

**New York City Economic Development Corporation and Department of Small Business Services**  
**New York City Council Hearing:**  
**Oversight – Worker Cooperatives – Is This a Model That Can Lift Families Out of Poverty?**  
**Committee on Community Development**  
**Miquela Craytor, Director of NYC Industrial and Income Mobility Initiatives**  
**Monday, February 24, 2014**

I. Introduction

Good morning Chair Arroyo and members of the Committee on Community Development. My name is Miquela Craytor and I am the Director of NYC Industrial and Income Mobility Initiatives at the New York City Economic Development Corporation (“NYCEDC”), and together with Gregg Bishop, Deputy Commissioner of the New York City Department of Small Business Services, I am pleased to speak with you today about worker cooperatives, a workforce model deserving of further consideration by the City as we begin to develop new strategies to address income inequality in New York City under Mayor de Blasio's leadership. After my testimony, I will be happy to take questions.

Income inequality is a critical concern for all New Yorkers, and Mayor de Blasio has made clear that tackling this important issue will be a central tenet of this administration. Currently, 30% of full-time NYC workers are low-income with limited opportunities to increase their economic potential.<sup>1</sup> NYCEDC is working closely with the Administration to start developing new strategies for strengthening the economic base in distressed neighborhoods and communities across the city. We've done this through fostering entrepreneurial opportunities and supporting organizations and businesses that provide support and employment opportunities to the City's low-income populations. Ultimately the goal is to help employers invest in their workers and develop policies that help improve income mobility for all workers across the City.

In January of this year, the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies (FPWA) released a report on worker-owned cooperatives in New York City and the potential opportunities cooperatives

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<sup>1</sup> *“Low income” benchmarked at a family income of <\$63K/year for a family of two adults and two children.*

may provide as a tool for addressing income inequality in our city. The report argues that cooperatives can be formed with workers in any industry but accrue particular benefits to workers in low-wage industries by empowering workers to exercise democratic control of their businesses, including wage and profit distribution decisions. This in turn can potentially lead to greater financial stability and wealth accumulation for participating workers.

Worker cooperatives often represent two groups which NYCEDC, SBS and the City has long worked to support- small businesses and entrepreneurs. We believe these two groups are unique in their position to help continue to create jobs and improve the New York City workforce landscape as the City's economy continues to recover, but also represent individuals who are often in need of additional financial and technical resources. It is our understanding that worker cooperatives face many of the same issues encountered by all New York City small businesses, including funding, affordable space, and technical assistance needs.

As the report states, worker cooperatives are not a well-known business model in New York City, with 23 cooperatives throughout the five boroughs.<sup>2</sup> However, FPWA's report suggests that existing cooperatives can serve as a model for supporting small business growth in the city.

## II. Services Available to Worker Cooperatives

The FPWA report outlines supportive services that can help worker cooperatives to overcome the initial hurdles inherent in the cooperative formation process, including legal and technical assistance and a worker cooperative movement and community to draw on experiential advice and institutional support.

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<sup>2</sup> Jones Austin, Jennifer. "Worker Cooperatives for New York City: A Vision for Addressing Income Inequality." Federation for Protestant Welfare Agencies. January 2014. pp. 6.

At SBS through their network of Business Solutions Centers, they meet with entrepreneurs seeking to establish new businesses. This process usually involves consideration of business structure, including sole proprietorships, partnerships, and incorporating. SBS will be able to provide information on the corporate cooperative structure and refer interested individuals to these organizations that offer step by step information on this type of structure. Currently, SBS is discussing providing procurement technical assistance to existing cooperative corporations on how to do business with the City as well as determining what agencies purchase the goods and services of those corporations. In addition, SBS can also provide information on certifying as an MWBE where applicable.

Worker cooperatives are eligible for many of NYCEDC's industry transformation programs as well as some capital funding opportunities. For instance, cooperative corporations that otherwise meet the requirements specified in NYCEDC RFPs are eligible to respond to opportunities for capital funding, provided that the cooperative corporation is the legal entity that owns the real property or capital assets being acquired, constructed and/or improved.

### III. Further Research Questions

Both NYCEDC and SBS are open to exploring and learning about new and innovative strategies for addressing income inequality and workforce development issues in New York City. The FPWA report has brought to our attention potential strategies for recognizing and engaging with worker cooperatives. We believe worker cooperatives warrant further consideration and discussion, particularly to determine what forms of technical assistance or support the City can provide to groups interested in forming cooperatives. Based on our experience in assisting businesses to grow and create jobs in New York City, we believe there are still some key questions that need to be answered about the worker cooperative model, including:

- What does the Worker Cooperative landscape look like as far as interests among would-be worker owners and potential industries for growth?
- Are there opportunities to expand the core values (employee ownership and community wealth building) of the Worker Cooperative model to existing businesses and/or non-Worker Cooperative businesses?

The FPWA report cites two current factors that have impacted the City's understanding of worker cooperatives- the limited number of worker cooperatives in New York City and the lack of a centralized worker cooperative association. We're open to engaging with these existing organizations, including those offering institutional and technical assistance to groups interested in forming cooperatives, in order to learn more and further discuss these capacity and community issues.

We're aware that the City Council has shown support for the worker cooperative model in the past by providing grant support to the Center for Family Life to form a cooperative incubation training program. We would be interested in hearing more about the results of their program and any potential future efforts by the Council to expand on their partnership with CFL.

#### IV. Conclusion

Thank you again for inviting me to speak today and giving me the opportunity to discuss the benefits worker cooperatives may provide in addressing income inequality and the issues these organizations currently face.

I will now take your questions.



**Testimony before the New York City Council Committee on Community Development  
Worker Cooperatives - Is This a Model That Can Lift Families Out of Poverty?**

**February 24, 2014**

**Stephan Edel, Green and Equitable Economies Organizer**

**Center for Working Families**

Good Morning, Chair Arroyo, and members of the Committee on Community Development. Thank you for this opportunity to testify on whether worker cooperatives can lift families out of poverty.

My name is Stephan Edel. I am the Green and Equitable Economies Organizer at the Center for Working Families. The Center is a nonpartisan multi-state 501(c)3 organization that engages in issue advocacy and public education for policy campaigns at the state and local level. The Center incubates and develops compelling issue campaigns, provides resources and technical assistance, and injects our values into the national political discourse.

I want to thank the Committee for holding this hearing. We support the many good policy ideas being presented today. These innovative ideas include City agencies offering support for cooperatives as part of their portfolio of services; investigating ways to leverage city procurement to create good local jobs through cooperatives; and providing direct funding to worker cooperative developers.

Working families need universal standards like the minimum wage and paid sick days, that set a floor, but public policy should encourage businesses to provide good jobs that rise above that floor. Policies supporting worker cooperatives address the root causes of poverty by creating good jobs, reducing income inequality, and empowering workers.

Poverty reduction is directly related to attaining good jobs. However, the dominant economic development system has often failed to create promised jobs, especially good jobs and especially in low income communities of color. New York State spends \$7 billion on economic development, largely on corporate tax subsidies in the name of job creation.<sup>i</sup> The City spends roughly \$4 billion, roughly \$3 billion of which is business tax abatements.<sup>ii</sup> Most of the jobs created are temporary or low wage. Worker cooperatives offer an alternative community development strategy to create good jobs at businesses owned by members of the community.

Employment at worker cooperative enterprises has clear benefits for job quality, transforming entry level jobs into pathways out of poverty. Cooperative employment empowers workers and builds leadership, problem solving, and business skills. Worker ownership can create a sense of agency that extends beyond the workplace. Cooperatives tend to provide stable jobs even in economic downturns because cooperatives shed fewer jobs than other businesses.<sup>iii</sup> Democratic control of the workplace reduces abuse and wage theft, and tends to lead to more equal compensation structures.<sup>iv</sup> Worker owners at most cooperatives build equity in addition to their wages which improves their credit, builds their long term financial position, and keeps resources in the local community.

The benefits of cooperative businesses are not limited to their employee owners. Cooperatives generally provide better benefits to the broader community because they are owned and controlled locally.<sup>v</sup> Since spending in worker cooperatives remains in the community, the impact of each dollar is multiplied.<sup>vi</sup> A recent survey of research showed that cooperatives can compete with other similarly situated businesses and may fail at a lower rate.<sup>vii</sup>

There are models for creating a thriving cooperative sector around the country that New York City can draw from.

- The Federation of Southern Cooperatives grew out of the civil rights movement and a long history of struggle for economic and social justice for African-Americans. The Federation currently serves 75 active cooperatives, many of which are worker cooperatives, helping to pull 20,000 families up from poverty.<sup>viii</sup> The Federation demonstrates not only the effectiveness of workers to create and sustain employment in dire circumstances, but also the strong impact that cooperative development can have on a community.
- In Cleveland the Evergreen Cooperatives have developed over the last decade to provide good permanent jobs to the city's least privileged residents. These cooperatives provide goods and services that major institutions in Cleveland already need.<sup>ix</sup> Federal Reserve Board Governor Sarah Bloom Raskin highlighted the innovative work of the Evergreen to leverage procurement by "anchor institutions," such as hospitals and universities, as powerful engines for job creation in their communities.<sup>x</sup> In New York City procurement was more than \$16.5 billion worth of supplies, services and construction in 2013.<sup>xi</sup> If even a tiny fraction of that spending were redirected to local cooperatives it would have a substantial impact in this sector.

