



**New York City Council Committee on Cultural Affairs**

**Hearing: Int 2203-2021, Establishment of a drag laureate program**

**October 26, 2021, 11:00 am - Virtual Hearing**

**Testimony presented by Cultural Affairs Commissioner Gonzalo Casals**

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Good morning, Chair Van Bramer. I am Gonzalo Casals, Commissioner of the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, here today to testify in regards to Int. 2203 of 2021, which would establish a drag laureate program for New York City.

I am in support of any effort to elevate and highlight artforms rooted in marginalized communities. Drag has a rich, and at times rocky history in New York City. It has provided a space for people who were not welcome in large swaths of society. Even as drag is increasingly embraced by the mainstream, it is one of the few places that queer people can be unapologetically extra. But it has also been stigmatized and even persecuted by authorities. So I'm overjoyed by the idea of it being embraced and supported by our local government.

The Department of Cultural Affairs supports a number of organizations who work in the drag space, such as Drag Queen Story Hour, Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo, and spaces like House of Yes and Dixon Place. With the Village Halloween Parade making a triumphant return in just a few days, I look forward to seeing the glorious energy of the drag scene on full display.

As we consider details of this program, we need to be cautious not to conflate the drag scene with our entire LGBT community. We've come a long way in recent decades to recognizing the full breadth of our trans community, which was once referred to as "drag" by a mainstream looking to dismiss trans people. But the drag scene continues to be dominated by cis gender men. It's been exciting to see these barriers broken down in recent years, but there is still work to be done. Any laureate program would need to reflect the increasingly inclusive and equitable definition of the art form, and even help push it forward. Drag must embrace trans people, people of color, people with disabilities, and people of all ages and every background.

There is nothing more empowering than seeing yourself reflected in society. Elevating this art form, which does so much to soften our notions of a rigid binary, could help New Yorkers think about gender in more expansive and inclusive ways. That's why I'm delighted by the prospect of New York having a drag laureate, and hope it marks the start of additional ways for our city to embrace and elevate art forms by and for marginalized communities.

I look forward to working with you toward a drag laureate program befitting our city. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



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## TESTIMONY Re: Transgender Day of Visibility and Transgender Day of Remembrance

October 25, 2021

Dear Committee,

Thank you for having us here today. My name is Adam Odsess-Rubin and I am the Founder and Artistic Director of **National Queer Theater**, New York City's leading LGBTQ theater company.

At National Queer Theater, we focus on uplifting and showcasing the work of trans and non-binary artists, who have been systematically marginalized and invisibilized in the media, including Broadway, film, and TV. Although we are starting to see more representation in shows like *Pose*, visibility for transgender people in the mainstream is still seldom found. According to a 2019 report from The Trevor Project, 44% of transgender youth seriously considered suicide in the past year and 35% attempted suicide. We as queer and trans people feel hopelessness and shame, especially as kids, when we do not see ourselves reflected in society. This is why visibility is so important and potentially life-saving.

Recognizing Transgender Day of Visibility and Transgender Day of Remembrance would have a tremendous impact on LGBTQ New Yorkers, and trans people across the country. It tells trans citizens that their lives matter, and that New York City is indeed a safe place and a beacon for them, as it has long been for the rest of the LGBTQ community.

New York City is a shining model for progressive legislation across the country. Recognize Transgender Day of Visibility and Transgender Day of Remembrance so that our trans community can be fully recognized and embraced in all corners of the city, and achieve the safety and visibility they deserve.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Adam".

Adam Odsess-Rubin



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Founding Artistic Director  
National Queer Theater

**TESTIMONY Re: Transgender Day of Visibility and Transgender Day of Remembrance**

October 25, 2021

Dear Committee,

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about the unique circumstances facing transgender individuals living in New York City. I myself am an artist, activist, and consultant on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) issues, especially as they pertain to transgender people of color. Living at this intersection, I am reminded everyday that transgender, gender non-confirming, and non-binary people in our city deal with issues that many people outside of our community are hardly aware of.

