businesses in the city. We are updating all
11 of our materials to kind of shift and pivot our
12 messaging about why this city is the greatest place
13 to do business and making sure that all the right
14 audiences from site selectors to corporate relocation
15 specialists know that we are ready to welcome them
16 and it is still a great bet.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: In joining in with you
18 with that great vision is the realities of what we
19 are handcuffed with and what we are allowed to do
20 from restrictions placed on a state or federal or
21 administration level versus getting that engine and
22 vision and working with small businesses and hotel
23 occupancy at 5 to 10 percent of the venues opposed
24 and permitting processes that have slowed down and
25 quality of life issues that are abound. There is two

1 different stories that is happening in the city and
2 what we want to do is listen to the stories today on
3 how we can make a difference by relieving some of the
4 burdens. Opening up some of the restrictions and
5 where is EDC's view on transitioning from obviously
6 testing and targeting in what you guys have done
7 better than anyone probably in the world and keeping
8 New York City in the amount of testing that was done
9 versus targeting how we can highlight restrictions
10 that are over the owners, like a 50 percent limit ban
11 on a place like Sheridan in Manhattan. A 25 percent
12 cap on inside eating and restaurants.

14 And my last question for you would also be, as
15 the landlord of city property, Jimmy Van Bramer and
16 some of the Council Members and all of us are saying,
17 we have land that must be used for use of cultural
18 events and for outdoor events but the process is
19 blocked at almost every step. You are the landlord
20 of the city spaces. What would your vision be to
21 opening up the spaces and getting folks to be
22 outdoors? To get people all in campaign to really
23 encompass all of our city properties. Whether from
24 parking lots to parks, to streets, to any place we
25 can get a performance, a performer to go so that

1 folks from Whitestone to Bensonhurst from Bronx to
2
3 Manhattan, can say, hey, we're going to do this this
4 weekend. That's where we did our All in video and we
5 did the outdoor movie night, which was successful and
6 kept the businesses and terrace complex open for the
7 entire summer. It is something that we did on our
8 own to bring folks in. We need that vision coming
9 from you.

10 ALEX COSTAS: Sure, so, that's a terrific
11 question. What we've done so far is where possible
12 we have activated our asset. So, at Brooklyn Army
13 Terminal in Sunset Park, we have a drive-in movie
14 theater set up there which is hosting the New York
15 film festival. Which is you know, a great kind of
16 iconic institution. It's the oldest film festival in
17 the city, if not the country.

18 So, we're making sure we use our assets to bring
19 that sort of program to the city. We are joining
20 with our colleagues in parks and CCM and DCLA you
21 know on regular phone calls and conversation and as
22 guidelines are set and as protocols are in place, you
23 know we are investigating how we can leverage some of
24 our assets.

1
2 You know initially our assets were being used for
3 pop-up hospital sites and in testing facilities but
4 now we are definitely looking at ways that we can -
5 we do have a couple kind of irons in the fire, ideas
6 of how we can leverage our space. Some of the space
7 like Brooklyn Army Terminal for example is also an
8 active manufacturing center, so we have to kind of be
9 mindful of not disrupting any of the operations.
10 That's something we are focused on and have regular
11 conversations with our other city agency partners on
12 how we can better leverage our space and we've gotten
13 leads from different city agencies about space we
14 have.

15 So those conversations are happening and
16 something we're definitely focused on.

17 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Well, we would like to hear
18 more on that and I'd like to turn it back to Chair,
19 Co-Chair Jimmy Van Bramer if he has any last follow
20 up questions before we have our Committee Counsel
21 swear in the first panel. Jimmy, back to you.

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you Chair Vallone
23 and I know we want to get to the other panelists in
24 the various industries and sectors being effected so
25 devastatingly and so I won't prolong it further.

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4 Just to thank the folks that are here and once
5 again implore all of us to not settle for the status
6 quo and to do more better and faster to save more of
7 our cultural organization. Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: And conveniently, we have
9 had some success already Jimmy and everyone here
10 because the Mayor just announced or the
11 Administration just announced the use for outdoor
12 heating for our dining spaces to streamline the
13 process. A small part of what we are talking about
14 today, to give folks that ability to get through warm
15 weather and get the jobs to our folks. So, that's
16 good news.

17 So, to Committee Counsel if you could begin the
18 panels and thank you to the Admin and those who
19 testified for all the great work that you are doing
20 to keep this city the great city.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Chairs. We will
22 now turn to public testimony. I would like to remind
23 everyone that unlike our typical Council hearings, we
24 will be calling individuals one by one to testify.

25 Each panelist will be given two minutes to speak.
Please begin your testimony once the Sergeant has
started the timer. Council Members who have

1 questions for a particular panelist should use the
2 Zoom raise hand function and we will call on you in
3 the order that you raised your hand after the
4 panelist has completed their testimony.
5

6 For panelists, once your name is called, a member
7 of our staff will unmute you and the Sergeant at Arms
8 will set the timer and then give you the go ahead to
9 begin. Please wait for the Sergeant to announce that
10 you may begin before delivering your testimony. I'd
11 like to now welcome Regina Fojas to testify. After
12 Ms. Fojas, Lucy Sexton and Thomas Ferrugia will be
13 following her testimony.

14 Ms. Fojas, as soon as the Sergeant unmutes you,
15 you may begin.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time starts now.

17 REGINA FOJAS: My name is Regina Fojas, Senior
18 Vice president of the Time Square Alliance speaking
19 on behalf of our President Tim Tompkins. Thank you
20 for the opportunity to speak today.

21 Thank you Council Member Vallone for your
22 continued leadership and for highlighting the
23 importance of sustaining the tourism industry in a
24 well-coordinated manner. We would also like to thank
25 NYC & Company for their continued partnership.

1 While COVID has devastated nearly every industry,
2 tourism has entirely ceased. Time Square, the City's
3 most iconic tourist destination, has borne the brunt
4 of the standstill. The tourism industry is the
5 fourth largest employer in New York City and we
6 estimate a loss of 35,000 hospitality and services
7 jobs in Time Square so far. Our visitor spending
8 declined by 94 percent, which is 7 percent more than
9 citywide and our average daily pedestrian counts
10 plummeted by 90 percent. These effects will
11 reverberate across all five boroughs. The Alliance
12 proposes a five point plan for recovery.

14 Number One; Establish a dedicated funding stream
15 to NYC & Co. Set a timeline of 24 to 36 months and
16 contribute 50 cents for every dollar of existing
17 hotel occupancy tax revenue to NYC & Co. Also,
18 implement NYC & Co.'s Tourism District Funding
19 Proposal.

20 Number Two; Tap creatives by putting out an
21 employment grant program to create viral promotional
22 materials under the rubric of All in NYC and give
23 additional tax breaks to TV and film creators who
24 work to create content in line with All in NYC.

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4 Number Three; Address deteriorating public spaces
5 conditions through an integrated public space
6 management task force.

7 Number Four; Stop the restaurant apocalypse by
8 implementing New York City Hospitality Alliance
9 proposals and create a temporary sales tax holiday
10 campaign for people who dine out.

11 And Number Five; Convene a multiagency tourism
12 relief task force to support NYC & Co and solicit all
13 mayoral candidates to issue a long-term tourism
14 recovery plan as part of their platform.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

16 REGINA FOJAS: A strong New York City recovery
17 requires strong tourism recovery and strong tourism
18 recovery starts with Time Square. We want to work
19 with the city to make this happen. Thank you for
20 your time.

21 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you Regina and give
22 our gratitude's to Tim and he was great this morning
23 as he talked about virtual leaders celebration and
24 your five point plan is as usual all points alike.

25 REGINA FOJAS: Thank you.

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4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Ms. Fojas. Unless
5 there are any additional questions from members, we
6 will move to the next panel.

7 Seeing no question, we will move to Lucy Sexton
8 followed by Thomas Ferrugia followed by Candice
9 Thompson Zachery. Ms. Sexton, you may begin your
10 testimony as soon as the Sergeant -

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time starts now.

12 LUCY SEXTON: Thank you for allowing me to
13 testify at this important hearing. I want to thank
14 Chair Van Bramer and Majority Leader Cumbo for the
15 bills they have introduced and I want to thank the
16 Speaker for supporting Save our Stages.

17 Thanks to Chair Vallone also for recognizing
18 cultures role in tourism and the economy.

19 I am Lucy Sexton from New Yorkers for Culture and
20 Arts, a citywide coalition of cultural groups and
21 workers. We know culture is key to the city's
22 economy. Arts and culture have also led the city out
23 of every crisis in my lifetime. Filling empty spaces
24 in the 70's, bringing downtown back after 911 and
25 getting tourists back after the financial crisis. We
stand ready to lead the recovery again, but with many
of our spaces still shuttered and 62 percent of

1 artists and culture workers still unemployed, we need
2 your help.
3

4 A story in yesterday's Times, which DCLA
5 Commissioner shared on Facebook, talks about the
6 City's survival. It has stories of Zumba classes
7 outside and impromptu music in park and fire escapes,
8 artists doing chalk murals, people coming together to
9 find joy, beauty, and each other. IT's the story of
10 New York City we want to hear. Yet every day, I hear
11 from theater companies whose long planned shows still
12 don't have permits, who face conflicting restrictions
13 on dance, who can't play music that needs an amp, who
14 can't afford the extra cost of permits for events
15 that charge or ask for contributions.

16 I appreciated the DCLA webinar on permitting. It
17 is a complex process with multiple agencies and there
18 are too many obstacles to granting permits.

19 The open restaurants program provided a quick
20 streamline process to open streets and get sorely
21 needed income to the restaurants. Providing and
22 simple way to open our public spaces to music, dance,
23 theater, visual art and spoken work, will transform
24 the city. Delivering entertainment and healing and
25 laughter and anger.

