

Testimony by Tiffany Raspberry
Director of Intergovernmental & External Affairs – Office of the Mayor
Committee on Governmental Operations, State and Federal Legislation

Good afternoon, Chair Restler and members of the Committee on Governmental Operations, State and Federal Legislation. My name is Tiffany Raspberry, and I am the Director of Intergovernmental & External Affairs for the Mayor's Office.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to address the newly implemented operational protocol, specifically known as the Elected Officials Engagement Request Form. This form is aimed at ensuring efficient and equitable engagement among Elected Officials and Agency Commissioners/Executive Directors. This protocol not only facilitates coordination with our agency leadership but also ensures the efficient allocation of city resources. I want to start by thanking all of you who have already utilized this form to engage with our City agencies and also emphasize that every level of government, federal, state, and city, are utilizing it.

Example of appropriate engagement requests include meetings with Commissioners or Executive Directors; meetings with Senior Level Agency Staff; requests to either: tour districts, attend events, attend task force meetings; requests for taking part in interagency meetings (more than one agency) and requests to discuss enforcement.

The form is not intended to stand in the way of elected officials picking up the phone to reach out to a commissioner, borough commissioner, or any other official in the administration. I still encourage you all to continue to do just that. Rather, it's to request formal meetings, or a deployment of agency resources, outside of an emergency response, so that we can make sure we are connecting with and serving all our government partners as efficiently and effectively as possible. While we are still early in the process, we have already seen how this new system serves as a one-stop shop for elected officials to easily access every agency regardless of if they have their specific contact information.

I would also like to make clear that this does not apply to inquiries for constituent cases, basic requests for information, general outreach regarding emergency issues or standard project or information updates that fall outside of formal briefings. Instead, this form should be used for formal meeting requests with agency leadership and for the deployment of agency resources. For inquiries related to constituent cases, elected officials should feel free to contact the most appropriate agency contact, including agency leadership, as well as your partners here at City

Hall, including myself, those on my team or one of my colleagues, for a response and attention to any matters.

One of the key objectives of this protocol is to mitigate disparities in access among elected officials. While many elected officials know agency leadership, or intergovernmental staff, there are many newly elected officials, who may not have those contacts. This process seeks to prevent situations where certain elected officials have greater access than others, thereby fostering a level playing field for engagement. Additionally, it aims to streamline inquiries by consolidating issues raised by multiple officials into cohesive meetings, enhancing the administration's responsiveness and effectiveness.

After clicking on the link, you will be directed to complete a brief questionnaire, which will allow the administration to enhance collaboration and streamline the delivery of services to our city. It also helps to ensure that the administration avoids duplicative efforts as we work towards our shared goals for the city.

As of this morning, we have received a total of 182 requests through the form, and all have received a response. Of that, we've received 51 requests from City Council members, representing 23 different offices. It is important to acknowledge that no request has been denied, and the average turnaround time for approvals stands at 24-48 hours.

Again, it is crucial to emphasize that in cases of emergencies or urgent matters, the Adams administration remains fully committed to promptly addressing issues without use of this form. Elected Officials are not required to fill out the form for such matters, and our team stands ready to respond swiftly and effectively to any emergency situations. Likewise, again, I want to stress how the form is not for constituent cases, and how those inquiries are not required to go through this process.

I am optimistic about the continued collaboration between the Mayor's Office and the City Council, and I look forward to our ongoing efforts to serve the residents of New York City. Thank you for your time and interest in this matter.



JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS

**TESTIMONY OF PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS
TO THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS,
STATE AND FEDERAL LEGISLATION**

Good morning,

My name is Jumaane D. Williams, and I am the Public Advocate for the City of New York. I thank Chair Restler and the members of the Committee on Government Operations, State and Federal Legislation for holding this critically important hearing and allowing me the opportunity to make a statement.

The administration's recent policy to require elected officials in city, state, and federal office to seek approval from City Hall for meetings with agency commissioners and their executive teams is troubling and must be challenged.