An estimated 84% of cisgender Americans report not knowing any transgender people in their lives. This is unsurprising given that only 0.6% of the United States population identifies as transgender. It therefore stands to reason that, for 84% of cis Americans, their primary source of information on the trans community is the media they consume.

Unfortunately, while we've seen high-profile breakthroughs with *POSE* (FX) and *Orange is the New Black* (Netflix), these minor gains in positive representation are not yet enough to combat the oppressive legislation we're seeing across the country. The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) found recently that 2021 is, officially, the worst year on record for anti-LGBTQ+ state legislative attacks. The vast majority of these new and discriminatory measures are focused on the transgender community, including:

- At least 35 bills that would prohibit transgender youth from being able to access best-practice, age-appropriate, gender-affirming medical care.
- At least 69 bills that would prohibit transgender youth (and in some cases college students) from participating in sports consistent with their gender identity.
- At least 43 bills that would allow people to assert a religious belief as justification for failing to abide by the law or provide services to people of whom they disapprove.
- At least 15 bills that would prohibit transgender people from having access to restrooms or locker rooms consistent with their gender identity.

This is, in fact, the most anti-trans bills proposed and enacted in a single year since the HRC began tracking these numbers 15 years ago.



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In addition to being unaware of the lack of basic legal protections transgender people receive, our community is disproportionately vulnerable to violent—and often fatal—bias crimes. This is especially true for trans people of color, namely Black transgender women, who are the most at-risk population in the LGBTQ+ community. Since the first Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR), a day to mourn the lives lost to transphobic violence, was first observed in 1999, each year for which we have recorded data has proven to be more fatal than the last. Unfortunately, this also means that 2021 has been the deadliest year for trans people on-record thus far.

The road to acceptance, equality, and protections for trans people begins with education and public knowledge. That's why it's critical that annual occurrences like TDOR—and its counterpart, the Transgender Day of Visibility (TDOV)—be recognized by all Americans, including those of us here in New York City. For too long, it's fallen on us in the trans community to look out for one another, to protect one another, and to defend each other when society at large will not. But we are a minority within a minority, and there is only so much we can do in the face of ongoing systemic oppression. It will take allyship at every level, including the government, to help move trans rights forward. Today, you have the opportunity to help do just that.

It is admittedly difficult to present a testimony that is calm, collected, and neutral on this issue. I cannot be neutral on this issue. The stakes for me and the community I love so dearly are just too high. I've lost count of the number of vigils I've attended and friends I've buried, and today, I am asking you for help. Please consider recognizing both TDOR and TDOV, and setting an example for all New Yorkers that the trans community is welcome, embraced, and safe on our streets.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sammy Figarado". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Samy Figaredo  
Actor, Activist & Consultant

## Testimony of Prof. Jacqueline D. Shannon

### in support of Intro 2374-2021 and the need to reduce class size

October 30, 2021

Thank you for holding hearings on Introduction 2374-2020 to provide members of the public an opportunity to comment on this important bill. My name is Jacqueline Shannon, and I am an Associate Professor and the Department Chair of Early Childhood Education and Art Education at Brooklyn College of the City University of New York.

In 2014, I helped write a letter to then-Chancellor Farina, warning her that the increases in class size that had occurred since 2007 in NYC public schools, particularly in the early grades of K-3, threatened to undermine the gains one might otherwise expect from the expansion of prekindergarten across the city.

This letter, which is attached to my testimony, was signed by over 70 professors of education, psychology, and sociology.<sup>1</sup> Sadly, we received no response from the Chancellor.

Since we sent this letter more than seven years ago, the city has made very little progress in lowering class sizes, which are still far larger than they were in 2007 (except for last year during the start of COVID), especially in the early grades.

Kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade are those very years where the research is most crystal clear and convincing that class size has a strong determining effect on learning, especially for disadvantaged children and students of color. And yet the number of children in Kindergarten in classes of 25 or more has risen by 68% since 2007, and the number of 1<sup>st</sup> through 3<sup>rd</sup> graders of thirty or more has increased by nearly 3000%.<sup>2</sup>

Luckily, class sizes are strictly limited by state law for Pre-K and now 3-K; but none when they enter Kindergarten.<sup>3</sup> The only limits on class size are the UFT contractual limits, which are far too large, and only inconsistently enforced.<sup>4</sup>

One of the best experimental studies of Pre-K recently concluded in Tennessee. Researchers from Vanderbilt University followed a thousand randomly selected, economically disadvantaged children from Pre-K through third grade, and compared them to a control group who did not attend Pre-K. Not only did children who missed Pre-K catch up within a year

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.classsizematters.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Letter-Reducing-Class-size-to-Farina.pdf> See also the oped here: Jacqueline Shannon and Mark Lauterbach: *Mayor De Blasio Must Put Reducing Class Sizes at Top of His Agenda.* SchoolBook, Nov. 6, 2014; <https://www.wnyc.org/story/opinion-de-blasio-must-put-reducing-class-size-first/>

<sup>2</sup> See the data summarized at <https://www.classsizematters.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/citywide-class-size-updated-2.17.20.pptx>

<sup>3</sup> The maximum legal size of preK classes in NY State is 20. In classes with 18 students or less, one teacher and one paraprofessional are required; for 19 or 20 students, there must be one teacher and two paraprofessionals assigned to each class. <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/upk/documents/151-1.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> The UFT class size limits are: 25 students per class in Kindergarten, 32 in elementary grades, 33 in middle schools (30 in Title 1 middle schools), and 34 in high schools. See <https://www.uft.org/teaching/new-teachers/your-rights-new-members/class-size>

or two, but the children who attended Pre-K had fallen behind their peers on many achievement measures by the third grade.<sup>5</sup>

The lead researchers of this Vanderbilt study were surprised. They have speculated about why the program failed to produce positive results. As co-investigator Dale Farran concluded:

*Pre-K is a good start, but without a more coherent vision and consistent implementation of that vision, we cannot realistically expect dramatic effects...Too much has been promised from one year of preschool intervention without the attention needed to the quality of experiences children have and what happens to them in K-12.”*

The other co-investigator, Mark Lipsey, pointed out that the study raises important questions about what was happening in the other early grades to cause these students to fall behind:

*“The biggest mystery here is what in the world is going on as these kids hit kindergarten, first, second, third grade, that is not building on what they seem to have come out of pre-K with?”<sup>6</sup>*

There is no mystery as to what hits NYC children as they enter Kindergarten in our public schools. As we wrote in our letter to the Chancellor, in words that still hold true today:

*New York City schools have the largest classes in the state and among the largest in the nation. We believe strongly that more equitable outcomes depend on more equity in opportunity. We commend you for your commitment to expanding prekindergarten programs, but as you know, early childhood education does not begin and end at age 4. We urge you now to focus on lowering class sizes in all grades, which will improve teaching and learning in our public schools.*

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this critical bill—Intro 2374-2020. Its passage is essential to our city’s children and students success academically and emotionally as well as to their overall health and safety.

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September 22, 2014

Cc: Mayor de Blasio

Dear Chancellor Fariña:

We, the undersigned, professors and researchers, urge you to put forward an aggressive but practicable plan to reduce class size in NYC public schools. Last school year, class sizes were the largest in 15 years in grades K-3, and the largest since 2002 in grades 4-8. More than 330,000 children were sitting in classes of 30 or more, according to DOE data.

As you know, robust research shows that class size matters for all students, but particularly students at-risk of low achievement, including children of color, those in poverty, English language learners, and students with special needs. This is why class size reduction has been shown to be one of the few reforms to narrow the achievement gap.