New York City has solid infrastructure in both the government and non-profit sector to support worker cooperatives. Current efforts have had a real impact on job creation and poverty reduction, including:

- Cooperative Home Care Associates, a Bronx based unionized worker cooperative, has more than 1,600 employees who earn above the industry average, have comprehensive benefits, and support educational and other programming.<sup>xii</sup>
- Si Se Puede Women’s Cooperative is a Brooklyn based immigrant women run cooperative that provides cleaning services citywide, which was incubated by the Center for Family Life. Si Se Puede has grown quickly to over 50 employees who have doubled their wages from previous jobs and now receive a living wage at a business they control.<sup>xiii</sup>

There are no guaranteed solutions for poverty. However, there are clear links between worker cooperatives and outcomes that we know have a positive long term benefit for lifting families out of poverty. A policy that supports worker cooperatives is a good jobs strategy. It also offers an opportunity to ensure that public procurement is targeted at local cooperative businesses where the economic benefits of public expenditures are multiplied as those dollars remain in the community.

I appreciate the Council members’ time and the opportunity to be part of the conversation. Thank you again for holding this hearing. We look forward to working with you to support the expansion of worker cooperatives throughout our city.

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<sup>i</sup> ALIGN The Alliance for a Greater New York. 2013 *The \$7,000,000,000 Wager: New York State's Costly Gamble in Economic Development* <http://www.alignny.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/7-Billion-Wager-Web.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> Public Advocates Office. 2013 [archive.advocate.nyc.gov/jobs/3](http://archive.advocate.nyc.gov/jobs/3)

<sup>iii</sup> Burdin, Gabriel and Andres Dean. 2009 “New Evidence on Wages and Employment in Worker Cooperatives Compared with Capitalist Firms.” *Journal of Comparative Economics* 37 (4):517-33

<sup>iv</sup> Restakis, John. 2010 *Humanizing the Economy: Cooperatives in the Age of Capital: New Society Publishers*

<sup>v</sup> IFAS *Community Development: Cooperatives as Tools for Community and Economic Development in Florida* <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/fy728>

<sup>vi</sup> BALLE *The Benefits of Locally Owned Businesses* <https://bealocalist.org/economic-development/planet-protection/benefits-of-locally-owned-businesses>

<sup>vii</sup> Olsen, Erik. 2013 “The Relative Survival of Worker Cooperatives and Barriers to the Creation.” *Advances in Economic Analysis of Participatory and Labor-Managed Firms*.

<sup>viii</sup> Federation of Southern Cooperatives Land Assistance Fund *History and Historical Documents* [www.federationsoutherncoop.com/history.htm](http://www.federationsoutherncoop.com/history.htm)

<sup>ix</sup> Evergreen Cooperatives. 2012 [www.evergreencooperatives.com/about/](http://www.evergreencooperatives.com/about/)

<sup>x</sup> National Community Reinvestment Coalition annual conference 2013 <http://evergreencooperatives.com/2013/03/federal-reserve-board-governor-highlights-evergreen-cooperatives-as-substantial-positive-development-in-the-local-economy/>

<sup>xi</sup> City of New York Mayor’s Office of Contract Services. 2013 *Agency Procurement Indicators Fiscal Year* [www.nyc.gov/html/mocs/downloads/pdf/Fiscal%202013%20Procurement%20Indicators%20complete%20text%2010%2021\\_for%20web.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/mocs/downloads/pdf/Fiscal%202013%20Procurement%20Indicators%20complete%20text%2010%2021_for%20web.pdf)

<sup>xii</sup> Schneider, Stu. 2010 “Cooperative Home Care Associates: Participation with 1600 Employees” *Grassroots Economic Organizing (GEO) Newsletter, Volume II, Issue 5*, <http://www.geo.coop/node/443>; also <http://www.chcany.org/>

<sup>xiii</sup> Bransburg, Vanessa. 2011 *The Center for Family Life: Tackling Poverty and Social Isolation in Brooklyn with Worker Cooperatives*. Grassroots Economic Organizing (GEO) Newsletter, Volume 2, Issue 8. <http://geo.coop/node/636>

TESTIMONY OF MAKE THE ROAD AND WORKER COOP MEMBER  
CLAUDIA LEON  
2/24/2014

Greetings, My name is Claudia Leon, I'm a member of Make the Road New York and a co-owner of Pa'lante Green Cleaning Coop, a cooperative that offers cleaning services formed by workers that like me, had been victims of wage theft and workplace abuse.

I'm originally from Puebla, Mexico. I moved to the United States three years ago. I came to this country looking for new employment opportunities and personal growth for me and my family in Mexico who depend on me. Once here I found a job as a waitress where I worked 6 days a week, 9 hours per day earning \$ 20 per day – I worked under these conditions for three years, in an environment where I felt humiliated and where my personal growth was limited.

Through my participation in English classes offered by Make the Road and my engagement in community meetings, I learned about my rights as an immigrant woman and as a worker in this country. After learning my rights I realized I was being a victim of labor exploitation. I decided to quit my job even though I knew how difficult it would be to find a new one.

At that time "Make the Road" was developing a new project to help members to establish worker cooperatives. During our weekly cooperative's trainings, we realized that we were victims of workplace abuse as well as the lack of good jobs in different industries. We decided to commit to the creation of a different type of workplace, where everyone has a voice, a fair wage, stable jobs, and can work in an atmosphere of respect and dignity.

Pa'Lante Green Cleaning Coop, is made up of 16 individuals who have received training to ensure the success of the cooperative and the satisfaction of our future customers. As of February 2014 we have received our certificate of incorporation as a business. I am part of the publicity committee working on advertising for the cooperative. We are working to ensure the success of the cooperative, so that we can one day offer more jobs to people who desire better working conditions and to improve their lives. We are a group of 16 people each dedicated to doing monthly hours of publicity and to attending regular meetings where we engage into important topics such as customer service, training and the use of natural products, etc.

In Mexico I got my accounting license and now I will have the opportunity to implement what I learned there to improve the performance of my cooperative.

Today I want to acknowledge the support we have received from organizations and different cooperatives through their trainings and information.

Thanks for your interest and commitment to help workers' cooperatives in the city of NY



(In Spanish)

Buenas, Mi nombre es Claudia Leon soy miembro de Se Hace Camino Nueva York y una de las dueñas de Pa'lante Green Cleaning Coop, una cooperativa que ofrece servicios de limpieza formada por trabajadores que al igual que yo han sido víctimas de robo del salario y abuso laboral.

Soy originaria de Puebla México. Me mudé a los Estados Unidos hace tres años. Vine a este país buscando nuevas oportunidades de empleo y superación personal para mí y mi familia en México quienes dependen de mí. Al llegar encontré un trabajo de mesera donde trabajaba 9 horas por 6 días a la semana ganando \$20 por día – Trabaje en estas condiciones por tres años, en un ambiente donde me sentí humillada y limitada a un desarrollo de superación personal.

A través de mi participación en las clases de inglés que ofrece Se Hace Camino y en mi involucramiento en las reuniones comunitarias aprendí sobre mis derechos como una mujer inmigrante y trabajadora en este país. Después de conocer mis derechos me di cuenta de que estaba siendo víctima de explotación laboral, en ese momento decidí de dejar mi trabajo aun sabiendo lo difícil que es encontrar un trabajo nuevo.

En ese momento Se Hace Camino estaba desarrollando un nuevo proyecto que ayudaba a los miembros a crear cooperativas. A través de los entrenamientos semanales de la cooperativa nos dimos cuenta de que éramos víctimas de abuso laboral y la falta de trabajos buenos en diferentes industrias. Decidimos comprometernos a crear un lugar de trabajo diferente, en donde todos tengamos una voz, un salario justo, trabajos estables, y con un ambiente de respeto y dignidad.

Pa' Lante Green Cleaning Coop, esta formada por 16 personas las cuales hemos recibido entrenamientos para asegurar el éxito de la cooperativa y la satisfacción de nuestros futuros clientes. En este mes de Febrero ya recibimos nuestro certificado de incorporación como un negocio. Yo formo parte del comité de publicidad que trabaja en la propaganda de la cooperativa y estamos enfocándonos en que nuestra cooperativa sea un éxito, así en un futuro daremos más empleos a personas que deseen superar sus condiciones laborales y mejorar sus vidas. Somos un grupo de 16 personas dedicadas al hacer horas de publicidad mensuales, asistir reuniones regulares donde tocamos temas importantes como el servicio al cliente, entrenamientos como el uso de productos naturales, etc.

En México obtuve mi licenciatura en contabilidad donde ahora tendré la oportunidad de desarrollar lo aprendido para mejorar el funcionamiento de mi cooperativa.

Hoy quiero agradecer el apoyo que nos han brindado organizaciones y diferentes cooperativas a través de sus entrenamientos y información.

Gracias por su interés y compromiso en ayudar cooperativas de trabajadores en la ciudad de NY.