This policy as designed will stymie vital interaction between government partners – preventing public service on behalf of New Yorkers – in order to service this administration's seeming need to exert further control over all government operations. Furthermore, it will set a dangerous precedent limiting follow-up and oversight as related to hearings – my colleagues on the Council know how often commissioners need to get back to them on certain questions and issues.

“Completion of this form does not result in a guarantee of a meeting or appearance.” With the administration's reserved right to decline any request, I am concerned that this policy is simply the latest in a wave of policies curtailing agency transparency. It is possible that serious issues in need of investigation, correction, and certainly public spotlighting may never see the light of day, denied by the mayor's office for any number of reasons. This is not a way to make government work for New Yorkers.

I was happy to learn that these forms are subject to our city's Open Data Law, mandating public release and storage of municipal data. However, this policy should not exist, plain and simple. For offices like that of the Public Advocate, which exists outside the purview of the office of the mayor, this policy is a significant overreach. It would affect my office's ability to comply with our Charter-mandated responsibilities. And, as an ex-officio member of the Council, I feel compelled to add it would also limit Council Members' ability to work collaboratively with agency partners and deliver results for their constituents.

I urge the administration to rescind this policy. Thank you.

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY ON BEHALF OF COMMON CAUSE NEW YORK
before the New York City Council Committee on Governmental Operations,
State & Federal Legislation**

*Oversight Hearing re Elected Official Agency Engagement Request Form
May 1, 2024*

Unnecessary red type is often unavoidable in large bureaucracies, and nowhere is this more true than New York City. New York City has the largest municipal workforce in the country and has a corresponding sprawling set of administrative institutions that keep the city running. Somewhat recent snapshot data from New York City's Department of Administrative Services (DCAS) indicated 72 city agencies employed nearly 400,000 New Yorkers in 2021 that serve over 8 million residents.¹

New York City's Mayor has the latitude, as executive-in-chief, and the power and authority to reconfigure certain aspects of the bureaucracy, particularly in the Mayor's office, to reflect the vision, policies and values of their administration. It is the Mayor's statutory right to manage a highly complex bureaucracy as they see fit. Despite the periodic questionable call, one former Mayor managed the city on the presidential campaign trail while another routinely did so from their home in Bermuda, these decisions must not interfere with the day-to-day functioning of government.

Elected officials and their staff are vital parts of the many interlocking pieces that make the city hum, and they contribute to the effective delivery of government services throughout the city. Often, they add a much needed local perspective on aspects of city governance from quality of life issues to constituent services, or the capital needs of a local public school to the proliferation of illegal cannabis shops in their city council district.² The inter-agency and elected-city agency relationships are so deeply embedded as a vaunted component of governmental collaboration that many agencies have "Intergovernmental Affairs" teams and departments to steward and support cross-functional work.

¹ New York City Department of Administrative Services, [NYC Government Workforce Profile Report](#), 2021.

² [Brewer Releases Results of New UWS Unlicensed Cannabis Survey](#), March 14, 2024.

Historically, electeds have been able to work with city agency brass and staff without top down restrictions from the Mayor's office. We were dismayed to see the Mayor's recent announcement that adds a superfluous layer of bureaucracy in the form of an [Elected Officials Agency Engagement Request Form](#) as the new first step of elected official and city agency collaboration. The form also notes in small print at the bottom: *"Completion of this form does not result in a guarantee of a meeting or appearance. The City reserves the right to decline requests."*

[We agree with the assessment](#) of the New York City Council, State Legislators and members of Congress that this form and new approval process will only serve to stymie collaboration and government services. Upon review of the form itself, it is hard to imagine a rationale that supports an efficiency argument given the length, breadth and tediousness of its content. The Mayor has many tools at his disposal to better coordinate city services and support the ongoing work of elected officials and his administration, however this is not one of them.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tiffany Raspberg

Address: _____

I represent: Mayer's Office

Address: _____

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆

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Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 1/24

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Name: Elisabeth Gottbaum

Address: _____

I represent: _____

Address: _____

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Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

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Name: Rosie Mendez

Address: Former Councilwoman District 2

I represent: myself

Address: _____

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**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: 5/1/29

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Name: Nick Gwlotta

Address: Jackson Heights, NY

I represent: N/A

Address: _____

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