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<sup>5</sup> Mark W. Lipsey, Dale C. Farran, Kerry G. Hofer, “A Randomized Control Trial of a Statewide Voluntary Prekindergarten Program on Children’s Skills and Behaviors through Third Grade,” Peabody Research Institute of Vanderbilt University, 2015. [https://peabody.vanderbilt.edu/research/pri/VPKthrough3rd\\_final\\_withcover.pdf](https://peabody.vanderbilt.edu/research/pri/VPKthrough3rd_final_withcover.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Blake Farmer, “Vanderbilt’s Unflattering Pre-K Study Strikes A Nerve, But What Does It Really Say?” Nashville Public Radio, September 28, 2015. <http://nashvillepublicradio.org/post/vanderbilt-s-unflattering-pre-k-study-strikes-nerve-what-does-it-really-say#stream/0>

Smaller classes have also been shown to increase student engagement, lower disciplinary referral and drop-out rates, and reduce teacher attrition. No teacher, no matter how skilled or well prepared, can be as effective in the large classes that exist in many of our city's public schools.

We believe that the benefits of many of the other positive reforms that the city is pursuing, such as increasing access to Universal prekindergarten, establishing community schools, and inclusion for students with disabilities, may be undermined unless the trend of growing class sizes is reversed and class sizes are lowered in the city's public schools.

In particular, placing students with special needs into classes of 25, 30 or more will not work to serve their individual needs, no less the needs of the other students in the class.

New York City schools have the largest classes in the state and among the largest in the nation. We believe strongly that more equitable outcomes depend on more equity in opportunity. We commend you for your commitment to expanding prekindergarten programs, but as you know, early childhood education does not begin and end at age 4.

We urge you now to focus on lowering class sizes in all grades, which will improve teaching and learning in our public schools.

Yours sincerely,

Jacqueline D. Shannon, Chair, Dept. of Early Childhood and Art Education, Brooklyn College

Diane Ravitch, Research Professor of Education, New York University

Barbara Schwartz, Clinical Professor, Dept. of Teaching and Learning, NYU Steinhart

Sonia Murrow, Associate Professor, Brooklyn College

Mark Alter, Professor of Educational Psychology, Programs in Special Education, New York University

Xia Li, Assistant Professor, Undergraduate Deputy, Dept. of Early Childhood and Art Education, Brooklyn College

Barbara Rosenfeld, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Childhood, Bilingual, and Special Education, Brooklyn College

Sharon O'Connor-Petruso, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Childhood, Bilingual, and Special Education, Brooklyn College

Carol Korn-Burztyn, Ph.D., Professor, Dept. of School Psychology, Counseling, and Leadership, Brooklyn College & Ph.D. Program in Urban Education, Graduate Center, CUNY

Karen Zumwalt, Evenden Professor Emerita of Education, Department of Curriculum and Teaching, Teachers College, Columbia University

Beverly Falk, Ed.D., Professor/Director, Graduate Programs in Early Childhood Education, The School of Education, City University of NY

David Bloomfield, Professor of Educational Leadership, Law and Policy, Brooklyn College & CUNY Graduate Center

Jessica Siegel, Assistant Professor, Education, English and Journalism, Brooklyn College

Barbara Winslow, Professor, Secondary Education, Brooklyn College

Diana B. Turk, Ph.D., Associate Professor and Director, Social Studies Education, Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, New York University

Peter Taubman, Professor Secondary Education, Department of Secondary Education, Brooklyn College

James E. Corter, Prof. of Statistics and Education, Dept. of Human Development, Teachers College, Columbia University

Jeanne Angus, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Childhood, Bilingual & Special Education Head, Graduate Program in Special Education Co-Director, Brooklyn College

David Forbes, Associate Professor, Brooklyn College

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Laura Kates, Associate Professor, Deputy Director, Education Program, Kingsborough Community College, CUNY

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Robert Lubetsky, Ed.D., Associate Professor, Director, Educational Leadership Program, Dept. of Educational Leadership & Special Education, School of Education, City College of New York

Anna Stetsenko, Ph.D., Professor, Ph.D. Program in Developmental Psychology, The Graduate Center of The City University of New York