# TESTIMONY

## Oversight Hearing:

### **“Worker Cooperatives – Is This A Model That Can Lift Families Out of Poverty?”**

New York City Council, Committee on Community Development

Hon. Maria Carmen del Arroyo, Chair

Monday, February 24, 2014

Panel #2: Worker Cooperatives as a means for helping the unemployed

Vanessa Bransburg's testimony

- In 2006 the Center for Family Life, a program of SCO Family of Services, the Worker Cooperative Development Program was created out of our Adult Employment Program which is the workforce arm of our agency.
- We identified the need to have an alternative from our traditional job readiness approach for our clients who were unemployed, had experienced multiple barriers to finding work and demonstrated an interest in entrepreneurship.
- The worker cooperative model presented itself as an ideal opportunity to organize themselves, work collectively to create high standards for their work, and establish a democratic workplace that would benefit both themselves and their clients.
- Since 2006, we have seen the involvement of more than 120 community members in worker cooperatives in Sunset, Park, alone. They have generated more than \$5 million in income and have organized their coops to offer flexible schedules and training opportunities for its members.
- Additionally, with the support of the City Council CFL has been providing training and technical assistance to 16 community organizations in New York City who will become cooperative incubators themselves. The potential in this expansion process demonstrates the real interest on behalf of workforce development programs and community members to engage in a model that can offer members and their families living wages and benefits that they might not otherwise be able to attain in a traditional job.

- Therefore, as the City of New York revamps its workforce system plans and policies, we urge the City to include worker cooperatives as part of the effort, as worker cooperatives could be a useful tool to achieve broader goals in the workforce system. While the benefits of worker cooperatives are clear, they are widely unknown and underutilized in the ongoing and ever present fight against poverty and unemployment.
  
- With regards to the various city agencies funding workforce development programs, these programs should partner with cooperative incubators to lend guidance and expertise to cooperatives, refer workers to cooperative incubators, or even become incubators themselves. Such a partnership can direct more workers and resources to the cooperative sector. Therefore, new city workforce development contracts should include provisions that permit job placement in a worker cooperative as an approved placement opportunity. In addition, new city workforce development contracts should provide funding for capacity building, industry skills training, and resource development for worker cooperatives.

## TESTIMONY

Oversight Hearing:

“Worker Cooperatives – Is This A Model That Can Lift Families Out of Poverty?”

New York City Council, Committee on Community Development

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Monday, February 24, 2014

Panel #2: Worker Cooperatives as a means for helping the unemployed

Yadira Fragoso's testimony

Mi nombre es Yadira Fragoso y soy de la ciudad de Mexico.

Llegue a los Estados Unidos en el 2000 y el primer trabajo que tube fue de limpieza. Ganaba \$6.50 la hora. Solo trabaje un año.

En 2006 me quede desempleada y estaba pasando por un momento dificil en mi vida por lo cual tube que mandar a mis hijos a Mexico por un año.

En ese tiempo yo estaba recibiendo concejeria en el CFL y mi trabajadora social me dijo que Si Se Puede tendria un open house asi que decidi aplicar,

Afortunadamente fui aceptada para empezar el proceso de aprobacion. Este proceso duro 4 meses pero fue hasta despues de 8 meses que me hize miembra oficial de Si Se Puede

Como este proceso fue largo y no obtube trabajos inmediatos yo empeze a trabajar en un restaurant ganando 10 dolares x hora.

El año que yo me habia destinado a trabajar fuerte se termino y mis hijos volvieron de Mexico. Para ese entonces yo estaba trabajando en el restaurant y en la cooperative

En la cooperativa solo tenia un cliente fijo y tres de cada mes. Asi que mi principal entrada de dinero era mi trabajo en el restaurant. Desafortunadamente, no tenia tiempo para estar con mis hijos y algunas veces tenia que traerlos conmigo al trabajo y esperaban por mi todo mi horario de 8 horas o mas.

Mi jefe en ese tiempo, me dijo q me daba un tiempo para que yo resolviera mi situacion y fue entonces cuando decidi que renunciaria al restaurant y que me enfocaria mas en la cooperative.

Desde ese entonces puedo afirmar que mi vida cambio x que empeze a tener mas clientes y por lo tanto mi entrada de dinero era mas alto.

El crecimiento fue de 10 dolares a 20 o 25 dolares por hora.

Por ultimo mencionare que ser parte de una cooperative no es facil y se necisita paciencia y mucha dedicacion.

Ahora yo paso mas tiempo con mis hijos y el que mi salario haya aumentado quiere decir que mi vida es mucho mejor.

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Hi all,

My name is Yadira Fragoso and I am here to represent Si Se Puede Women's cooperative

I came to the United States in 2000 and the first job I did was cleaning. I was making \$ 6.50 an hour. I did cleaning just for one and a half year and then I dedicated myself to my children.

In 2006 I was going through a difficult time in my life and because of that I had to send my children to Mexico for a year. And I was unemployed.

By that time I was receiving counseling at the Center for Family Life and my social worker told me that Si Se Puede would have an open house. So I decided to apply.

Fortunately I was accepted to begin the approval process. This process was for four months and after eight months later is when I became a official member.

The year I had intended me to work hard was finished and my children returned from Mexico. By then I was working at a restaurant and at the cooperative.

In the cooperative just had one regular client and three of every month. So my main source of money was my job at the restaurant. Unfortunately, I had no time to spend with my kids and sometimes had to bring them with me to work and waited for me 8 hours or more.

My boss at the time, told me that I need to resolve my situation and it was when decided to give up the restaurant and I focus more on the cooperative .

Since then I can say that my life had changed. I started to have more clients and therefore my entry money was higher, from \$10 dollars to

\$20 or 25 dollars an hour .

Finally I would say that to be part of a cooperative is not easy and you need a lot of patience and dedication. But all the effort you put in this, it will take you to a better life style and most importantly it will give you enough time to spend with your children and raise them to became a good citizen of this country.

TESTIMONY OF CARMEN HUERTAS-NOBLE, CUNY SCHOOL OF LAW COMMUNITY  
& ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CLINIC

Oversight Hearing:

Worker Cooperatives – Is this A Model That Can Lift Families Out of Poverty?

Presented to:

New York City Council, Community Development Committee

Hon. Maria Del Carmen Arroyo, Chair

February 24, 2014

Hello, my name is Carmen Huertas -Noble. I am an Associate Professor of Law and the founding director of CUNY School of Law's Community & Economic Development Clinic. The Community and Economic Development (CED) Clinic provides legal support to community-based organizational clients that are creating vibrant neighborhood institutions and organizing for social and economic justice. Our work is grounded in the belief that social justice lawyering is most effective when it is strategically deployed to build the power of low-income and marginalized communities. The work of the Clinic is divided into three project areas: the Worker Cooperative Law Project, the Non-Profit Legal Support Project, and the Tenant Law and Organizing Project.

Today, I would like to thank the committee for providing this opportunity to testify in support of worker cooperatives. By way of background, I would like to begin by sharing that before joining CUNY, I played a leading role in providing transactional legal support to worker-owned cooperatives in New York City. Under my directorship, the CED Clinic continues this role by providing legal support to a number of organizations that are at the forefront of creating and/or supporting worker-owned cooperatives, including ROC-NY, Cidadão Global, Green Worker Cooperatives, and the New York City Network of Worker Cooperatives.

Most recently, the CED Clinic has also formed a partnership with Mondragon International, the largest network of cooperatives in the world and a recent recipient of the Financial Times' "Boldness in Business" award. Through this partnership, The Clinic has started to develop the legal framework for a new hybrid union coop model created by Mondragon International USA, the United Steelworkers and the Ohio Employee Ownership Center. The Clinic is also currently working with Regional Housing Legal Services in Pennsylvania and the Pittsburgh Clean & Green Laundry to create an innovative unionized worker-owned cooperative based on Mondragon principles.

Based on my legal experience in representing worker cooperatives for over 10 years as well as my scholarly research and articles on worker ownership, I am here to testify in support of worker cooperatives, not only as an effective job creation strategy but also as a strategy that can provide for transformative economic justice during a time of economic crisis. In fact, given the deepening economic crisis in our country (and globally) now more than ever, is the time to take bold and innovative action and to dispense with business as usual.

Today's income inequality is at its highest since 1928, right before the Great Depression. While the one percent of our country is experiencing unprecedented wealth, the other ninety nine percent is experiencing wage stagnation and are working longer hours for less pay. Wage stagnation and the growing number of people working longer hours for less pay has left more and more people unable to provide for themselves and their families. The enormity and ubiquitous nature of today's income inequality has resulted in a significant increase of Americans, of all walks of life, starting to focus on and experientially understand the structural ills of our current economic system, including how many of our businesses are currently structured.

As the negative societal impacts of how many companies are structured are becoming clearer and clearer, more and more people are experiencing the reality of the U.S. class system and are understanding that economic upward mobility is not as likely, and certainly not a given based on working hard, as they once understood. There is no longer the promise that if you work hard, you will be rewarded and succeed in life. Instead, despite people working even harder than their counterparts from many years ago, they are being paid less and experiencing a number of unacceptable social ills i.e. an inability to provide for themselves and their children.

Many of these social ills, including unemployment from factory closures/relocations stem from having too many corporations that are owned by absentee owners and that have no loyalty to the communities in which they are located and the people that they employ. These corporations are willing to exploit their current workers, offshore jobs to further exploit workers abroad, and to pollute communities in the name of maximizing profits for a few while simultaneously degrading the lives of many. Some people claim that this is simply the nature of capitalism but we know better. We need a much more inclusive form capitalism. There are other successful ways to establish and operate businesses that are competitive and profitable, while also actually having a positive impact on the communities they are located in.