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4 Thank you Majority Leader for your painful
5 opening remarks. There is much anger to be expressed
6 and much change to be demanded. Like struggling
7 restaurants, we must also be allowed to charge for
8 our offerings, so that we can pay the artists and
9 workers that make culture happen. Our financial need
10 is urgent. We call for the open culture bills to be
11 expedited, so that we can begin to work now and we
12 can't pro towards financial stability if we can't
13 plan.

14 This open culture program needs to be extended at
15 least through next fall. That will allow us to plan
16 for performances and exhibitions and fairs for the
17 spring, summer, and fall. After winter months
18 indoors, our communities will be longing to get
19 outdoors to celebrate, reflect, and connect. As
20 culture comes out, people will fill the streets,
21 driving traffic to small businesses of every kind. A
22 city filled with vibrant culture and life is exactly
23 what will draw tourists back. Let culture and art
24 work their magic and let our cultural organizations
25 and workers begin to recover economically as we help
the city recover.

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4 I also want to thank NYC & Co. for the work they
5 have been doing bringing cultural groups and
6 hospitality companies together to form an alliance
7 for New York's recovery, it's been great. Thank you
8 very much.

9 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you Lucy. I know
10 Chair Bramer has a question.

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah, thank you Lucy for
12 your testimony and for your advocacy. You mentioned
13 some of the difficulties that some of our
14 organizations are having with the current state of
15 affairs with permitting and I wonder if you could
16 just talk a little bit more about some of the stories
17 you are hearing and why exactly the status quo isn't
18 working for so many in our community?

19 LUCY SEXTON: For instance, I was just on an
20 email with theater company that has been planning for
21 months to do a performance in Astor Place. They have
22 been going through all the process. It's a week now
23 out and they still don't have the permit in hand. It
24 makes it very difficult.

25 I appreciate, I mean the webinar was very
informative. What it informed me of was how many
different agencies there are and how to navigate that

1 process and those agencies are also navigating
2 different restrictions. Now this whole question
3 about dance, whether we can dance or not or yes we
4 can but we can't but it's in the wrong category.
5

6 So, and then amplifying music. Someone earlier
7 said something about - and you will hear from other
8 people testifying today. But you were talking
9 earlier about whether we can form alliances with
10 restaurants. There is a some performing allowed for
11 restaurants but it is very restricted. And then some
12 theaters that are on streets, that are closed for
13 restaurants can't do anything because they are not
14 allowed to interrupt the restaurants.

15 So, it's a lot of restrictions and a lot of
16 obstacles that we are facing. It is not an easy road
17 to getting culture on the streets or you would be
18 seeing much more of it.

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That's right. Thank
20 you, I appreciate you just numerating just what the
21 struggles look like and the urgency of the moment,
22 right. I think you hear that from me a lot. I hear
23 that from you a lot, right. The urgency of the
24 moment.
25

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4 LUCY SEXTON: It's urgent and I also just want to
5 say that you know we have been — you all have been on
6 the calls with us. We are doing deep dives about how
7 to keep things safe.

8 So, you know I really appreciated what you said
9 Commissioner Casals about safety is a first priority.
10 For me, it is absolutely a first priority. The
11 cultural field has been doing deep dives on what's
12 safe, what's not, how can we be with each other, how
13 can we not? Because we are concerned about our
14 performers as well. So, I think you have a good
15 partner in keeping this safe. It's been so wonderful
16 to find that guess what, outdoors is pretty safe.
17 You have to do it right but why not be out there?
18 Thank you very much.

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you Lucy. Thank
20 you Chair Vallone.

21 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you and Lucy, that's
22 exactly right. You know, no one here is saying we're
23 going to do anything that is not safe and even with
24 the Open Streets program, we haven't seen any numbers
25 tick up. We are doing safe, New York's got it. We
got it from the beginning. So, now we need to get it
to start moving and that's why you have this great

1 bill from Jimmy, our great idea to get to the
2 additional dedicated staff to streamline this same
3 process of permits and what's allowed in this new day
4 and age. So, thank you.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Ms. Sexton. We
7 will now be hearing from Thomas Ferrugia followed by
8 Candice Thompson Zachery followed by Vijay Dandapani.

9 Mr. Ferrugia, you may begin your testimony as
10 soon as the Sergeant announced the time.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

12 THOMAS FERRUGIA: Good afternoon, I am Thomas
13 Ferrugia Director of Governmental Affairs at the
14 Broadway League. We want to thank Chairman Van
15 Bramer, Chairman Vallone and the distinguished member
16 of the Committee's for allowing us this opportunity
17 to tell our story concerning New York City's tourism
18 industry and the COVID-19 crisis.

19 In addition to its cultural significance,
20 Broadway is a massive economic and tourism driver
21 that, until recently, brought an average of 40,500
22 theatregoers into Midtown Manhattan every day.
23 Broadway sold 14.8 million tickets in the season
24 ending in May of 2019 and 65 percent of those
25 admissions or 9.6 million tickets were made by

1 tourists who live outside New York City and it's
2 surrounding suburbs.

3
4 Most significantly, of those 9.6 million tickets
5 purchased by tourists, an astounding 2.8 million were
6 purchased by visitors from abroad. While we are at
7 risk of losing a tremendous number of domestic
8 visitors next year because of COVID related
9 disincentives to traveling abroad, foreign visitors
10 represent our most at risk theatregoers as the
11 likelihood of their visiting New York City in
12 significant numbers for before 2022 is quite low.

13 Last year, we drew audiences from United Kingdom,
14 Europe, Asia, Australia, Africa, South America and
15 many other parts of the world, comprising the highest
16 number of foreign visitors in all of Broadway's
17 storied history. Approximately 60 percent of foreign
18 visitors who attended a show last year stated that
19 Broadway was one of their most important reasons for
20 visiting New York City. The average foreign Broadway
21 tourist saw an average of 2.3 shows and stayed in the
22 city for an average of 6.7 days. Broadway motivated
23 foreign spending on ancillary activities, not
24 including the price of their theatre ticket, exceeded
25 \$2.9 billion last year, \$2.9 billion.

1
2 As we know, Broadway, along with everything it
3 brings to the economy, ceased on March 14, 2020 and,
4 as of today, we still have no clear path to
5 reopening, getting our people back to work, and
6 stimulating massive tourism dollars for the city.

7 Now to the legislation. NYC & Company's
8 marketing efforts that drive business from the tri-
9 state area into the five boroughs, is of utmost
10 importance for us as 35 percent of Broadway theatre
11 tickets are purchased by patrons residing in New York
12 City and the surrounding suburbs. We therefore
13 kindly defer to our friend Fred Dixon and his
14 wonderful team for their opinions on Proposal Intro.
15 1773-A, Intro. 2034 and Intro. 2068.

16 Finally, we sincerely appreciate and endorse
17 Chairman Van Bramer's Resolution calling on Congress
18 to pass Save our Stages. As you may now, the
19 Broadway League has been working very closely with
20 the National Independent Venue Association and with
21 Congress in support of SOS and just this past Friday
22 September 18th, we joined with Senator Schumer in
23 Time Square for a press conference publicly asking
24 congress to pass this very bill.

1 Substantial financial support will be required to
2
3 reopen shuttered shows, launch new production and
4 help subsidize losses while this vital industry
5 rebuilds audiences in New York and in the 200
6 American cities that annually host Touring Broadway.
7 Accordingly, we feel it is vital that government
8 recognize the unique cultural, economic, and
9 employment importance of the live commercial theatre
10 industry and act to address the devastating impact of
11 the mandated theatre closures that they have had on
12 this industry and on our economy.

13 Thank you for this opportunity.

14 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you Thomas and make
15 sure you give Charlotte our love and how we are dying
16 to have you reopen it back and so many things
17 affecting the 14-day ban. Name it, we got to get our
18 artists back on stage. Thank you.

19 THOMAS FERRUGIA: I agree, I will do that and we
20 are here to join with the city as soon as we can.

21 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Wonderful. Thank you.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Mr. Ferrugia. A
23 reminder to the panelists who wish to testify today.
24 There is no need to raise your hand. We will call
25 upon you in the order that you submitted testimony.

Next up, we will hear from Candace Thompson
Zachery followed by Vijay Dandapani, Charles Shaviro.
Ms. Thompson Zachery, you may begin when the Sergeant
announced the time.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

CANDICE THOMPSON ZACHERY: Greetings City Council
and Committee members and thank you for having me. I
am Candice Thompson Zachery from Dance NYC, a service
organization which serves over 5,000 individual
dancers, 1,200 dance making entities and 500
nonprofit dance companies based in New York City.
Our diverse constituents include Black indigenous
people of color, immigrants and disabled dance
workers. It has been over six months since arts and
culture organizations have had to close their doors.
Their in-person programming went online earning a
fraction of the typical revenue.

Due to lost performance opportunities and the
inability to generate enough income to cover basic
needs including housing, food, and healthcare, there
is a mass exodus of dancers and artists leaving the
city. Live indoor performances may not return for at
least a year after a vaccine and institutions are
faltering as we speak.

1
2 Simultaneously, small business and family run
3 dance studios are facing closure due to unfair
4 enforcement of the city's vague reopening plans. Our
5 findings show that the dance sector generates \$300
6 million to the city and currently dance projects
7 project losses of at least \$22 million in income.
8 The lack of understanding of our sector and the
9 city's failure to include a dance specific
10 representative on the Mayor's Office Advisory
11 Committee for Arts, Culture and Tourism, has
12 contributed to the dire situation of these key
13 sustainers of the dance workforce. Including the
14 DOE, professional training programs and Broadway.