Katharine Pace Miles, Dept. of Early Childhood and Art Education, Brooklyn College

Daniel S. Katz, Ph.D., Director, Secondary/Secondary Special Education, Seton Hall University

Nancy Leggio, Education Program Faculty, Kingsborough Community College

Tovah Klein, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Psychology, Director, Barnard Center for Toddler Development, Barnard College, Columbia University

Rosalie Friend, Adjunct Associate Professor, Educational Foundations, Hunter College

Gigliana Melzi, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Dept. of Applied Psychology, New York University

Daisy Edmondson Alter, Ph.D, Center for Advanced Study in Education, CUNY Graduate Center

Jacqueline Hollander, Substitute Instructor, Dept. of Early Childhood and Art Education, Brooklyn College

Dr. Johnny Lops, Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist

Marshall A. George, Ed.D., Professor and Chair, Graduate School of Education, Fordham University

Helen Freidus, Ed.D., Bank Street College of Education

Barbara Barnes, Adjunct Associate Professor, School of Education, Brooklyn College

Hugh F Cline, Adjunct Professor of Sociology and Education, Teachers College, Columbia University

Gil Schmerler, Director, Leadership for Educational Change, Bank Street College

Elsie Cardona-Berardinelli, Resource Specialist, Fordham University

Lulu Song, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Early Childhood and Art Education, Brooklyn College

Jennifer Astuto, Ph.D., Director of Human Development and Social Intervention, NYU Steinhardt

Rena Rice, Graduate School Faculty, Bank Street College of Education

Mary Mueller, Ed.D., Seton Hall University

Beth Ferholt, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Early Childhood and Art Education Department, Brooklyn College, CUNY

Juan Morales-Flores, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Early Childhood Education, Kingsborough Community College

Robin B. Smith, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Special Education, SUNY New Paltz/Educational Studies

Mary DeBey, Associate Professor, Dept. of Early Childhood and Art Education, Brooklyn College

Susan Riemer Sacks, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology, Director of Education Initiatives, Barnard College

Jeremy D. Finn, Ph.D., SUNY Distinguished Professor, Graduate School of Education, University of Buffalo-SUNY

Diane Howitt, Resource Specialist, NYS/NYC RB-ERN Fordham University, Graduate School of Education, Center for Educational Partnerships

Fran Blumberg, Associate Professor, Division of Psychological and Educational Services, Fordham University

Diana Caballero, Ed.D., Clinical Professor, Fordham University, Graduate School of Education, MST Programs in Early Childhood and Childhood Education

Gay Wilgus, Ph.D., Assistant Professor. Graduate Program in Early Childhood Education. The City College of New York

Joshua Aronson, Ph.D., Applied Psychology, New York University, Director of Center of Achievement Research and Evaluation

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Merle Keitel, Ph.D., Professor, Graduate School of Education, Fordham University

John Craven, Ph.D., Science Education, Fordham University

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Herman Jiesamfoek, Associate Professor, Associate Professor, Dept. of Early Childhood and Art Education, Brooklyn College

Edwin M. Lamboy, Associate Professor, Secondary Spanish Education Program Director, City College of New York, CUNY

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Nataliya Kosovskaya, Graduate School of Education, Fordham University

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Paul C. McCabe, Ph.D., NCSP , Professor & Program Coordinator, School Psychologist Program , Dept. of School Psychology, Counseling, and Leadership, Associate Editor, School Psychology Forum, Brooklyn College

Meral Kaya, Ph.D Assistant Professor, School of Education, Dept. of Childhood, Bilingual, Special Education, Brooklyn College

Laurie Rubel, Ph.D., Association Professor, Dept. of Secondary Education, Brooklyn College