One promising way is through creating and supporting more worker cooperatives and union-coops. Worker cooperatives and union-coops offer a big part of the solution to the many problems, and their root causes, that we see today. Worker cooperatives and union-coops are locally owned and locally based. They are more likely to pay their worker-owners equitably, provide better working conditions and are less likely to pollute the very communities in which they are not only located in but live in. Societal benefits from worker cooperatives and union-coops are also more inclusive and sustainable.

Government support of worker cooperatives and union-coops can take many forms. To name a few, the City can help worker cooperatives and union-coops realize their transformative potential by providing funding to incubate worker cooperatives and union-coops, providing funding for technical assistance and providing worker cooperatives and union-coops a preference in the City's procurement process.

# TESTIMONY

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New York City Council, Committee on Community Development  
Hon. Maria Del Carmen Arroyo, Chair  
Monday, February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2014



## Democracy at Work Institute

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Good morning, Chairperson Arroyo, and distinguished members of the New York City Council Committee on Community Development. My name is Joe Rinehart and I am a staff member at the US Federation of Worker Cooperatives and the Democracy at Work Institute.

The US Federation of Worker Cooperatives is the national membership organization for worker owned businesses. Our associated think tank, The Democracy at Work Institute, focuses on researching and supporting organizations in implementing cooperative development that expands the promise of cooperative business ownership to those communities most directly affected by social and economic inequality.

I'd like to talk a little about the steps that cities around the nation and world are taking to utilize worker cooperatives as a community economic development tool for more fair and resilient local economies. City and regional governments, along with foundations, academic institutions and the non-profit sector, are increasingly seeing worker cooperative development policy as a means to support the creation of good jobs. These cooperative jobs also build community wealth, lower income inequality, and shape a more just, socially mobile and democratic society while contributing to a robust and growing local economy.

In the United States, cities are integrating worker cooperative development and knowledge into their economic development departments and practices. For Example:

- Madison, Wisconsin is integrating knowledge of worker cooperatives into their city's small business development services agency, regulatory agencies, and planning department.
- Richmond, California has hired a cooperative developer onto city staff who is specifically tasked with starting new cooperative businesses to support low-income residents, and to provide support for entrepreneurs starting cooperatives in the city.
- Reading, Pennsylvania is founding a city supported worker cooperative development center using funds from several city agencies
- Jackson, Mississippi is moving towards using capital investment funds for its water and sewer system to provide protected markets for locally owned worker cooperative construction companies, and is integrating worker cooperative education into its small business support services.

Internationally, policy supports and tools for worker cooperatives are far more advanced, and have shown to significantly advance the economic development goals of creating high quality jobs, rooting large and small businesses in communities and creating community based wealth. For example:

- Canadian city, regional and provincial governments provide broad support for worker and multi-stakeholder cooperatives through government research and business development funds.
- In the United Kingdom, regional and city government councils are transforming themselves into "cooperative councils" that practice more open and participatory governance and institute policies to support worker cooperatives through preferential sourcing and contracting of public services. One example of this is the creation of Cooperative Academies and Trusts by the hundreds throughout the United Kingdom. Similar to Charter schools in the United States, in these publicly funded but not for profit



cooperative schools teachers, parents and community members directly elect the board of the charter school, connecting those schools more closely to the community, and ensuring equitable pay and working conditions for the teachers who are unionized with the largest teachers union in the UK.

- In Italy, 3000 worker cooperatives with strong community and stakeholder ties contract with cities to provide public services. These “social” cooperatives have successfully achieved through “cooperatization” the cost savings and efficiencies promised by privatization while continuing to treat their workers well and increasing their accountability to the individuals receiving the services and the local governments. These worker cooperatives administer public health services and other programs, provide maintenance and repairs to government facilities, and provide job training and employment for citizens with barriers to employment.

While some cities in the United States have begun to support worker cooperatives, none have begun to think systematically about using cooperative development as a tool for creating an economy resilient against downturns and mitigating unemployment and income inequality.

New York City is well positioned to lead the nation in cooperative development. It already has one of the most skilled and thriving worker cooperative communities in the United States. This local community has already shown that Worker Cooperatives can create better jobs on a large scale, as demonstrated by Cooperative Home Care Associates of the Bronx, with more than 2,500 home health care aids receiving better than industry wages with far better working conditions. This community has also demonstrated the effectiveness of investing in cooperative development, through City Council’s investment in the Center for Family Life’s programs and the five corresponding worker owned cooperatives that have as much as doubled the hourly waged earned by their members.

The question before the city today is simple: Will the city engage with worker cooperative development in a systematic way as a tool to reshape the economy towards one that works for all New Yorkers?

If the answer is yes, the city would implement policies and programs that support the creation of an independent, and eventually largely self-financing, worker cooperative development ecosystem with the mission of community based economic development that provides good jobs for New Yorkers through cooperative business. By taking a systems approach (rather than a single developer or program approach) to cooperative development, the city will ensure that its investment is effective and that the cooperatives and institutions created continue to produce good jobs and a more robust economy even years after the programs are complete. Such a structural approach would allow for the creation of cooperative businesses in a long-lasting and permanent way.

Hallmarks of such an approach would be:

- The support for cooperative entrepreneurs and for large scale cooperative business development that takes advantage of protected or difficult to enter markets to provide employment for individuals with traditional barriers to employment.



- The encouragement of worker cooperatives to reinvest in the creation of more cooperative jobs, either through the heavy reinvestment of profits from the business into its expansion, or in the creation of future worker cooperatives.
- The connection of those worker cooperatives and developers to each other and to the national and international worker cooperative movements.
- The creation of policies and practices inside city government that support worker cooperatives in accessing contracts for city sourcing and service delivery.
- The integration of knowledge of worker cooperatives and worker cooperative technical assistance providers into city agencies such as SBS and NYC EDC, as well as into city supported small business service providers, financial institutions and city agencies with significant purchasing and contracting roles.

The Democracy At Work Institute sincerely hopes that the New York City Council and city government at large will increase its support for worker cooperatives. We would be happy to assist the council in any way towards achieving those goals.

Respectfully Submitted,

Joe Rinehart

[joe.rinehart@usworker.coop](mailto:joe.rinehart@usworker.coop)

US Federation of Worker Cooperatives, Democracy at Work Institute



TESTIMONY  
ON  
**WORKER-OWNED COOPERATIVES  
AS SOURCES OF LIVING WAGE JOBS  
IN LOW-INCOME NYC COMMUNITIES**

PRESENTED BEFORE:

THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

CHAIR MARIA DEL CARMEN ARROYO

PRESENTED BY:

Edward W. De Barbieri

SENIOR STAFF ATTORNEY  
URBAN JUSTICE CENTER  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

URBAN  
JUSTICE  
CENTER



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

FEBRUARY 24, 2014

Good morning Chair Del Carmen Arroyo, and Committee Member. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Committee. My name is Ted De Barbieri, and I am a Senior Staff Attorney at the Community Development Project (CDP) of the Urban Justice Center. I am here today to speak about worker-owned cooperatives, and their potential to create well-paying jobs and serve as engines of economic growth in our city's low-income communities.

The Community Development Project strengthens the impact of grassroots organizations in New York City's low-income and other excluded communities by winning legal cases, publishing community-driven research reports, assisting with the formation of new organizations, and providing technical and transactional assistance in support of their work towards social justice. For more than ten years, CDP has collaborated with community organizations to help low-income NYC residents form worker-owned cooperative businesses. Worker cooperatives are businesses that are owned by the workers and that have participatory management. These ventures, which focus on sectors of the service industry such as restaurants, child care, home improvement and housecleaning, have created dozens of jobs for formerly low-wage, primarily immigrant workers, in which they earn much higher pay than in their previous jobs, develop business skills and have greater control over their working conditions.

Worker cooperatives of all kinds are best framed as economic development tools that create quality jobs that will stay in New York City and cultivate local entrepreneurship. Worker cooperatives produce an array of economic benefits for low-income communities and effectively reduce economic disparity on a long-term basis. Worker cooperatives tend to provide higher wages, opportunities for skill development, job stability, and better benefits than other small businesses; are less vulnerable to economic shocks; and have less exploitative working conditions. There are examples of low-wage workers in New York City who have formed worker cooperatives and have seen their hourly wages increase from \$10 to \$25 per hour within just a few years.

CDP first became involved in this work when it helped the Restaurant Opportunities Center of New York establish COLORS, NYC's first worker-owned and operated restaurant which opened its doors in early 2006. The success of COLORS spurred further interest in cooperative business models, and to date CDP has helped grassroots organizations establish co-ops in a variety of industries, including the selling of surplus and used building materials, construction, housecleaning and day care. Notably, we have collaborated with the Center for Family Life in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, on an initiative funded by former City Council Speaker Christine Quinn to train several community organizations to become "co-op incubators". These incubators, located in neighborhoods from Bushwick, Brooklyn to Jackson Heights, Queens to Parkchester in the Bronx, help low-income workers in their communities establish coops as a means of increasing their income and developing entrepreneurial skills. CDP is also a founding member of the NYC Network of Worker Co-ops, which is at the forefront of the burgeoning cooperative movement in the city.