15 Dance NYC is demanding legislation for the quick
16 reopening of more public spaces for revenue
17 generating performance opportunities before winter
18 sets in. The waiving of city permitting fees for
19 arts and culture organizations, outdoor programming,
20 the fees are currently burdensome for arts
21 organizations that are already struggling. Grant
22 funding for the city for outdoor public space
23 performances to support artists wages, salaries and
24 production costs, and for the city to provide clear
25

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and specific reopening guidelines for the dance
sector -

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time.

CANDICE THOMPSON ZACHERY: Which are not gyms.
Dance NYC strongly advocates for a just and equitable
vision for New York City and sustainability for arts
and culture which is necessary for community
building, mental health and drives tourism and the
economy.

Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Keep on dancing Candice and
everyone else. Thank you very much.

CANDICE THOMPSON ZACHERY: Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Ms. Thompson
Zachery. We will next hear from Vijay Dandapani
followed by Charles Shaviro followed by Cristyne
Nicholas. Mr. Dandapani, you may begin as soon as
the Sergeant calls time.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

VIJAY DANDAPANI: Good afternoon Chair's Van
Bramer and Vallone, thank you for the opportunity to
testify and Member of the Committee. I am Vijay
Dandapani, President and CEO of the Hotel Association
of New York City. We represent 300 hotels in the

1
2 city, all five boroughs. The impact of COVID-19 has
3 created a really untenable situation for my industry
4 with hotels across the city closing, approximately
5 200 hotels have closed, many unsure whether they will
6 ever reopen in the future.

7 Despite these burdens, Hammock the acronym for
8 Hotel Association has worked closely with the city on
9 COVID relief efforts providing hotel space at cost
10 wherever the city needs it, for hospital capacity
11 expansion, for homeless individuals in need of
12 additional space, or for healthcare personnel.

13 On a personal note, I have personally led in
14 person donations of masks, tens of thousands of masks
15 to city hospitals Flushing and Elmhurst as well as
16 Mount Sinai and we will continue to work with the
17 city to address needs as they arise.

18 As you know, tourism is a crucial economic
19 generator for the City and hotels are a vital part of
20 this tapestry. But the onset of the pandemic has
21 resulted in the loss of nearly 80 percent of jobs,
22 there were 50,000 before COVID hit us and there was
23 \$3.1 billion in taxes that the hotel industry can't
24 bear to the City of New York on an annual basis.

1 We need support in the industry, so that hotels
2 can survive as we essential infrastructure founded on
3 private dollars. So, both the creation of an office
4 of tourism and recovery to facilitate tourisms
5 recovery.
6

7 With the caveat that was outlined by Fred Dixon
8 that it will not be duplicated. We hope that they
9 will use theatre to come up with good policy options
10 that will enable us a quick path forward. We badly
11 need relief in our industry as we've got none so far
12 from either state, city, or even the federal
13 government. I just would like to point out that our
14 industry -

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time.

16 VIJAY DANDAPANI: Oh, thank you. I will just
17 close by saying that you know, we would really like,
18 from others have pointed out the quarantine aspect,
19 we looked into. There are other policies that could
20 really enable [INAUDIBLE 2:34:56] of that and then
21 enable tourism to come back to the city.

22 Thank you for your time.

23 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: So, Vijay, there was just
24 some staggering numbers and statistics that affect
25 the entire city. I just want to give you an

1 additional minute there. What is the current
2 occupancy rate? I had heard some numbers of
3 somewhere from 5 to 10 percent and what do you think
4 that we could directly do tomorrow to help that
5 impact?
6

7 VIJAY DANDAPANI: Well, thank you Chairman. The
8 actual occupancy rate is under 10 percent, 8 percent.
9 The normal rate that's being put out is about 38
10 percent or thereabouts. That's a misleading number
11 because you've got several hotels, close to 35, 40
12 percent of the hotels that are not reporting as I
13 said to one of the hotels that closed. And on top of
14 that you have got many hotels that are now catering
15 to government business and we are thankful for that
16 of course. So, that misleads the true tourism
17 number. It's really between 7 and 8 percent.

18 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: If that continues, how many
19 hotels will be able to survive?

20 VIJAY DANDAPANI: Well, we are estimating between
21 25 and 30 percent of the hotels will simply go out of
22 business. They have a problem and now it's fast
23 becoming a solvency problem and as I said earlier, it
24 is an infrastructure issue and you are doing to see
25 whenever tourism does come back and we are all very

1
2 confident in New York, but when it comes back, it
3 will take three years to do a Greenfield Hotel
4 Project. So, we are going to lose essential
5 infrastructure and jobs of course.

6 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: And then the last part to
7 that was what can we do tomorrow to start this
8 process?

9 VIJAY DANDAPANI: Well, I mean, it is something
10 that I think all of us here can easily endorse which
11 is a more shall we say enlightened if you will,
12 policy with regard to the quarantine.

13 It's well known. Invitation is the best form of
14 flattery. The other jurisdictions that are doing
15 this and are doing it successfully may notably but
16 also will ask why, in the entire Caribbean they are
17 doing an RTPCR test that is not 100 percent sure but
18 it is close to 99 percent sure that when somebody is
19 negative, they are good to go.

20 But as a quarantine is an absolute wall that
21 prevents people from coming into the city and it
22 really is what [INAUDIBLE 2:37:08] in July with its
23 regard to occupancy.

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4 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you Vijay and we
5 continue to work immediately together with all of
6 this as we always do. Thank you.

7 VIJAY DANDAPANI: Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Mr. Dandapani. We
9 will next hear from Charles Shaviro followed by
10 Cristyne Nicholas followed by Amy Roth. Mr. Shaviro,
11 you may begin as soon as the Sergeant calls time.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

13 CHARLES SHAVIRO: Good morning. My name is
14 Charles Shaviro. I am the Data Researcher at the
15 Center for an Urban Future, an independent think tank
16 focused on expanding economic opportunity in New York
17 City.

18 I'll be sharing testimony prepared for today's
19 hearing by our Policy Director Eli Dvorkin. Thank you
20 for the opportunity.

21 Our research at the Center for an Urban Future
22 has shown just how important tourism has become as a
23 source of middle income and accessible jobs for New
24 Yorkers across the five boroughs.

25 Prior to the pandemic, 91 percent of the jobs in
tourism were accessible to New Yorkers without a
bachelor's degree. And although most of these jobs

1
2 are concentrated in Manhattan, the tourism workforce
3 is distributed across the entire city. For example,
4 81 percent of hotel workers live in the four boroughs
5 outside Manhattan where dollars earned in the tourism
6 sector have a significant global impact. Even how
7 important tourism has become to the city's economy,
8 the city will need to do more to help lay the ground
9 work for a long term recovery.

10 NYC & Company will have to build on and the
11 promising All in NYC campaign and take the city's
12 local and regional marketing efforts to the next
13 level, and it will require support from the City
14 Council to do so. For instance, the Council and the
15 Mayor's Office should work together on new discount
16 and incentive programs designed to turn out New
17 Yorkers who become tourists in their own city.

18 The city can draw inspiration from Montreal's
19 Passport Attractions program, which is spurring
20 locals to visit tourist attractions, or the UK's Eat
21 Out to Help Out scheme, which provided a government
22 backed 50 percent discount for dining out at local
23 restaurants on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday night
24 in August.

1
2 The Council can build on the effective Open
3 Streets for Restaurants initiative by expanding this
4 free online permitting system to work for cultural
5 organizations and performance venues of all sizes, an
6 approach that could help these hard hit venues
7 generate much needed revenue while serving as an
8 attractor to boost visitation in commercial hubs like
9 Midtown.

10 The Council could also direct the creation of a
11 new initiative enlisting New York City's creatives to
12 promote the city.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

14 CHARLES SHAVIRO: This Works Progress
15 Administration, style program could hire out of work
16 artists and creatives to respond to All in NYC brief.

17 To ramp up these efforts, NYC & Company will need
18 a new level of support to broadcast New York City's
19 public health success story. The Mayor and City
20 Council should increase baseline funding for NYC &
21 Company and work with the state to pilot a consistent
22 stream of future revenues, which is dedicating a
23 small portion of taxes from hotel and other
24 accommodations stay to fund tourism marketing and
25 promotion.

4 Thank you for the opportunity to testify today
5 and for bringing attention to this vital part of the
6 city's overall recovery strategy.

7 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you Charles and that
8 also is a good point for any of the panelists to
9 please submit testimony to for anyone who asks after
10 the hearing, what's your thoughts we can make sure we
11 can make sure we can shoot that to anyone who is
12 asking. And yes, we agree with you on the budget,
13 especially after eight years of no increases to New
14 York & Company and now with the budget crisis. All
15 the great work that they do is jeopardized by this
16 budget, so we have to increase these resources. So,
17 thank you Charles.

18 CHARLES SHAVIRO: Thank you.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Mr. Shaviro. We
20 will next hear from Cristyne Nicholas followed by Amy
21 Roth and then Siri Horvitz. Ms. Nicholas, you may
22 begin your testimony as soon as the Sergeant calls on
23 you.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

25 CRISTYNE NICHOLAS: Chair's Vallone, Van Bramer
and Members of the City Council, thank you for your
focus on tourism, one of the most important economic

1 drivers of New York City and critical to our
2 recovery. My name is Cristyne Nicholas, I am the
3 Chair of the Broadway Association. I Chair Governor
4 Cuomo's Tourism Advisory Counsel and I am the former
5 CEO of NYC & Company, which during 911 I was honored
6 to help create the roadmap to tourism's recovery and I
7 was honored to promote to the world just how
8 resilient New York City is.
9

10 This global pandemic is challenging our
11 resilience. We need to think outside the box and I
12 thank the City Council for your creative thinking and
13 offer my support for these bills today. Regarding
14 Intro. 1773-A, which would establish an Office of
15 Tourism of Recovery within the Office of the Mayor, I
16 see the need for executive level coordinated approach
17 from City Hall to rebuild tourism in the economy in
18 this historic time of need.