Geraldine Faria, Assistant Dean, School of Education, Brooklyn College



Tuesday, October 25, 2021

**Dear New York City Council's Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations:**

My name is Tiffany Jade Munroe, and I am the Trans Justice Coordinator for the Caribbean Equality Project, a Queens-based community organization that empowers, advocates for, and represents Black and Brown, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender non-conforming, and queer Caribbean immigrants in New York City. I came to this country as Dwayne Brhamdeow, a gay man fleeing years of emotional and physical violence and homelessness after my parents abandoned me. But today, I come before you as Tiffany Jade Munroe, a proud Black trans woman from Guyana, South America. As an immigrant and an asylee, being a trans woman and learning to navigate NYC has been challenging. To survive, I currently live with my transphobic aunt and her family in South Ozone Park, Queens. For many trans people, safe and affirming housing is not a luxury and privilege most of us can afford due to housing instability, discrimination, and lack of employment opportunities for undocumented asylum seekers. Today, I accept and affirm my true authentic self by having access to healthcare and immigration resources through my affiliation with the Caribbean Equality Project.

I am to testify on the importance of recognizing November 20 annually as Transgender Day of Remembrance and March 31 annually as Transgender Day of Visibility in the City of NY.

At the Caribbean Equality Project, we are thrilled that the city wants to recognize these two annual community-focused days centered on honoring and celebrating Transgender and gender-expansive people. However, we wish to acknowledge the significance of why trans activists first created these days. There is an epidemic of anti-transgender violence and erasure in New York and across the country that disproportionately impacts black trans women and trans women of color, particularly immigrants, asylum seekers, sex workers, and refugees. Since 1999 and prior years, Black and Brown people of trans experience have been murdered in record and traumatizing numbers. The list of my killed trans siblings grows longer and longer year by year with no end in sight to transphobic-related violence. These senseless and brutal killings must stop! I say this to you as a scared Black trans woman who fears her name will one day be added to a SAY THEIR NAMES LIST.

The transgender community is systemically ignored, maligned, erased, and forgotten about by our families, communities, and government. Trans day of visibility and remembrance started to push back against that erasure and bring to attention the

staggering amounts of violence inflicted on my community. New York City should undoubtedly recognize Transgender Day of Remembrance and Transgender Day of Visibility, but I also want to remind our elected officials that the city has tremendous power and live-saving resources to offer trans people. If New York City wants trans people to be visible, it needs to put us first in its efforts to create a safer and healthier city. Since New York City wants to recognize Transgender Day of Remembrance, a day dedicated to mourning and remembering my murdered trans siblings, the city should also invest more money into affordable housing to keep Black and Brown trans people safe. We deserve city-wide recognition and more robust laws to end workplace discrimination, access to affirming healthcare options, and immigration services to protect undocumented transgender people and asylum seekers.

To learn more about the Caribbean Equality Project, phone us at (347) 709-3179 or visit [www.CaribbeanEqualityProject.org](http://www.CaribbeanEqualityProject.org).

In Community and Solidarity,

Tiffany Jade Munroe  
Trans Justice Coordinator  
Caribbean Equality Project



Testimony in Support of Resolution 1487, Recognizing November 20th annually as Transgender Day of Remembrance and March 31st annually as Transgender Day of Visibility in the City of NY, for the City Council's Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations Hearing Tuesday, October 26 at 11am, from Olive Daddi and Translatinx Network

Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to give testimony in support of Resolution 1487. My name is Olive Daddi, I use the pronouns they and them, and I am here to testify on behalf of myself and Translatinx Network, a community based organization in District 3 in Chelsea, where we serve the transgender, gender non conforming, otherwise LGBTQ+, and immigrant communities of NYC, and where I currently work as the Associate Director of Economic Justice. I am also a lifelong and third generation New Yorker, and I currently reside in District 22 in Astoria.

Speaking on behalf of Translatinx Network, we hope that Resolution 1487 is passed, because we want to see more people in this city celebrating and cherishing trans lives, especially the lives of Black and Latina transgender women, who have always and continue to lead the fight for our rights to live safely and authentically in this city. For the past ten years at Translatinx Network, we have held a gathering every November to honor the lives of our siblings who have been taken away from us, and another one every March to celebrate the brilliance of our identities and our community. We will be gathering again next month on November 19th from 6-8pm at St. Bart's Church in Midtown East, and we invite anyone present who would like to join us this year to attend, especially those who have never had the opportunity to participate in the commemorations this Resolution seeks to recognize.