A few examples of our current work with worker-owned co-ops and their impact on NYC communities include:

*Sunrise Cooperative, Inc.* – CDP is helping a group of 60 immigrant-owned automotive shops in Willets Point, Queens, who are being displaced due to the development adjacent to Citi Field. The businesses are committed to staying together and have formed a cooperative organization, Sunrise Cooperative, Inc., to develop a business plan to move as a group to a new site in Queens. We have assisted them with entity formation/corporate structure, board development for their newly-formed board, financial management and budgeting training to help them manage their new organization. We are working with the Council, the Office of Queens Borough President, Queens Community Boards 7 and 2, and the New York City Economic Development Corporation to relocate the 60 businesses and create a viable auto repair cooperative in a new location. The final relocation will leverage agency resources, equity from Sunrise Cooperative members, as well as private capital.

*Si Se Puede! Women's Cooperative, We Can Do It! Inc.* – CDP has provided free legal services to the *Si Se Puede!* women's cleaning cooperative based in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, for nearly five years. Since the initial group of 11 or 12 fundadoras, or founding members, *Si Se Puede!* has grown to over fifty members grossing more than \$1 million annually, and continues to expand, providing high quality job opportunities for low-income, primarily Spanish-speaking immigrant women. The co-op is currently deciding whether to continue to expand and add new voting members, or to spawn a separate democratically-run cooperative. CDP is poised to provide ongoing legal guidance to the cooperative as they chart their course and continue to create key jobs that pay well and provide their workers with an opportunity to have work with dignity and self-respect.

These are just a few examples of successful co-ops that strengthen NYC communities and improve the lives and incomes of community members. In each case, critical legal services were necessary to assist members in worker co-op formation. CDP was there to provide those services. We need continued funding to do that. We look forward to discussing with the Committee how the Council and the Administration can further support worker cooperatives in NYC, including through the funding of civil legal services groups that support worker co-op formation.

Worker-owned cooperative businesses play an important role in the economic development of our city, as they create and preserve living-wage jobs in low-income NYC communities. These types of jobs and businesses are vital to the success of our city, and our commitment to ensuring that our city remains a place of opportunity for all. CDP is committed to continuing this work in NYC's low-income communities and we respectfully request the Council's support in the year to come.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to testify.

SUBMITTED TESTIMONY TO CITY COUNCIL  
COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (2/24/14)



## TESTIMONY

**Oversight Hearing:  
“Worker Cooperatives – Is This A Model That Can Lift Families  
Out of Poverty?”**

Presented to  
New York City Council, Committee on Community Development  
Hon. Maria Carmen del Arroyo, Chair

Monday, February 24, 2014

Prepared By:  
Evan Casper-Futterman  
Member, SolidarityNYC  
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SUBMITTED TESTIMONY TO CITY COUNCIL  
COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (2/24/14)

SolidarityNYC is an all-volunteer collective founded in 2009 whose mission is to connect, support, and promote solidarity economies in New York City. We use the term “solidarity economies” to mean economic activities and institutions that are guided by principles and values of cooperation, social justice, mutualism, ecological sustainability, and democracy. Although cooperatives are often packaged and discussed as being part of a “New Economy”, it is important to note that people who have been marginalized by capitalist economies have cooperated for generations to procure their individual and their community’s basic needs. New York City has a rich history of these values and practices: cooperative businesses, coop and mutual housing, credit unions, and even “Time Banks NYC” are all evidence of these values at work from past to present. Our task now should be to continue and grow this vibrant tradition.

We are pleased to support the recommendations outlined in FPWA’s report. Our testimony will make three points to support and elaborate upon their recommendations:

- Mapping solidarity economies
- Value chains for solidarity economies
- Education for cooperative enterprises and economic resilience

**Mapping**

Since 2009, SolidarityNYC has maintained a map<sup>1</sup> that, while in no way comprehensive, shows that New York City is already home to a diverse range of activities, practices, and organizations that makes visible the way that people are always cooperating to secure their basic needs. Worker cooperatives are a part of this map, but there is also much more: From community gardens, CSAs, and food co-ops, to credit unions, cooperative and mutual housing, community land trusts, time banks, barter networks, and worker cooperatives, these activities are often all around us in our communities but are invisible to the general public.

Governments such as Brazil’s (where the practice of Participatory Budgeting also originated) have endeavored to make the mapping of these cooperative and solidarity economies a public service. Explicit in this public sector commitment to mapping is the understanding that all of these activities stabilize local and regional economies and create community wealth to lift families out of poverty. Mapping is the first step to creating an awareness of the assets that exist, so that they can be further mobilized and supported via public policy. This is an area where city government can play a critical role, in partnership with non-profits, philanthropy, and educational/research institutions.

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<sup>1</sup> See our map at [www.solidaritynyc.org](http://www.solidaritynyc.org)



SUBMITTED TESTIMONY TO CITY COUNCIL  
COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (2/24/14)

Value Chains for Cooperative Economies

Since worker cooperatives are democratic and generate surpluses, they are key instruments in growing solidarity economies through the **strategic re-investment** of that surplus in cooperative development. As outlined in FPWA's report, the city can bolster the development of consumer, worker, and multi-stakeholder cooperatives by supporting revolving loan funds and small business technical assistance through NYCEDC. It can further support state and federal advocacy work for better policies and enabling legislation for cooperatives of all kinds, such as housing coops, credit unions, and food coops.

The strength of different kinds of cooperatives across sectors a virtuous cycle in which cooperatives create markets for goods and services for yet other cooperatives. This vibrant **value chain**—a supply chain based on cooperative values—can reduce poverty and stabilize communities and regional economies. By growing a cooperative economic ecosystem, individual firms and sectors can become less reliant on public subsidies (which taxpayers will appreciate!).

To this end, in February 2013, SolidarityNYC published a report called “Growing a Resilient City: Possibilities for Collaboration in NYC’s solidarity economy”<sup>2</sup> that involved interviewing over 30 practitioners and leaders from various sectors in the solidarity economy such as cooperatives, community gardens, credit unions, and smaller collectives engaged in barter or time banking, to understand the how greater cross-sector collaboration could benefit all. The results of this report showed a strong desire among diverse sectors to increase their collaboration across sectoral networks—but also revealed differential capacities to do so. **An explicit statement of support from the Mayor for cooperative economies of all kinds**, as outlined in FPWA's report and testimony, would be a “low-touch” mechanism for the city to catalyze the energy that already exists among these groups to work and grow stronger and more visible **together**.

Education

Our last point to you deals with an often overlooked but critical component to building successful cooperative economies, and that is education. You have no doubt heard from our colleagues about the successes of Mondragón, the large-scale multi-sectoral cooperative conglomerate in the Basque region of Spain. Often forgotten in the stories about Mondragón is the key role that community education has played through its history. **For 15 years before Mondragón launched its first cooperative business**, Father Arizmendi built a technical academy and led intensive community-based study circles for those in his community.

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<sup>2</sup> See our report at <http://solidaritynyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Growing-A-Resilient-City-SolidarityNYC-Report.pdf>

SUBMITTED TESTIMONY TO CITY COUNCIL  
COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (2/24/14)

This speaks to the critical need here in New York City to involve our outstanding institutions of higher education, as well as the expertise of local, national, and international cooperative leaders in building **an educational pipeline to support research and development, stability, and sustainability for strong cooperative enterprises in our city.** This should include partnerships between NYCEDC and business schools and educational and research centers such as CUNY's Center for Worker Education and Rutgers University's School of Management and Labor Relations. All of the world's most successful regional cooperative economies, including Montreal, Emilia-Romagna and Mondragón, include significant dedication to learning democratic decision-making processes, business and entrepreneurial skills, and economic development and policy analysis. Survival in the complex global capitalist economy demands nothing less, and New York City has high quality resources and assets to foster an educational ecosystem to support these activities.

From our perspective, worker cooperatives as a small but growing piece of a larger framework for moving towards grassroots economic development and a more just and nurturing city for everyone. SolidarityNYC is pleased to testify in favor of the policies outlined in the FPWA report on worker cooperatives in New York City. We thank you for holding this hearing and inviting testimony on cooperative economies.

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**Evan Casper-Futterman** is a 5th generation New Yorker born in the Bronx, raised in Manhattan, and currently living in Brooklyn. He earned a master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of New Orleans in 2011, and was a White House Intern in the Spring of 2012 in the Domestic Policy Council's Office of Urban Affairs. In the summer of 2012 he was a Research Fellow for the US Federation of Worker Cooperatives. He is currently a doctoral student at the Bloustein School of Urban Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University, studying economic democracy and development. He has been a member of SolidarityNYC since November 2012.

# Ginger Moon

*Healing Foods for the Childbearing Year*

GINGER MOON  
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## FOR THE RECORD

Ginger Moon is a mother-owned cooperative. As food doulas, we “mother the mother” by providing her revitalizing and healing foods during pregnancy, childbirth and nursing. After many discussions about how we could create a resource for busy mothers like like us, we realized that knowing what to eat and knowing the kinds of support we need during pregnancy, after giving birth and while nursing, is essential and was a gap in society. We believe that what we eat determines our physical and emotional wellbeing. We envision a world where every new mother will have the knowledge and support to nourish herself and her family.

We define success by how we are creating a shift in culture. By changing the dynamic of a family to one in which a pregnant, new or nursing mother is nutritionally, emotionally and spiritually taken care of by her community and her family, tells us that we are successful at what we do. Success is measured in the belief that healthy and supported mothers create healthy and supported children, families and communities, we see our work as strengthening the world, one mother at a time.