19 I am aware also of the budget crisis and know
20 that investing in new personnel during this time
21 would be challenging and probably not necessary. As
22 done in New York State, the State ESD holds a
23 quarterly interagency tourism taskforce pulling
24 resources and assigning existing state employees to
25 be responsible and accountable for tourism policy.

1 The city personnel is there, they just need to be
2 directed.

3
4 However, I still urge the Administration to fully
5 invest in NYC & Company's future. According the
6 Center of Urban Future, NYC & Company's overall
7 tourism budget has not stayed competitive with other
8 global destinations. Tourism is a revenue generator
9 for NYC and we need now more than ever to generate
10 revenue for our city. I applaud NYC & Company for
11 their outstanding work and I also know that this
12 office would be very important to coordinate the
13 agencies as we have done in the past with big events
14 such as the NBA All Star game, World Economic Forum,
15 the Grammys and others.

16 A current and immediate tourism recovery that the
17 City Council and the city can do today is to support
18 the meetings and events businesses throughout the
19 five boroughs. A \$10 billion industry that is
20 completely closed.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time.

22 CRISTYNE NICHOLAS: The powerful meetings and
23 events industry would have a massive economic impact
24 to our restaurants, retail, and small businesses that
25 are the backbone of our economy.

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4 According to NYC and Company's 2019 report, \$46
5 billion in visitor spending supported almost 400,000
6 jobs citywide and generated 70 billion in economic
7 activity. Sadly, however, the tourism industry is
8 now one of the slowest to recover.

9 If we fail tourism, we fail us all. I commend
10 the City Council for your hard work on these bills
11 and thank you for your attention to tourism. New
12 York City's fourth largest industry. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Cristyne, you are
14 experience and words are needed more than ever. So,
15 thank you for today and always helping us guide our
16 way through and I know you have worked with numerous
17 administrations that have many titles. If there was
18 a single focus, you could say if we started tomorrow,
19 that would make the most difference, what would that
20 be?

21 CRISTYNE NICHOLAS: The meetings and events
22 industry. Some of your other speakers have mentioned
23 it. They are ready to go. They are professionals
24 and understand how this arbitrary number of 50
25 individuals is just - it's not realistic. When you
26 look at the ballrooms and the hotels and you look at
27 the wide open spaces that many of the big event

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1 spaces have, you can divide that up. You can spread
2
3 out hundreds and hundreds of people. And other
4 states now are using our weakness to their advantage
5 and welcoming other conventions, small meetings,
6 weddings and we're losing out.

7 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you and that's a
8 perfect - something that can be done tomorrow and
9 that's why it is so important. Thank you and I like
10 all the panelists making it through now into our
11 third hour for waiting to be heard because I am
12 hoping folks will listen.

13 CRISTYNE NICHOLAS: Thank you for your
14 leadership.

15 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Ms. Nicholas. We
17 will next hear from Amy Roth followed Siri Horvitz,
18 and then Dhruv Chopra. Ms. Roth, you may begin as
19 soon as the Sergeant calls time.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

21 AMY ROTH: Good afternoon. I am Amy Roth, CEO of
22 the Whitney Museum of American Art. Thank you for
23 hosting this hearing and inviting the cultural
24 community to speak. The Whitney is a contemporary
25 art museum focused on the art of the United States

1 and located in lower Manhattan. The Whitney at its
2
3 core is a New York City institution, about 80 percent
4 of our staff live within the city and New Yorkers
5 account for more than a third of our annual average
6 visitation of one million.

7 The impact of the pandemic is unprecedented on
8 the Whitney. Revenue losses are significant, we rely
9 on revenue from ticket sales and visitor related
10 revenue, which is about one-third of our \$60 million
11 annual operating budget.

12 The Whitney is committed to contributing to the
13 city's recovery. Last April, we convened 25 museums
14 from across the five boroughs to establish the New
15 York City museums Reopening Taskforce. The Taskforce
16 developed a set of reopening protocols with the
17 belief that standardized procedures will contribute
18 to the health, safety and confidence in visiting
19 museums across New York City.

20 The Whitney zone reopening plans aim to welcome
21 back New Yorkers, engaging and expanding this
22 audience is vital for reaching or attendance and
23 admissions goals. The Whitney enthusiastically
24 supports NYC & Company's efforts to encourage
25 hyperlocal tourism and rebuild New York City's

1
2 tourism economy. The Whitney reopened to the public
3 on September 3rd and as a gesture to the city
4 admission during the month of September is pay what
5 you wish. We've seen a very strong response from New
6 Yorkers.

7 The Whitney's planning for the gradual but
8 certain full recovery of tourism to New York, pre-
9 COVID tourists accounted for nearly 60 percent of the
10 museums paid visitation. Looking ahead, increasing
11 revenue from Admissions is essential. It is critical
12 that New Yorkers patronize museums and cultural
13 organizations. The support of the City of New York
14 and NYC & Company to continue promoting the cultural
15 community is vital and any further investment in
16 public awareness and facilitating pathways for New
17 Yorkers to visit the City of Museums would be greatly
18 appreciated.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time.

20 AMY ROTH: The waiting is unwavering in its
21 commitment to serve the City of New York and remains
22 grateful for the ongoing support it receives from the
23 New York City Council. Thank you all.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you Amy and I look
25 forward to returning to the Whitney myself. What are

1
2 your numbers looking like? Obviously, you've got a
3 month plus of experience under your belt. How many
4 folks have gone through per day totals? What does
5 that look like? What's the experience look like?

6 AMY ROTH: Yes, thank you. We are capped as you
7 know at 25 percent. So, we started a little bit more
8 conservatively at 20 percent tickets offered to the
9 public. Advanced booking is required and we have
10 seen about 30 to 40 percent attrition.

11 So, really reduced numbers in terms of what a
12 normal season would look like. For us, that's about
13 anywhere between 600 and 1,000 visitors a day. So,
14 again, that is significantly reduced. We are just
15 four weeks in. We are pay what you wish, so when we
16 go back to full price program, we expect to see some
17 of that attrition go down. But you know, it's really
18 slow going but the robustness has come from New
19 Yorkers, thanks so much to the efforts of everyone
20 here on the committee's in New York City & Company.

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: While it is down
22 greatly, it is still good to hear that 600 to 1,000
23 people are going through your very large and very
24 beautiful museum and again, look forward to getting
25 back there myself. Back to the Committee Counsel.

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4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Chair. Thank you
5 Ms. Roth for your testimony. Next, we will hear from
6 Siri Horvitz followed by Dhruv Chopra followed by
7 Duke Dang. Ms. Horvitz, you may begin your testimony
8 as soon as the Sergeant calls time.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

10 SIRI HORVITZ: Chair Van Bramer, Chair Vallone,
11 and Members of the Committee's, my name is Siri
12 Horvitz and I am the Director of Government and
13 Community Relations for Lincoln Center for the
14 Performing Arts, a member of the Cultural
15 Institutions Group. I express my gratitude to the
16 Chair and to Majority Leader Cumbo for recognizing
17 the significant challenges faced by the city's
18 performing arts organizations, which continue to
19 remain closed due to COVID-19.

20 When considered supports, the Proposed Intro.'s
21 2068 and 2034 which have passed, will help us restart
22 our programming and resume our sizable contribution
23 to the city's position as the world's cultural
24 capital.

25 In the absence of our indoor venues, performing
26 arts organizations are desperate for alternative
27 spaces in which to present programming. Access to

1 outdoor space is critical for our long term survival.

2 Bringing culture to the city's outdoor spaces affords
3 many benefits. It will restart our organization's
4 revenue streams, support job creation for artists and
5 art workers, drive economic impact for tourism
6 related businesses and help audiences ease back into
7 the comfort of attending performances.
8

9 Lincoln Center 16 acre campus is resplendent with
10 ample open spaces begging for creative use, making us
11 uniquely positioned to offer our spaces to our peers
12 all across the five boroughs in the absence of their
13 home venues. However, the process of navigating the
14 city's many oversight arms to date have been
15 cumbersome despite best efforts. We can't even
16 program our own spaces.

17 The proposed legislation would bypass these
18 barriers allowing us to self-certify our socially
19 distant programming and apply for free permits by an
20 expedited online process. This would ease our
21 organizations bandwidth burden and reduce the city's
22 reliance on precious staff resources during an
23 already challenging period in our history. Lincoln
24 Center urges the City Council to swiftly pass
25 Intro.'s 2068 and 2034. The performing arts are a

1 significant part of the reason why local and nonlocal
2 tourists visit New York City. We share the city's
3 safety concerns and stand ready with detailed health
4 protocols to safeguard our artists, employees and
5 audiences.
6

7 We are confident that we can work with the city
8 to mitigate health risk, provide positive community
9 impact and achieve wonderful results for the city's
10 residents and visitors alike. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you Siri and it is
12 great to have you know, Lucy and so many of our small
13 not-for-profit out of borough [inaudible 2:51:50],
14 cultural organizations calling for this but also good
15 to have Lincoln Center throwing your weight behind
16 this as well because you are incredibly important to
17 our city and you amplify the voices of all of those
18 other organizations, right. All of those other
19 cultural organizations that have budgets of \$100,000
20 or \$200,000, right. And so, as you were speaking and
21 talking about how both my bill and Majority Leader
22 Cumbo's bills would be helpful to Lincoln Center,
23 what I kept thinking is, you are amplifying the
24 voices of those who are much smaller and I am just
25 really glad that Lincoln Center is here to do that.