Speaking personally as a queer and transgender person, I would not have the civil rights, the language and vision for my sense of self, or the community I have today without the unrelenting work of Black and Latinx trans activists, artists, and organizers, such as the people I am lucky to call my colleagues. However, when I am able to exercise my rights, it is often the racial privilege that I have as a white person that opens the door first, while the Black and Latina women who have always lead the fight to gain civil and human rights for trans people are systematically disenfranchised and murdered in all of the ways already stated in the Resolution. When new media comes out about or including us, it usually portrays mostly or only white trans masculine people who look like me, rather than the Black and brown trans people and femmes who are most often the originators of our community's expressions and culture.

Recognizing November 20th annually as Transgender Day of Remembrance and March 31st annually as Transgender Day of Visibility in the City of NY is necessary because the legacy and leadership of our community deserves public space and time in which to be honored and celebrated. We at Translatinx Network, and I personally, would only add that we hope to see the

City celebrating these days by intentionally amplifying and resourcing the leadership of Black and Latinx trans community members.

On behalf of Translatinx Network, I want to sincerely thank the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations for holding this hearing on Resolution 1487, and Council Members Kallos, Rosenthal, Diaz, Gibson, and Van Bramer, as well as Public Advocate Jumaane Williams, for sponsoring this resolution. Thank you all again for the opportunity to speak.

**TESTIMONY BY ANGEL ROMAN SUPPORTING NYC COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1543, IN SUPPORT OF PUERTO RICO SELF-DETERMINATION ACT HR 2070**

**Councilmember Diana Ayala,**

**I am writing to urge you to pass NYC Council Resolution 1543 in support of the Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act HR 2070 sponsored by Congress members Nydia Velazquez and Alexandria Ocasio Cortes.**

**I am a Boricua life-long New Yorker, and recently retired NYC civil servant. I am keenly aware of the importance of expanding support for this act for Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico and the diaspora. Please expedite it's support in the NYC Council. Puerto Rico has been a colony of the United States for more than 120 years. It is time for a change!**

**I believe that the Velazquez-Ocasio Bill (H.R.2070) and S.865 are the appropriate remedy—in as far as they conform with US treaty obligations and the United Nations Founding Charter (Article73e) provision on the granting of self-governance to non-self-governing peoples and territories, to which the United States is a signatory.**

**Furthermore,**

- 1. it recognizes the more than five century historical struggle of Puerto Ricans to achieve political self-determination, and the distinct Puerto Rican cultural identity;**
- 2. prescribes a democratic, thoughtful, timely, inclusive, transparent, and informative process by which Puerto Ricans, through their elected Constituent Assembly representatives, popular education campaign, and subsequent final voter direct ballot approval or disapproval — gives Puerto Ricans the better mechanism by which to express their sentiments on how to resolve the colonial status question;**
- 3. institutes a process by which the elected Constituent Assembly members negotiate with the US government on matters such as: indemnities, reparations, the inviolability of US entitlement benefits, and future economic development assistance; and**

**4. finally outlines the actions to be taken in Puerto Rico, and the US—  
in order to realize the freely expressed will of Puerto Ricans on the  
matter of Puerto Rico's post colonial relationship with the US.**

**Peace,  
Angel Roman  
176 Ludlow Street  
New York, NY 10002  
212 533-0064**

Dear Honorable Members of the City Council:

It has been almost 125 years since Puerto Rico became a colony of the United States. Although autonomous from Spain at the time of its invasion, the people of Puerto Rico were not allowed a say at the time of its appropriation by the US as war booty following the Spanish-American War in 1898. A pattern that with a few minor exceptions has continued to the present.