Ginger Moon has been entirely self and crowd funded to date, with a great percentage of this support coming from the cooperative community. This has allowed us - far more than a new non-cooperative small business - to begin with a foundation of support, in no small part due to our participation in the Greenworker Co-op Academy. This in turn has made it possible for us to expand our services to reach more women, and add a delivery service for current and new clients, so that our foods can reach a larger amount of women both in New York City, and nationally. Further support to cooperatives will directly support our mother owned worker cooperative, enabling its growth and sustainability so that more women can be impacted by our concept of mothering the mother through cooking workshops and trainings.

Ginger Moon has since its very beginning in 2012 been clear that we are a mother owned business that prioritizes motherhood, family and community. Mothers are the pillars of why and how we started, and they have remained pillars in our company. The three co-owners of Ginger Moon are mothers to 6 children, aged 10 months to 10 years, with 4 out of the the 6 children

# Ginger Moon

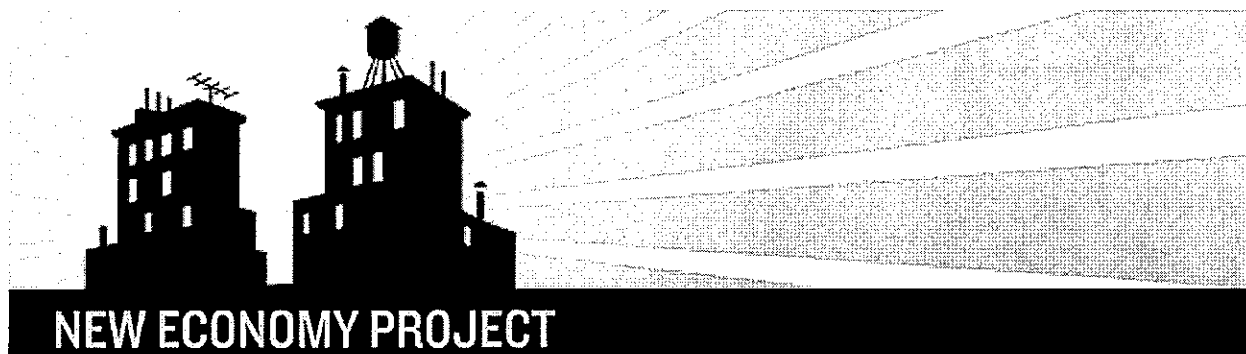
## *Healing Foods for the Childbearing Year*

under 3 years of age. We have made decisions to take on part time and occasional jobs to stay at home the most possible time with our children, but since Ginger Moon's inception we have been building our business alongside our children, while providing support to other women as well as taking care of our families and ourselves.

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*Janvieve*

I waited until after I was 35 to have my children, and when I decided to have my first baby, I knew that I had to shift things to lead a sane, balanced life. All of my working years, I worked for non-profits, and within the non-profit sector I really grew to become a human rights advocate and defender. I worked extremely long hours, both in an office and in the community and I still had my work/hobby related projects, like hosting a radio show and facilitating workshops in the community. I wanted and needed a break in order to really be able to focus on my pregnancy and later on my son. I committed myself to being a work at home mother for 2 years, and I started consulting with organizations. But there was still a gap, as a mother I was lonely and isolated since I was no longer part nor available for the long hours and heavy travel. That was when I sought out community and relationships with other pregnant and new mothers. I met my co-owners through sharing of food at our kitchen tables, and that in essence is how Ginger Moon was born. Ginger Moon's existence and my own ability to reinvent my life to fit my needs as a mother was only possible through a cooperative business model and the resources and support that accompany it. We are truly a co-op success story!



## TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

February 24, 2014

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Josh Zinner and I am the co-director of New Economy Project (formerly known as NEDAP). New Economy Project's mission is to build a just economy that works for all New Yorkers. We work with community groups both to fight for economic justice and to create alternative economic institutions – such as worker cooperatives, community land trusts, and community-owned financial institutions – that are based on principles of cooperation, economic democracy, racial justice, and ecological sustainability.

New Economy Project is launching the New Economy Fund, which will provide loans and investments to worker cooperatives by and for low-income New Yorkers, and we are dedicated to promoting worker coops as a model of economic democracy and worker control.

We appreciate the Committee's interest in worker coops as a tool for addressing poverty and creating quality jobs. We agree that worker coops can offer tremendous opportunity to low-income and other economically marginalized New Yorkers, and represent a demonstrated model of workplace democracy – though worker-ownership also requires tremendous dedication, focus, and hard work by cooperators.

I have just a few quick points to add to those my colleagues have already offered today:

- - New York City should prioritize worker coops in its economic development policies, not only to create jobs, but also to strengthen neighborhood economies. The City should provide financial and technical support to cultivate worker coops as a major economic sector, as well as fund organizations working to incubate and sustain worker coops at the neighborhood level. The City should prioritize worker coops as preferred contractors for city agencies. By integrating worker cooperatives into a deliberate economic development strategy, the City will also help low-income and New Yorkers have say over their work lives, and directly address the exploitation that low-wage workers routinely experience.
- New York City should create a special Office of Cooperative Economics to focus city resources, policies, and programs on alternative economic institutions that are democratically structured and community-controlled, which at their core address racial and wealth inequality. The Office of Cooperative Economics would link worker coops to financial cooperatives, low-income housing coops, community land trusts, and other cooperative economic models that are starting to crop up in the city, and that have tremendous potential to have measurable impact in reducing poverty and bolstering communities throughout New York City.

We are eager to work with the City to promote and grow worker cooperatives as a tool to address poverty and create opportunity for lower income and immigrant workers and communities.

TESTIMONY

Oversight Hearing:  
Worker Cooperatives – Is this A Model That Can Lift Families Out of Poverty?

Presented to:  
New York City Council, Community Development Committee  
Hon. Maria Del Carmen Arroyo, Chair

February 24, 2014

By: Melissa Risser, CUNY Law Community and Economic Development Clinic (CEDC)

Good morning. My name is Melissa Risser and I am a public interest attorney working with CUNY Law School's Community and Economic Development Clinic (CEDC). Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony on how worker cooperatives can lift families out of poverty.

CUNY School of Law trains law students to become social justice lawyers that provide legal representation in the service of human needs. The centerpiece of CUNY School of Law's curriculum is its clinical program, including the CEDC. Since its inception in 2008, the CEDC has served low-income and working class communities that are fighting for social and economic justice. The Clinic helps build the capacity of grassroots organizations to implement community development projects. These projects include creating neighborhood institutions that provide needed services and opportunities. To that end, the CEDC has provided legal services to form, sustain, and expand numerous NYC-based worker-owned cooperatives, where the businesses are owned and managed democratically by their workers. The CEDC also represents workers in a variety of labor and employment matters.

Additionally, in the spring of 2013 the CEDC partnered with Mondragon USA to develop the legal framework for a new union-cooperative model nationwide. Mondragon is the world's largest group of worker cooperatives, and employs over 83,000 people in its more than 250 worker cooperatives, subsidiaries, and affiliates. In 2013 Mondragon was the winner of the *Financial Times* "Boldness in Business" award. Previous awardees have included Fiat, Apple, and Amazon. The CEDC's partnership with Mondragon supports worker cooperative development as a means to overcome inequality of opportunity, mobility and income. The partnership aims to create a rising and expanding middle class through developing worker equity and equal share ownership. In so doing, the partnership intends to create competitive jobs with higher wages and better economic benefits, which support families and communities in local economies. The first worker cooperative to come of this partnership is a commercial laundry facility in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. That cooperative will employ over 100 low-income people, primarily people of color, who were laid off when another commercial laundry closed down. These workers will receive living wages, build equity through ownership, and help revive a distressed community where the laundry and many of its employees are located.

On a local, national, and global scale, the CEDC views worker cooperatives as a pathway out of poverty, where jobs and profits remain local and wealth-building occurs for both individuals and communities. Worker cooperatives create meaningful, long-term, safe, and stable jobs with increased job security and reduced workplace abuse. They produce an array of economic benefits to lower-income, socially and economically marginalized communities. In worker cooperatives, profit sharing limits income disparities within the business and provides skill and asset-building opportunities for workers of all income levels. Employees in typically low-wage work can earn more in a worker cooperative than in a traditional company, because of



equitable pay structures between worker-owners. Furthermore, workers-owners have more control over their work, democratically managing the business by adhering to the principle of “one worker, one vote,” and are thus more engaged than in traditional workplaces. As institutions where real democracy is practiced on a daily basis, worker cooperatives serve as a model for building a meaningful movement for workplace democracy and transformative economic justice and social change.

The economic opportunities worker cooperatives offer are essential today given the increasing levels of poverty, outsourced jobs, unemployment, and wealth inequality in the United States. Workers today face uniquely difficult times. They confront not only a bleak economic climate in the wake of the “Great Recession,” but also structural problems that predate the downturn. After accounting for inflation, workers’ wages have stagnated over the past 30-40 years. Meanwhile, worker productivity has grown dramatically, indicating that those who have jobs today work longer for less pay. CEO pay, on the other hand, has grown 127 times faster than worker pay over the last 30 years. Today, the richest 85 people in the world have as much wealth as the poorest 3.5 billion, or half the world’s population. In America, 400 individuals own more wealth than the bottom 150 million. America ranks 65<sup>th</sup> globally in social mobility.