4 So, thank you.

5 SIRI HORVITZ: Thank you Chair. We are doing our
6 best. We would love to be able to offer our spaces
7 to organizations all across the city. This is not
8 just for Lincoln Center's benefit. Now is the time
9 where we need to be a better civic actor and a
10 community partner.

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Ms. Horvitz. We
13 will next hear from Dhruv Chopra followed by Duke
14 Dang followed by Lizzy Marmon. Mr. Chopra, you may
15 begin as soon as the Sergeant's call time.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Mr. Chopra, we can't hear
18 you.

19 DHRUV CHOPRA: Can you hear me?

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, we can hear you now.

21 DHRUV CHOPRA: Apologies, I wanted to say thank
22 you for everybody for the concern that you are taking
23 in the industry. It's been really heartwarming to
24 hear all the things in motion and of course, we do
25 need to do more. I think the issues concerning the
broader industry and its impact on the city have been

1 well outlined, so perhaps I could focus on our
2 individual experience.
3

4 At Elsewhere which is a BIPOC music venue, music
5 and arts menu, focused on emerging music in Bushwick.
6 We have multiple rooms catering to artists just
7 starting off their career who can bring in maybe 50
8 or 100 people in a small room. Local artists as well
9 as international touring artists who can fill let's
10 say 2,000 or 3,000 people in the room.

11 Elsewhere's capacity All in is about 1,600 and we
12 are also the owners and operators of PopGun Presents,
13 which is a citywide booking promotion company that's
14 been around for 12 years. Again, with the focus on
15 emerging music without boundaries. And for us, this
16 is obviously culturally devastating because new
17 artists aren't given a chance to share their voices
18 and their art with the world but also because in our
19 staff of over 100 has now dwindled to about you know,
20 a skeleton crew of about 5 people.

21 We have a small outdoor space, which is giving us
22 a little bit of activity. But at the end of the day,
23 the real point I want to make is that without federal
24 funding, most if not all independent music venues
25

1
2 will be going away, if we are not already sort of
3 under water and walking ghosts.

4 You know, we at Elsewhere are in a favorable
5 position because we had a small profit last year
6 that's been reinvested this year and we have an
7 understanding landlord and we were able to
8 renegotiate insurance. But those offsets are
9 obviously not down to zero, which is basically what
10 our activity is down to and as a result, with PPP
11 money running out and events getting canceled, for
12 which we have to return tickets, most of us are
13 already under water and will be you know, evicted if
14 not just going into bankruptcy by the end of the year
15 and when we're looking at -

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time.

17 DHRUV CHOPRA: Thank you. All it says, if we are
18 looking at probably another one or two years for shut
19 down, we're concerned that obviously this is not
20 something we are prepared for as an independent
21 industry.

22 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you for that and we
23 need to hear those stories. Thank you.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Mr. Chopra. We
25 will next hear from Duke Dang followed by Lizzy

1
2 Marmon followed by Dale Paker[SP?]. Mr. Dang you may
3 begin when the Sergeant's call time.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

5 DUKE DANG: My name is Duke Dang, I am the
6 General Manager of Works and Process, the resident
7 performing arts organization at the Guggenheim
8 Museum. For 17 years I've produced over 500
9 performances at the museum, many in its iconic
10 rotunda. Arguably one of the most indoor social
11 distance conducive spaces in the city.

12 The performing arts economy tourism and
13 employment, yet with theatres closed, the industry is
14 homeless. The Guggenheim can play a role when
15 museums are allowed to produce performances indoors
16 but we need a greater capacity and more imaginative
17 space use to deploy the performing arts to amplify
18 New York's recovery.

19 Having produced many performances in the rotunda,
20 and currently right now producing NBA like dance
21 bubbles and isolation in the Hudson Valley, I'd like
22 to share and proposed a simple idea that in one
23 gesture can grow tourism, create jobs, and help
24 satisfy audience demand.

1 The idea is indoor hotel atrium performances
2
3 right now or this winter. Deemed essential
4 throughout the pandemic, hotels have experienced low
5 occupancy and room rates and similar to the
6 Guggenheim rotunda, the Marriot Marquis, the Conrad
7 downtown, the Rock Seed, the Beacon Hotels all have
8 indoor atriums. Having produced Guggenheim tundra
9 performances this winter, I think performances and
10 hotel atriums can be coveted amenities for hotel
11 guests, watching safely from their room balconies.
12 No tickets are sold, noncancelable room reservations
13 are made, only registered hotel guests are permitted,
14 check ins are spaced out, elevators are keyed to
15 assigned floors, room service can be available.

16 This elegant solution optimizing the innate
17 social distancing created by indoor atrium spaces and
18 hotel operations could allow artists and fans to
19 safely gather and performance dining and lodging can
20 all come together to rebuild New York.

21 Thank you for your time.

22 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Duke, that could be the
23 idea today. Thank you so much. That is a great idea
24 and I think we will probably wind up submitting,
25

1 Jimmy and I, that idea for conversation and
2 legislation today. Thank you very much.

3
4 DUKE DANG: It's the first time I presented it.
5 So, first time I provided testimony.

6 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: So, keep it coming.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Mr. Dang. We will
8 next hear from Lizzy Marmon followed by Gail Thacker
9 followed by Mallory Markam. Ms. Marmon, you may
10 begin as soon as the Sergeants call time.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

12 LIZZY MARMON: Good afternoon. My name is Lizzy
13 Marmon, my pronouns are they, them, theirs. And I am
14 the Manager of Institutional Giving at the Museum of
15 the City of New York, one of the 34 members of the
16 CIG.

17 Thank you Chair Van Bramer and Chair Vallone and
18 Members of the Committee's for this opportunity to
19 offer testimony on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis
20 on the city's tourism industry and to share the
21 museums experience since reopening.

22 Prior to COVID-19, the museum serves 300,000
23 visitors annually with 40 percent from the New York
24 City Metro area, including 50,000 students and
25 educators and the remaining 60 percent of our

1
2 visitors are tourists. 30 percent domestic, 30
3 percent international origin.

4 Throughout the pandemic, the museum has served as
5 a steadfast resource on our city's past, present and
6 future virtually and now, as of August 27th, once
7 again onsite. The museum has welcomed nearly 3,000
8 visitors since reopening. In addition to 25,000
9 served through virtual programming during the same
10 period. None of which would have been possible
11 without the hard work and commitment of my
12 colleagues.

13 Past audience research has shown that visitors
14 see the museum as a place of comfort, escape and
15 exploration. 50 percent of our visitors since
16 reopening had not been to the museum before and most
17 of those who are visiting or staying for longer.
18 However, challenges remain. For FY21, the museum cut
19 its budget by 30 percent through significant
20 reduction in personnel and programming.

21 Since reopening, the museum had to rehire and
22 increase hours for some staff. The 20 percent of
23 full time staff remain on reduced hours. Attendance
24 is the 75 percent reduction from the same period last
25 year. Our earned income is down but we are

1 encouraged by the increased purchases per capita in
2 our shop and that our café will reopen with the start
3 of indoor dining.
4

5 In the short term, we expect the majority of our
6 visitors will be from our East Harlem neighborhood
7 and from Manhattan but in accordance with city and
8 state guidance, we hope to safely welcome visitors
9 from across the five boroughs from drive in markets
10 in the northeast and beyond. New York City's
11 economic prosperity is synonymous with culture.

12 The drives are spending, for many it's our
13 livelihood and the city's cultural offering serve at
14 beacon for global visitors.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time.

16 LIZZY MARMON: Culture will be a critical
17 component of the city's recovery and the museum of
18 the City of New York is a committed partner in this
19 transformed cultural landscape. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you Lizzy. We love
21 our museums.

22 LIZZY MARMON: Us to.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Lizzy Marmon.
24 Next, we will hear from Gail Thacker followed by
25 Olympia Cosby followed by Aimee Todoroff. Ms.

1 Thacker, you may begin as soon as the Sergeant's call
2
3 time.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time starts now.

5 GAIL THACKER: Hi everybody. My name is Gail
6 Thacker, I am the Artistic Director of the Gene
7 Frankel Theatre which is on Bond Street between
8 Lafayette and Bowery. We are an open street and I'm
9 here to tell you my story about this.

10 First, I want to thank everyone. It's really
11 great to see everybody's face and I know its been
12 difficult but here we are. The work that has come
13 from this venue for 71 years has had civil rights and
14 progressive thinking at its core. Today, this is
15 more relevant and necessary than ever. We need our
16 voices to be heard.

17 We have been closed for almost seven months now.
18 During that time, especially in the beginning we were
19 gung-ho going forward purchasing HVAC systems with
20 the M13 filters, fixing up cleaning stations with
21 hand sterilizers, touchless thermometers, safety
22 templates following all the directions and guidelines
23 on New York forward.

24 Painted, cleaned, removed seats, and we wait and
25 we wait and as we wait, we have emptied our savings

1 accounts. We fund raise, we fund raise. We need you
2
3 to see that we are not like Broadway. We are small
4 theatres. We are flexible. We can have a
5 checkerboard system for seating and we can do this
6 safely.

7 So, as we've watched the restaurants and bars
8 thriving outdoors with food and entertainment, we've
9 tried to apply for the same permits but we've run
10 into brick walls. So, I said, well, I can't bring
11 them in, I'll bring it to them. So, I built a stage
12 at the window. We have a storefront window. It's a
13 small little stage for probably one, maybe two
14 persons and I applied for more permits, just to have
15 outdoor seating's.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time.