The designation in 1952 of commonwealth status or associated free state(ELA) as it is called in Spanish as part of the cold war game of chess with Russia (given US criticism of its colonial control of eastern Europe) gave the optics of democracy, but reserved all real power to the US Congress. Today, commonwealth status has been denounced by every political party in Puerto Rico for what it has always been: a fig leaf covering for the embarrassment of colonial status.

Only the US continues to acknowledge the sham of Commonwealth. Were the US to stop doing so, the US would be admitting that the leader of the free world and the leading world advocate of democracy continues to harbor a colony populated by approximately four million people to whom Congress granted citizenship in 1917, but which has only nominal authority or power. Indeed currently, there is a congressional financial oversight board overseeing the operations of the Puerto Rican government that has no accountability to the Puerto Rican people.

Citizenship has neither guaranteed or accelerated equality or equity for the people of Puerto Rico notwithstanding the concerted efforts by one of Puerto Rico's major political parties over the course of the last 60 years, and more notably as the party in charge during recent times. For them, the solution to the US-PR inequality is to extend the historical pattern of keeping the voice of the Puerto Rican people silent or muted so as to achieve an outcome, statehood, that will primarily serve and benefit the political and economic interests of their more elitist members. In support of their effort, they cite the results of a questionable 2020 referendum in which only 23% of the Puerto Rican people participated, and which they devised and controlled.

The resolution before the Committee in support of House Bill 2070, put forth by NY Congressmembers Nydia Velazquez and Alexandria Ocasio Cortez, calls for Council support of a rational and deliberate process to take place in Puerto Rico to hear the voice as well as determine the choices of the Puerto Rican people. Under the bill, all options including statehood will be available for the people's discussion and review. However, unlike the last referendum, this process will be more than a beauty contest as it will have the support and involvement of the US and not be the product of any one political party.

The Council representing the voice of the people of NYC would do well to support the pending resolution that will allow the voice of the people of Puerto Rico to be heard. Moreover, it will be another step in the direction of removing the stigma of colonialism from the United States and its legacy.

Thank you for your consideration.

Hector W. Soto, Esq.

Bronx, New York



Quiero hacer constar y denunció que el gobierno de Estados Unidos está cometiendo un acto de ilegalidad al tener bajo un régimen colonial a Puerto Rico. Exijo un proceso justo de autodeterminación que promueva la descolonización del país ( Puerto Rico ) en donde nací. El colonialismo es un crimen de lesa humanidad y condenado por las Naciones Unidas.

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**TESTIMONY BY PEDRO REYES IN SUPPORTING NYC COUNCIL RESOLUTION  
1543, IN SUPPORT OF PUERTO RICO SELF-DETERMINATION ACT HR 2070**

**Dear Councilwoman Diana Ayala,**

**Let me begin by thanking you, Carlina Rivera, Ben Kallos, for sponsoring and supporting the passing of NYC Council Resolution 1543, This will support the Puerto Rican Self-Determination Act HR 2070. HR 2070 is sponsored in Congress by two prominent Congress members Nydia Velazquez and Alexandra Ocasio Cortez.**

**This Bill recognizes the naked truth that after one hundred and twenty-three years of a colonial relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico, the Puerto Rican people deserve to achieve political self-determination. This colonial relationship is clearly defined by the United States Founding Charter found in Article 73e which recognizes the granting of self-governance to non-governing people and territories.**

**At a time when in this country voting rights are being threatened in some states it is vitally important to take note of the positive and democratic features afforded by this bill. It calls for a full disclosure and popular education of the alternatives to Puerto Rico's colonial status. It calls for the establishment of a democratically elected Constitutional Assembly to bring an informed end to people who have sought the right to self-determination for the last five hundred years opposing Spanish rule followed by U.S. colonization.**

**We believe that the time is right for a democratic process to be put in place where the Puerto Rican people who have contributed so much to this city and who have maintained a close relationship with Puerto Rico can witness the free expression of their fellow Puerto Ricans on the island.**

**Thanking you in advance,**

**Pedro Reyes,  
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385 Grand Street  
New York, N.Y. 10002**