New York City is no exception. The income of the lowest fifth of New York’s population was \$8,993, while the highest fifth made \$222,871, and the top 5 percent made \$436, 931, or about 49 times the amount of the lowest fifth. New York City’s unemployment rate is higher than the state and national average, at 8.9% as of October 2013, with 350,000 New York City residents counted as unemployed. In addition, New York City’s underemployment rate, which includes involuntary part-time workers, discouraged, and unemployed workers was 14.8% in

2013, with significantly higher rates for African Americans (at 22.9%) and Hispanics (at 17.9%). More than 1 in 5 New Yorkers live in poverty – many even though they are employed. Minimum and low-wage jobs have been the majority of jobs created in the economic recovery since 2008, and these jobs do not compensate workers enough to lift them out of poverty. With such decreased spending power, individuals, businesses, and New York City's economy are suffering. As Mayor de Blasio acknowledges, living in New York has become a tale of two cities, with an economy that benefits fewer and fewer people. For many lower-income workers, long-term employment with a secure retirement seems unattainable.

It is critical that the City support the creation of jobs that combat poverty and empower workers to build businesses rooted in local communities. Worker cooperatives are natural vehicles for helping employ low-income communities, improve community infrastructure, and increase basic access to services. The development of worker cooperatives in New York City should be included as part of a long-term strategy to address income inequality and promote sustainable development within the New York City economy. The development of worker cooperatives would advance Mayor de Blasio's campaign goals of using a broad range of policies to help raise wage and labor standards and bring jobs to neighborhoods in all five boroughs. Governments around the world have developed policies to support thriving cooperative economies including: Mondragon in Spain, Bologna in Italy, and Quebec in Canada. New York City should support the development of worker cooperatives by: 1) dedicating funding from the NYC Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) and the Department of Small Business Services (SBS) to support and grow worker cooperatives in the City; 2) providing capital and/or incubator funding to worker cooperative businesses; 3) making worker cooperatives a preferred contractor for city agencies; 4) providing funding to worker cooperative

developers; and 5) connecting workforce funding to worker cooperatives.

Worker cooperatives are an economic development tool that can create quality jobs that will stay in New York City and cultivate local entrepreneurship, and that can assist marginalized populations, such as women and immigrants, in not only gaining employment, but employment that is fair and with a living wage. New York City should support the development of cooperatives because they embody the principles of social and economic justice and community development, by creating institutions that provide life-sustaining jobs that alter traditional power and wealth dynamics, through empowering workers to exercise democratic control over their workplaces, make living wages, and shape their communities.

The CEDC applauds the Council's Committee on Community Development for recognizing the potential of worker cooperatives to lift families out of poverty and for understanding the importance of public input on this issue, by inviting our testimony at today's hearing. We are grateful for the opportunity to submit this testimony, and would be pleased to provide whatever additional information you may require.

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa Risser  
CUNY Law CEDC

New York City Council  
Committee on Community Development

Hearing on *“Worker Cooperatives – Is This A Model That Can  
Lift Families Out Of Poverty?”*

**TESTIMONY** of Richard D. Wolff, Democracy at Work, Inc.

February 24, 2014

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Let me begin by applauding this committee for organizing this hearing and bringing the issue of workers cooperatives forcefully before the public.

I offer an enthusiastic “yes” in answer to the question that structures this hearing. Mounting evidence clearly supports my “yes” answer. Worker cooperatives have proven their viability and are increasingly offering real solutions to working people facing problems of unemployment and poverty as well as others. Additionally, the most successful worker cooperatives in the world these days - the Mondragon Cooperative Corporation (MCC) in Spain - provides further evidence. Beginning in 1956 in impoverished northern Spain, its founder, a Roman Catholic priest, decided to no longer await an employer. Instead, he helped his community by starting a workers cooperative with 6 workers.

Today, almost 60 years later, MCC employs nearly 100,000 workers. It has lifted many of their families out of poverty and also provided jobs and careers for non-poor as well. The unemployment rate in the Basque region of Spain, where the MCC is concentrated, is less than half the national rate of unemployment.

Mondragon competed successfully with conventional capitalist enterprises. It solved problems of growth while preserving its cooperative principles. It overcame the initial skepticism of many. In the end, it proved that cooperative enterprises - creating secure jobs producing socially useful goods and services - can match or exceed enterprises driven by bottom-line profit motives.

Worker coops - where workers function collectively as their own employer and thus are employers as well as employees - help to overcome poverty and its associated social ills as follows:

- coops better engage the creativity, commitment, quality, and intensity of workers than traditional, for-profit enterprises; this gives coops competitive edges
- coops distribute net revenues among all workers in ways that directly reduce the economic inequalities that accompany poverty
- coops better engage their communities because they are more locally based and locally focused than most conventional enterprises
- coops' decisions about the technologies they use and their environmental impacts respect their surrounding communities much more than conventional enterprises' decisions
- coops rarely relocate production sites away from their communities, making coop jobs that much more secure

Many anti-poverty programs over the last century failed because of profit-driven decisions made by conventional enterprises. For example, decisions to automate production and relocate to lower-wage regions or countries worsened poverty. Likewise, conventionally organized corporations funded politicians in both parties who limited or opposed government anti-poverty initiatives.

Worker cooperatives attack poverty by fundamentally altering *who* makes all the key enterprise decisions (what, how and where to produce and what to do with the profits) and *toward what ends*. Instead of a tiny minority of enterprise participants (major shareholders and the boards of directors they select), decision-making authority passes to the totality of all workers operating democratically. Coops' decision makers have different goals and different methods of making enterprise decisions. Their basic ways of operating reduce poverty.

What worker coops need to be successful is greater public awareness of the possibilities, actual histories, and benefits of worker cooperatives. That will stimulate consumers and businesses to buy coops' outputs. That will likewise attract workers to seek jobs in coops rather than conventional, profit-driven enterprises.

Worker coops also need a level playing field with profit-driven enterprises. In American history, small businesses got government help (via the Small Business Administration) and sometimes minority-owned and women-owned enterprises did too. The same should be available to worker coops. They need subsidized credit, technical and marketing assistance, tax exemptions, and a share of government orders. With government assistance plus coops' own competitive edges, they can significantly help New York's efforts to reduce poverty and provide many other social benefits.

We ask this committee and the City Council to encourage and support the growth of a vibrant workers cooperative sector of our economy.

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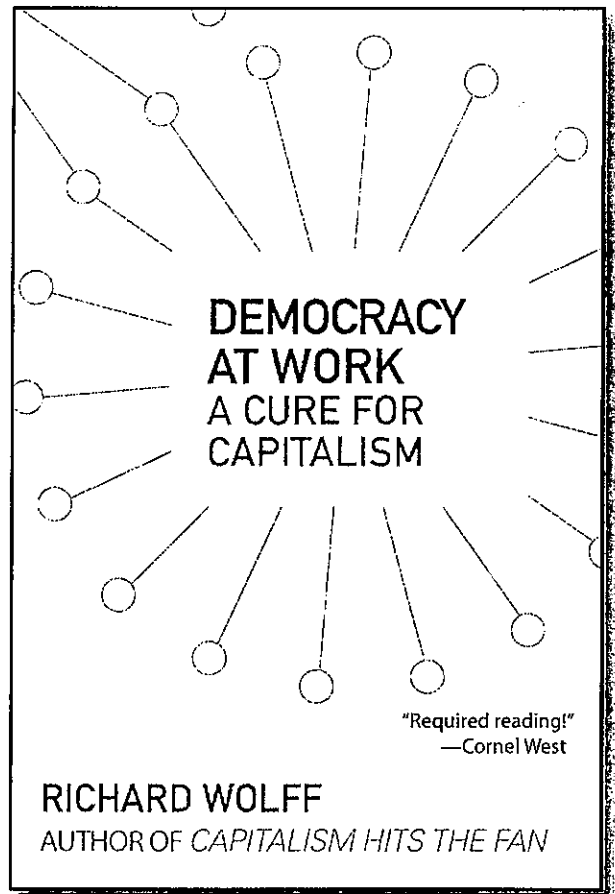
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**RICHARD WOLFF** is Professor of Economics Emeritus at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and the author of many books, including *Occupy the Economy: Challenging Capitalism* and *Capitalism Hits the Fan: the Global Economic Meltdown and What to Do About It*. He regularly publishes and archives his work related to workers' self-directed enterprises on the websites [www.rdwolff.com](http://www.rdwolff.com) and [www.democracyatwork.info](http://www.democracyatwork.info).

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# **TESTIMONY**

**Oversight Hearing:  
Worker Cooperatives – Is This a Model That Can Lift Families  
Out of Poverty?**

**Presented to:**

New York City Council, Committee on Community Development  
Hon. Maria del Carmen Arroyo, Chair

Monday, February 24, 2014

**N Y C   N O W C**

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Good morning, Chairperson Arroyo, and distinguished members of the New York City Council Committee on Community Development. My name is Christopher Michael. I am a founding director of the New York City Network of Worker Cooperatives, the local grassroots business association for worker cooperative businesses. My organization represents approximately 25 worker cooperative businesses in New York City, employing nearly 3000 workers, as well as a number of nonprofit support organizations, legal service providers, and academic centers.

I want to thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony on how city support for worker cooperative businesses can lift families out of poverty.