17 GAIL THACKER: Okay, but because the street is
18 closed, we cannot. I just ask you to please help us
19 move forward in this area. Thank you. I have more
20 to read but I will stop. Thanks.

21 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you Gail. We want to
22 see that show on that stage.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah, I just want to
24 Chair Vallone, say thank you to Gail and say how
25 heartbreaking your story is because of all that you

1 have done to make performance possible. You actually
2 have the capability to do something and yet, you are
3 prevented from doing so and that's exactly what we
4 need to stop doing in this city and give you the
5 ability to get back out there. And so, you know,
6 that's how I started this hearing and how I will end
7 it that the city has to do more and better and
8 quicker and not accept the status quo. That we have
9 a permitting system, it works, we're doing okay. You
10 know, we're going to lose too many small theatre
11 companies, small performance companies, small
12 cultural organizations. You know, on that glorious
13 day whenever it is one or two years from now and when
14 we are all dancing in the streets again, there will
15 be too many people that won't be left operating. We
16 cannot wait until them.

17
18 So, that story was particularly painful but I
19 thank you for sharing it.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Ms. Thacker. We
21 will next hear from Olympia Kazi followed by Aimee
22 Todoroff, and then Kimberly Olsen. Ms. Kazi, you may
23 begin as soon as the Sergeant's call time.

24 MARC RIBOT: Well, sorry to disappoint but I am
25 not Olympia Kazi. My name - I am representing The

1
2 Music Workers Alliance on behalf of my fellow
3 executive board members Olympia Kazi. My name is
4 Marc Ribot M-a-r-c R-i-b-o-t. I am formerly a
5 working musician over 300 CD credits and touring
6 internationally both with my own projects and as a
7 side musician.

8 I am a member of Local 802, former President of
9 the Content Creators Coalition and former Chair of
10 the Any Musicians Caucus of Local 802. I am here to
11 speak very strongly in favor of the bills presented
12 by Majority Leader Cumbo and James Van Bramer. I
13 think these are both essential, speak very strongly
14 in support of Save our Stages, also essential. I
15 want to note that in today's discussion, you know, of
16 drawing tourists back to New York, there has been a
17 presumption that when this is over, New York City is
18 going to be a world class cultural center that is
19 capable to which tourists can return.

20 That is not a presumption that I think people
21 should be making. Since the beginning of the COVID
22 crisis, Music Workers Alliance has been holding
23 dozens of open meetings for any musicians and DJ's at
24 all levels. People have shown up from the most
25

1
2 grassroots to really accomplished, to highly
3 accomplished known professionals.

4 And I just have to tell you, people are
5 desperate. We have been shut down in every way -

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

7 MARC RIBOT: Okay. We've been shut down in every
8 way imaginable. Our gigs have been shut down. We
9 are unable to travel abroad whereas opportunities
10 arise there.

11 So, yes, what we would like to see is this bill
12 as the beginning of a creative discussion on
13 reopening. These bills by themselves are not
14 sufficient but we need the city to begin this process
15 by passing these bills. We understand the financial
16 situation but the use of nonfinancial resources, the
17 advocacy for the state and federal levels, the irony
18 of our situation is that while we are shut down and
19 losing support, digital, online digital platforms are
20 making billions of dollars in the often copyright
21 infringing use of our work. We are looking forward
22 to a Reso. towards creating economic justice in the
23 digital domain.

24 Thank you very much.

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4 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you Marc for your
5 testimony.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Mr. Ribot. We will
7 next hear from Aimee Todoroff followed by Kimberly
8 Olsen and then Adam Ganser. Ms. Todoroff, you may
9 begin as soon as the Sergeant's call time.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

11 AIMEE TODOROFF: Hi, I am Amy Todoroff, Director
12 of the League of Independent Theatre. Things we
13 know, culture beautifies community space. It unifies
14 neighborhoods and it revitalizes economies. We need
15 all three as we face the future of New York City with
16 an uncertain budget.

17 Allowing artists to activate public spaces
18 creates an unofficial city workforce of caretakers
19 that will maintain these public spaces and stimulate
20 spending in a neighborhood based mom and pop shops
21 that we know multiply financial impact.

22 The legendary theatre Director Peter Sellers
23 credits the City of Los Angeles's decision to host an
24 outdoor performance festival in the early 1990's with
25 turning around the fortunes of their downtown
corridor and parks. New York artists can do the same
for our city in the months and years to come but only

1
2 if you can provide a fast track and streamlined way
3 to let artists have access to their public spaces
4 through one point of contact.

5 The open culture plan proposed by Council Member
6 Van Bramer and Council Member Cumbo is a great start.
7 Why is the delightful paint and pour that is on my
8 block allowed to operate a sidewalk painting class
9 through open streets but cultural nonprofits are
10 prohibited? Because we don't serve wine and
11 appetizers. Culture does not require mask removal.

12 Our artists can't lose another year's worth of
13 opportunity. Outdoor performance and culture needs
14 to be enshrined through at least the end of 2021. We
15 all understand that tourism is driven by culture but
16 respectfully to the great work that you are all
17 doing, this isn't about tourists. Access to art is a
18 right. Through a fast tracked permit and easily
19 accessible app to find public space and a single
20 point of contact, New York City needs a simplified
21 system for performance in outdoor public spaces that
22 prioritizes local, independent, nonprofit performance
23 arts and cultural groups that understand the need of
24 their community, especially those that are BIPOC,
25 immigrant or LGBTQ.

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4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

5 AIMEE TODOROFF: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you. I just want
7 to once again give credit to the League of
8 Independent Theatres. You all do amazing work and it
9 was our Zoom meeting from several months ago that
10 helped produce the piece of legislation that I
11 introduced. And so, I want to thank you for your
12 advocacy and that fierce testimony.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Ms. Todoroff. We
14 will now hear from Kimberly Olsen followed by Adam
15 Ganser and then Lynn Kelly. Ms. Olsen, you may begin
16 as soon as the Sergeant's call time.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

18 KIMBERLY OLSEN: Thank you for the opportunity to
19 testify and Council Member Cumbo and Council Member
20 Van Bramer for your leadership and commitment to arts
21 and arts education.

22 My name is Kimberly Olsen and I come to you today
23 as the Executive Director of the New York City Arts
24 and Education Roundtable and as a proud District 26
25 resident. On behalf of the Roundtable's membership,
I am here to highlight the importance of continuing
existing partnerships between New York City's

1 Cultural Arts organizations and our public schools to
2 support the financial sustainability of our cultural
3 community. The New York City Arts and Education
4 Roundtable is a service organization who builds its
5 efforts around the values that arts are essential and
6 that arts education is a right for all New York City
7 students. We represent over 120 cultural
8 organizations and 2,000 teaching artists in every
9 discipline.
10

11 These creative thinkers quickly pivoted in the
12 spring and summer to partnering with educators and
13 curriculum delivering art supplies to families and
14 creating engaging videos to promote art making at
15 home and in our communities.

16 Over 310 arts organizations partner with public
17 schools each year. These organizations hope to
18 continue these arts learning opportunities to support
19 the city's recovery process despite the financial
20 hardships and burdens they now face due to COVID-19.
21 These partnership employ thousands of artists, give
22 students space to process trauma and think critically
23 about the world around them and help students build
24 important life skills that will help them move beyond
25 the pandemic.

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4 Going into this unprecedented school year, we
5 understand the dynamics of both remote and in school
6 learning will be tested and adjusted throughout the
7 year. However, the critical services that our
8 cultural community provides has proven to be an
9 uplifting creative outlet for our students, supports
10 our DOE's goals of equity and excellence for all, and
11 again, provides these critical employment
12 opportunities. Especially for arts education
13 organizations who collectively reported artistic
14 employment decreases of over 2,100 artists or 78
15 percent of their artist staffing as of May 8th.

16 Given the importance of these partnerships and
17 filling the gap in arts instruction, we request City
18 Council's help in preventing schools from eliminating
19 arts education in order to make up for budget
20 shortfall.

21 Thank you so much for your time and
22 consideration.

23 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you Kimberly and boy
24 do we love District 26.

25 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: You know, Council Member
26 Vallone, some would say District 26 is the best
27 district in the city to live in but -

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4 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: It wouldn't be much of an
5 argument there.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: But thank you Kimberly.
7 As you know, I am a huge believer in arts and
8 education and we absolutely cannot sacrifice that at
9 this particular moment and time. You know, people
10 think these are the times where we could cut back on
11 the arts, arts and education in particular but we
12 actually have to double down if we are ever truly
13 going to recover.

14 So, thank you for the work that you do in this
15 field.

16 KIMBERLY OLSEN: Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you Kimberly.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Ms. Olsen, we will
19 next hear from Adam Ganser followed by Lynn Kelly and
20 then Susan Donahue. Mr. Ganser, you may begin as
21 soon as the Sergeant's call time.

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

23 LUCY ROBSON: Thank you. I am Lucy Robson from
24 New Yorkers for Parks testifying on behalf of Adam
25 Ganser, our Executive Director. Thank you to Chair's
Vallone and Van Bramer for giving us the opportunity
to speak about this issue. I think it is no surprise

1
2 to anyone on this call that this summer parks have
3 been in big demand like never before.

4 New Yorkers for parks is the only independent
5 advocacy organization for parks in New York City. We
6 advocate for the tools and resources that allowed
7 stewards of these public spaces to keep them clean,
8 safe, and welcoming for all New Yorkers.

9 We are thrilled to see New Yorkers coming
10 together for community, for recreation and yes, for
11 culture and art in our parks and open spaces. At the
12 same time, we need to be mindful that the demand we
13 create not outstrip the ability of park stewards to
14 care for the public spaces with the resources that
15 are available. Volunteers can't band together the
16 way they normally do to pick up litter and care for
17 plants.

18 It's the nonprofits and conservancies that
19 organize, volunteer and pay for additional
20 maintenance and repairs are suffering. Because their
21 own ability to fund raise has been cut out from under
22 them and New York City Parks, the agency that
23 oversees 14 percent of the city's land got handed a
24 budget cut of 14 percent in June, just as demand was
25 soaring towards a summer peak.

1
2 And we hear that additional layoffs may be on the
3 table that might cut down parks labor again, making
4 maintenance even more difficult. These cuts that
5 were handed down in June means fewer full time staff
6 and over 1,700 fewer seasonal staff to do day to day
7 maintenance and that was with a coalition of over 300
8 organizations called Play Fair that we organized to
9 advocate for park maintenance and park resources.

10 So, I'd like to draw your attention to this
11 imbalance between the many jobs we are asking our
12 parks to do for us and the maintenance jobs that have
13 been removed. If the Council provides a pathway for
14 cultural organizations to use our public park land
15 and our public realm, we must ensure that the
16 stewards of that public realm are not overlooked.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

18 LUCY ROBSON: Expanding park usage cannot be a
19 mandate. So, to be brief, we encourage the use of
20 our parks and our public spaces for arts and culture
21 and we need to ensure that we have a conversation
22 about directing resources to the entities that are
23 taking care of them.

24 Thank you so much.
25

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3 INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS 170

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Ms. Robson. We
5 will next hear from Lynn Kelly followed by Mallory
6 Markam followed by Heather Lubov. Ms. Kelly, you may
7 begin as soon as the Sergeant's call time.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

9 TARA GITTER: Good afternoon. My name is Tara
10 Gitter on behalf of Lynn Kelly Executive Director of
11 Restoration Project and I thank you for the
12 opportunity to testify today.

13 New York Restoration Project, the only citywide
14 natural land conservancy owns and operates 52
15 community gardens and stewards over 80 acres of city
16 park land. Many of them in our least green
17 neighborhoods.

18 Each year our parks and gardens host thousands of
19 neighbors for jazz festivals, performing arts
20 displays, installations by local artists, concerts
21 and more. This year has put display the importance
22 of New York City's parks and open spaces, as a
23 crucial resource for maintaining physical and mental
24 health, community connectivity, resource sharing and
25 more. We are excited for the prospect of connecting
cultural aspects to public spaces.

1 The arts are an essential piece of New York and
2
3 will be a part of the economic, physical and
4 psychological revival of the city. It is important
5 though to remember how we watched our city's park
6 struggle to handle the burden of increased use
7 equipped to decrease staff and funding. With a 14
8 percent budget cut to New York City parks and limited
9 fund raising impairing the nonprofit organizations to
10 fill in gaps and support our open spaces, our city
11 has suffered. The situation is untenable and without
12 adequate support, we risk our parks and gardens and
13 our ability to serve New York.

14 We ask that the city and state work together and
15 with open space partners to implement processes that
16 will permit cultural organizations and programming to
17 reasonably occupy space in parks, while also
18 considering the resources needed to maintain safety
19 and access for all.

20 Maintenance needs are huge and legislation should
21 ensure that partners utilizing park land are not
22 adding to the already overburdened park staff. As
23 open space operators, we want to be sure that
24 cultural organizations can use park land and that the
25 systems for approval remain simple and accessible.

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1
2 Parks operates a straight forward permitting process
3 which organizes space access and minimizes potential
4 conflict.

5 We want to thank Council Members for supporting
6 parks and gardens and for recognizing the benefit of
7 bringing cultural offerings outdoors. We hope the
8 need of New Yorkers will be acknowledged in both
9 increased access to programming and in the support of
10 public lands that require maintenance to serve New
11 Yorkers now more than ever. Thank you.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time.

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Chair Vallone, I just
14 want to respond because I hear you know some concerns
15 from advocate for parks, but you know, we don't have
16 to pit one against the other and I think those of us
17 who are incredibly supportive of parks and I voted
18 against the budget for example, that we voted on this
19 past June for many reasons but I just want to say, I
20 believe that the cultural organizations that
21 desperately need access to the parks have themselves
22 talked about the fact that they would be liable for
23 cleaning up and wrapping up after their performances
24 being good stewards and not contributing in any way
25 to any undue burden on the parks system and the green

1 spaces that we all have and want to keep as beautiful
2
3 as they are.

4 So, you know, I think that there is actual a
5 confluence of interest here. Not a divergence and I
6 just want to say that because I know that parks have
7 been cut, that's real. Parks are being utilized more
8 than ever in the pandemic and that's both good and
9 real, but I also want to stress that the cultural
10 community is talking about these issues already and
11 seeking to address them and will amend the
12 legislation to include that. But the culture
13 community stands ready, willing and able to meet the
14 challenge of both having greater access to these
15 spaces and then being good stewards of them and
16 leaving them cleaner than they met them.

17 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Well said Chair Van Bramer,
18 because that is a partnership for the future here and
19 during this new crisis and I think we will make that
20 divide into one as we look for outdoor spaces and
21 support both parks and cultural events.

22 And that puts a greater reliability on our
23 offices and our budgets in coordinating with
24 community groups and civic groups and sanitation
25 groups and students to get out to the parks and clean

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4 and participate and it will be a win win, so we can
5 get it done.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Ms. Kelly and next
7 up is Mallory Markam followed by Heather Lubov and
8 then Ann Wilson. Ms. Markam, you may begin as soon
9 as the Sergeant's call time.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

11 MALLORY MARKAM: Hello members of the Committee
12 on Economic Development and the Committee on Cultural
13 Affairs. My name is Mallory Markam, I am an
14 Independent Dance Performer and Administrator for New
15 York Based Contemporary Dance Company, Eric Taylor
16 Dance.

17 I am sharing testimony today on behalf of Eric
18 Taylor Dance in support of Intro. 2068. Established
19 in 2006, Eric Taylor Dance is a nonprofit dance
20 company whose mission is to create community by
21 connecting through movement. Eric Taylor dance
22 presents original performances, conducts master
23 classes, makes grants for aspiring choreographers and
24 curates community city programs and supportive
25 housing sites across all five boroughs.

Like most organizations, Eric Taylor Dance was
forced to radically shift course when the pandemic

1 hit. Our companies income was cut in half overnight
2 as the result of cancelled workshops, performances,
3 rehearsals, and guest artist engagements. Our latest
4 choreographic venture, Unchartered Territory was
5 conceived in collaboration with our dancers and
6 developed over Zoom.
7

8 Going virtual was crucial in order to keep the
9 company operation but virtual means are limiting and
10 unsustainable, especially for performing arts.
11 Unchartered Territory is planned to make its outdoor
12 premier in New York City on March 21st of 2021. With
13 a week of live and virtual events throughout multiple
14 public sites across New York City.

15 Intro. 2068 with an extension through next summer
16 is crucial to the actualization of our project and
17 the survival of our company. According to data
18 released by the national for the arts in 2018, the
19 performing arts sector accounts for \$760 billion of
20 the national GDP. \$114.4 billion of that is from New
21 York State alone.

22 The performing arts industry has been
23 significantly impacted both economically and
24 culturally due to extended closures and regulations
25 with little opportunity to resume our business. This

1 bill would usher in a new opportunity for our sector
2 to rebuild.
3

4 Art not only stimulates our economy but allows us
5 to feel human. That's why it is so essential that we
6 pass this legislation.

7 Thank you for your time and for giving Eric
8 Taylor Dance the opportunity to bring our story
9 forward.

10 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Ms. Markam. Next
12 we will hear from Heather Lubov followed by Ann
13 Wilson and the Towaki Komatsu. Ms. Lubov, you may
14 begin as soon as the Sergeant's call time.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

16 HEATHER LUBOV: Hi, I am Heather Lubov Executive
17 Director of City Parks Foundation, which provides
18 free programs to encourage New Yorkers to use and
19 care for their neighborhood parks.

20 We are both a cultural and a parks organization.
21 So, we have a unique perspective on performance.
22 Every year we present 180 free performances in
23 roughly 100 parks around the city, reaching 185,000
24 people both through summer stage, which is New York's
25

1 largest performing arts festival and our traveling
2 public mobile.
3

4 Parks have been critical to the wellbeing of our
5 city as we all know and the arts are equally vital to
6 our spirits and to tourism. Nobody is a greater
7 advocate for outdoor performance than City Parks
8 Foundation. We are ready with outdoor production
9 infrastructure and a detailed safety plan for
10 distance seating and crowd management and are eager
11 to partner to help other groups. But we are stymied
12 by the blanket 50 person capacity on outdoor concerts
13 which illogically applies regardless of the size of
14 the park space.

15 We urge the city to get the state to adjust this
16 limit and to use a percentage calculation and to
17 modify the current executive order to allow for a
18 stage and amplified sound.

19 New York City Parks has a publicly accessible and
20 well used application process with staff carefully
21 reviewing requests to prevent conflicts and to ensure
22 that the maximum public space is open to all. We
23 recommend it against anything that complicates their
24 process but definitely support that open culture
25 looks to fast track the permitting process as

1 kindness of approval has always been a planning for
2
3 us.

4 Our city's parks and public spaces that are free
5 and open to all, so we strongly recommend that the
6 majority of permitted performances be made available
7 to the public free of charge as is current practice.
8 Furthermore, as you mentioned, the presenter must be
9 responsible for cleanup of the park after usage.

10 Finally, as an early member of the New York
11 Independent Venue Association, we strongly support
12 Save our Stages to help ensure that the music echo
13 system can continue to thrive and develop new talent
14 and we thank the Council for its Resolution. Thank
15 you.

16 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Ms. Lubov. Next we
18 will hear from Ann Wilson followed by Towaki Komatsu
19 followed by Abraham Gross. Ms. Wilson, you may begin
20 as soon as the Sergeant's call time.

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

22 ANN WILSON: Thank you Chair's Vallone and Van
23 Bramer, Committee Members and all in attendance here
24 today. My name is Ann Wilson, I am speaking on
25

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1
2 behalf of the Randall's Island Park Alliance where I
3 am Senior Director of Planning.

4 As a nonprofit partner with the city, RIPA
5 develops and maintains Randall's Island Park and also
6 provides and facilitates extensive public
7 programming. Free RIPA events normally include
8 tours, movie nights, and yoga as well as large
9 weekend events like the Cherry Blossom Festival, the
10 Waterfront Festival, and the Harvest Festival.

11 In addition, RIPA works closely with producers to
12 bring major festivals and events to New York City
13 from concerts like Governors Ball to the Frieze Art
14 Fair. These cultural events are permitted and
15 coordinated through New York City Parks.

16 Importantly, these events bring revenue into the
17 park for maintenance and during COVID, RIPA's
18 operating budget has taken an enormous hit, like
19 those of so many other New York City nonprofits.

20 We are therefore extremely sympathetic to the
21 difficulties faced by the city's cultural
22 institutions without performance spaces. We do feel
23 strongly the permits and events should be submitted
24 through the established New York City Parks process
25 which provides time tested guidelines for scheduling,

1 safety and pricing among other concerns. Parks also
2
3 works to ensure that event permitting is done in a
4 careful and equitable manner and preserves open
5 spaces for public use.

6 In addition, while we support facilitating the
7 return of performances by the city's art and cultural
8 institutions, we feel that any use of park land for
9 revenue generating events should be neutrally
10 beneficial. Given large budget cuts and reduced
11 resources, parks already struggles to maintain the
12 city's park land. Especially with greater public use
13 than ever. Added use without added resources will
14 add to that struggle.

15 Nonprofit parks partners like RIPA are working to
16 assist the city in caring for public spaces in this
17 difficult time. Revenue from RIPA's cultural
18 programming normally helps to maintain Randall's
19 Island Park. We are looking for creative ways to
20 continue outdoor programming toward our continued
21 viability and support for the park.

22 RIPA welcomes creative support for nonprofit
23 cultural organizations. We hope we can work together
24 toward a return to outdoor performances at Randall's
25 Island Park and elsewhere in New York City.

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4 Thank you so much.

5 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Ms. Wilson. Next
7 up is Towaki Komatsu followed by Abraham Gross. As a
8 reminder to anybody else who wishes to testify whose
9 name has not been called, please use the Zoom raise
10 hand function and someone from staff will contact
11 you, so you may testify. Mr. Komatsu, you may begin
12 as soon as the Sergeant's call time.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

14 TOWAKI KOMATSU: Hi, I am Towaki Komatsu I am a
15 US Navy Veteran. This meeting is about essentially
16 having arts and cultural institutions violate the
17 first amendment rights of New Yorkers, pedestrians,
18 bicyclists and what have you to use public forums
19 without having their first amendment rights infringed
20 upon by cultural and arts institutions.

21 Long after I tried to attend Jimmy Van Bramer's
22 April 27th Town Hall in Long Island City that I was
23 kicked out of while I was shoved three times in the
24 chest by a member of the NYPD on a public sidewalk.
25 So, the question is, for all of you that are members
of the City Council, exactly where are your
priorities?

4 So, the point is, right by City Hall you have a
5 sidewalk for a passageway behind City Hall that is
6 currently closed off. So, if that's the current
7 case, how is it that I guess arts and cultural
8 institutions will be able to operate in public
9 forums, such as that passageway behind City Hall, the
10 part adjacent to Gracie Mansion that is also
11 illegally shut up.

12 So, yeah, that's essentially the jest of my
13 testimony. Also, just to try to wrap it up.

14 Although I support arts and cultural institutions, I
15 am firmly against having the first amendment of New
16 Yorkers violated. So, I currently have a federal
17 lawsuit and I'm going to file a motion in it over the
18 next three days to essentially block your legislation
19 from being enacted. Have a good day.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you Mr. Komatsu. We
21 will next hear from Abraham Gross and as a reminder,
22 if you have not signed up to testify, please use the
23 Zoom raise hand function and our staff will contact
24 you to testify. Mr. Gross, you may begin as soon as
25 the Sergeant's call time.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

1
2 ABRAHAM GROSS: Thank you Chairs Vallone and Van
3 Bramer. I am not going to read from a script but I
4 am going to read from my heart.

5 I am a member of [INAUDIBLE 3:31:32] and as you
6 might be aware the entire industry of film and TV
7 production is shut down. [INAUDIBLE 3:31:40] is the
8 large union, a lot of people are just simply stuck.

9 This is a radical proposal to help the cultural
10 arts that are suffering. It was as you are both well
11 aware, it was revealed by ProPublica in 2014 that
12 essentially the developers of affordable housing have
13 just ripped off the public and they have taken \$100
14 million a year in tax breaks but never registered
15 apartments as affordable that they were required to
16 and just continued to rent them out at market rate.
17 It's heartbreaking to see when powerful real estate
18 developers are able to just get away with that and if
19 you look at the transcripts of the City Council
20 hearings that took place, you just, you wonder you
21 know, about the public interest.

22 And you know, there are \$2 billion dollars out
23 there that have been embezzled by wealthy real estate
24 developers which could go easily to help feeders and
25 artists and you know, why not? Why not fight for

1 that Chair's Van Bramer and Vallone? Why not stand
2 up to these developers and you know, I will just say
3 on a personal note that this isn't an abstract scam.

4 I'm just going to wrap up here. This has deeply
5 effected -

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time.

7 ABRAHAM GROSS: I'm just finishing a point. This
8 has really destroyed my life and the life of my
9 mother who is not well and I am asking a question
10 here to both of you kindly. You know, what happened
11 to me is so horrific that it has shattered my faith
12 in the integrity of our government. I don't know
13 what I'm doing wrong. There is a problem here. The
14 public is being harmed and we just need public
15 officials of integrity to protect us. Thank you for
16 your time.

17 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you Abraham and I
18 believe you are the last one to testify today, so you
19 bring us to a close with our passionate words.

20 Is there anyone else for our Committee Counsel
21 that would wish to speak before we close the hearing?

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We don't see any additional
23 people on our end Chair. So, I will turn it back to
24 you for closing remarks.
25

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CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Well, I think Chair Van
Bramer and I have had to start the Van Bramer,
Vallone, Vallone, Van Bramer Broadcast because it
sounds really good and we are both passionately here
trying to kick start these important industries. So,
we thank everyone for sharing your stories. It must
get done though. Just like Jimmy said, the time is
now. The time for excuses and bureaucracy and red
tape and permits and legislation of excuses and
budget cuts, can't fight them. So, these bills and
Resolutions are all part and parcel of this immediate
restart plan through a healthy safe revision for our
parks, culture and all of it makes New York so
wonderful.

Chair Van Bramer, it's been an honor to share
this meeting with you and for your closing remarks.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much
Council Member Vallone and I will gladly do the Van
Bramer Vallone show or the Vallone Van Bramer show
anytime with you. We've had some good joint hearings
together in our current capacities and it's always a
pleasure to work with you. And I want to thank all
the staff and the Sergeant's at Arms and the team
that are here in these little boxes in front of me

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1
2 along with Council Member Vallone and I and Lucy and
3 the entire cultural community and everyone who is
4 fighting for this city and its great people to
5 survive and in order to do that, we need culture and
6 the arts to thrive.

7 So, we have to get all of these pieces of
8 legislation passed and implemented and if we do so,
9 we will be better off for it. So, thank you very
10 much Chair Vallone.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chair's before you close out
12 the hearing. It looks like the Majority Leader has
13 one last comment that she would like to make.

14 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Laurie's back. Where are
15 you? There you are Madam Majority Leader.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: This is not a duo, it's a
17 trio.

18 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Oh, we're in.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: You need a beautiful
20 powerful dynamic Black woman in the midst of this duo
21 to close it out. I just want to say, I want to thank
22 both of you Chair Vallone and Chair Van Bramer for
23 conducting this important hearing. It was incredible
24 and inspiring hearing all of the testimony and I
25 thank everyone that stayed on this Zoom for this and

1
2 it has really inspired me to continue to fight harder
3 for the legislation and recognizing that we've got to
4 spark a sense of urgency throughout the city on its
5 response to the cultural community. I think so often
6 that the cultural community is always forced to say
7 wait, there are more important things than culture
8 and art right now. We are always forced into that
9 space and we have to realize and the Administration
10 and people across this country have to recognize that
11 it can't be an either or. They have to happen
12 simultaneously because the arts are too critical to
13 the foundation of everything. From our soul to our
14 heart, to our spirit, to the economy to education to
15 all of these different elements. We have to be able
16 to do both and we can no longer tell the arts to wait
17 because there are other things more pressing.

18 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes.

19 We are responsible to the success of this city as
20 any other industry and thank you both.

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON VALLONE: Thank you everyone. Thank
23 you to the staff and the amazing one for today and we
24 will follow up after the meeting. We hope we get
25

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4 these votes out as quickly as possible. God Bless
5 everyone, have a wonderful day. [GAVEL]

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COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay Chairs, the live has
ended and you both can log off.

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 October , 2020