I would also like to thank you for New York City Council's ongoing struggles to achieve worker justice, distinguished most recently by its efforts to pass the NYC Earned Sick Time Act and the Living Wage Law, and not to mention the measures that I am sure are soon to be achieved given the Council's progressive stance and the Mayor's focus on economic inequality and the "tale of two cities" in New York City.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Today, you will hear from workers about the benefits of membership in New York City's worker cooperative businesses. These businesses range in industry, comprising a bookstore, restaurants, social service and health care providers, a law firm, web and graphic design services, and a childcare agency. Generally, these democratic jobs provide higher than average job security, higher than average industry wages, and superior working conditions—as well as the dignity of working in partnership and community with one's fellow workers, as opposed to subservience to investors. And these democratic jobs will not, by their very nature, be relocated abroad.

Rather, these worker cooperative businesses are bound to New York City, which is to say that corporate revenue and personal income is taxed locally and spent locally. Moreover, as a function of their democratic control by workers, who live in the neighborhoods they serve, these worker cooperative businesses typically value strong community relationships. Finally, as a function of support organizations like Community Service Society, Center for Family Life, and Green Worker Cooperatives, these democratic businesses are often planned as vehicles for employment for some of our city's most disadvantaged economic actors. As such, the vast majority of worker-members in New York City are women of color.

## **LACK OF CITY SUPPORT FOR WORKER COOPERATIVE BUSINESS**

And yet, for all of the concrete benefits achieved by these worker cooperative businesses, despite the employment and tax revenue and consumer spending they retain for the city, notwithstanding the strong correlation between community interests and worker cooperative business interests—and the often charitable nature of these businesses—and without regard for the tireless dedication of their support organizations, which are often understaffed or even volunteer-driven, the city currently has no programmatic agenda in support of these businesses.



At the same time, in fiscal year 2013, New York City procured more than \$16.5 billion worth of supplies, services, and construction, through more than 40,500 transactions. To my knowledge, none of these dollars flowed into a New York City worker cooperative business. At the same time, New York City manages a minority- and women-owned business program that aims to deliver greater economic equality and economic control to communities of color and women. I am certain that none of New York City's worker cooperative businesses—most of which are owned, through and through, by women of color—managed to certify as an M/WBE due to requirements that are impractical given the breadth of worker ownership within these firms. And at the same time, in tax year 2009 (the most recent year for which we have data), the city effectively spent over \$1B in business tax exemptions with the aim of fostering economic development. And yet, the current city support for worker cooperative business development has been insufficient to hire the critically necessary business planning and support staff required to bring meaningful, broad-based, and institutional change to our economy.

## CONCLUSION

Finally, I would be negligent if I failed to mention that, relative to international experiences, the industries represented by New York City's worker cooperative businesses are only the metaphorical "tip of the iceberg." In Spain, the 80,000-member Mondragon Cooperative Corporation embraces a university, architectural services, property consulting, electromechanical installation, consumer goods manufacturing, business planning, as well as public works design and construction. The firm helps to employ 16% of the workforce in the Basque province of Spain. In Italy, government support for worker cooperatives counts the city of Bologna, where approximately 80% of the city's social services are outsourced through worker cooperative businesses. Such outsourcing to worker cooperatives, in combination with a low-interest loan program and a special "cooperative tax," has helped to build a democratic worker cooperative economy in Italy that employs 5-6% of the entire nation's workforce. And these examples are not static—the democratic economic development within each of these countries is moving forward and expanding—even, as we know, in the face of devastating macroeconomic conditions. With forward planning, our city can match and exceed our contemporaries and colleagues in Italy and Spain.

To conclude, recently deceased Yale political scientist Robert Dahl once posed a challenge to the American people—he challenged us to consider whether we have the "firmness of purpose and the clarity of vision to assert the priority of democracy" over property and "undemocratic authority within corporate enterprises." The members of our network, the employees, community organizers, lawyers, business consultants, academics, and financiers who plan to testify today, I believe, possess this firmness of purpose and this clarity of vision. And we hope that you share it with us.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher Michael  
Founding Director, NYC Network of Worker Cooperatives

# **GREEN WORKER COOPERATIVES**

## **TESTIMONY**

Oversight Hearing:

**“Worker Cooperatives – Is This A Model That Can Lift Families Out of  
Poverty?”**

Presented to

**New York City Council, Committee on Community Development  
Hon. Maria Carmen del Arroyo, Chair**

**Monday, February 24, 2014**

**Prepared & Submitted By:**

**Omar Freilla**

**Founder & Coordinator**

**Green Worker Cooperatives**

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## Opening

Good Morning and thank you for this opportunity to address this committee on this historic occasion. As far as we are aware this is the first time in history that the New York City Council has held a public discussion on the value of worker cooperatives. And today's discussion speaks directly to the reason for existence of our organization, Green Worker Cooperatives.

## What is GWC

Green Worker Cooperatives is a non-profit incubator of worker-owned cooperative businesses. Our constituency are the working class communities and communities of color of NYC, particularly those of the Bronx, where we're based. Entrepreneurs come to us with business ideas. We help them turn those ideas into fully-functioning cooperative businesses, owned and controlled by the people who work them day in and day out.

We have pioneered an innovative cooperative entrepreneurship training program, the Coop Academy, that combines coursework and mentorship with support services such as web design, logo creation, and legal incorporation. It is a replicable and scalable, low-cost approach to organizing cooperatives that has already been copied in five US cities.

## Why Worker Cooperatives

We focus on worker cooperatives because we view this particular business structure as key to the development of an economy that respects democracy, and produces empowered people, family-sustaining work, and a healthy environment.

One part of the city that perhaps best represents the need and potential for worker cooperatives is the Bronx. Despite considerable effort over the decades, the Bronx remains the poorest urban county in the United States, and the South Bronx is still home to disproportionately high concentrations of polluting industries. Approximately 38% of Bronx residents work low-wage jobs, the highest such rate in the city, with little prospect for advancement. The Bronx has a vibrant history of entrepreneurship in both the formal and informal economy, as well as a vast pool of local large nonprofits and government agencies with vast purchasing powers that could support them. Despite these assets, the standard governmental approach to economic development in the Bronx consists of encouraging an influxes of higher-income residents and low-wage employers with little regard for environmental impacts or labor practices. We believe that instead of helping address income inequality and entrenched poverty these practices are actually exacerbating them.

The worker cooperative form of ownership, where a business is owned collectively by its employees is widely recognized for its many societal benefits. So much so that the United Nations went so far as to have designated 2012 the International Year of Cooperatives. Some of these widely recognized benefits of worker cooperatives are that they:

- share profits equitably;
- circulate more money within a community for longer periods of time;
- retain jobs better during recessions;
- provide greater employment stability;
- pay higher wages;
- invest in the growth and development of their members;
- avoid relocating operations out of their community;
- pool individual resources, making entrepreneurship more accessible for people with low incomes;
- empower workers to take control of their lives; and
- make democracy a regular practice

And if that were not enough, worker-ownership enables businesses to be held accountable for their actions by workers and, by extension, the communities they operate in, making labor protection and environmental justice reachable goals.

### Our successes

Through the Coop Academy we have developed four cooperatives ranging in size from three to fourteen members that are actively engaged in business. These include:

- HTINK, an educational services cooperative providing science & technology educational programming to schools and after school programs;
- Caracol Interpreters Cooperative, which provides language translation and interpretation services primarily to nonprofit organizations;
- B Blossom, a catering cooperative specializing in healthy & nutritious meals, and
- Ginger Moon, which provides personal chef and food delivery services for new and expecting mothers

Caracol Interpreters Cooperative, was recently awarded an Economic Justice Heroes Award for providing translation and interpretation services to social justice campaigns around the city. Caracol Interpreters Cooperative completed the Coop Academy 1½ years ago with three people, since then they have added two new members and have another seven waiting to join. They have already had a significant impact on the industry of language interpretation, raising the pay rate of interpreters throughout New York City as they raise the profile of language interpreters and introduce the concept of language

justice to new communities, all while also promoting environmental sustainability in their work.

In addition to these four, another three cooperatives (in the arts, financial services, and solar thermal industries) remain in development.

We are also currently working with Bronx Compass High School, located at the Stevenson Campus in the Soundview section of the Bronx, where we are running a version of our Coop Academy over the academic school year, to develop a an apparel design and screenprinting cooperative that the school has committed to contracting to produce the schools uniforms.

As a co-founder of the Bronx Cooperative Development Initiative, Green Worker Cooperatives has also worked to engage large nonprofit anchor institutions in the Bronx to commit to contracting with Bronx-based worker cooperatives. Some of the anchor institutions participating in this effort include Montefiore Medical Center, The Bronx Zoo, the Botanical Garden, and Fordham University (which also serves as host to our Coop Academy).

### Challenges to Cooperative Development & How the City of NY Can Help

Over the years we've noted three significant challenges to our efforts at supporting entrepreneurs in developing cooperatives:

#### **1. Insufficient public awareness of cooperatives as a legal business entity**

##### *The Problem*

While more and more entrepreneurs are interested in launching socially-responsible businesses or are eager to adopt democratic management styles in line with their values, few people are aware that worker cooperatives exist. As such, interest in starting worker cooperatives is less than what it could be if aspiring entrepreneurs were aware of the cooperative option.

##### *What the City Can Do*

- The City should publicly recognize and promote worker cooperatives as valuable tools in job creation, promoting living wages, reducing income inequality, and encouraging democratic workplaces. This can be done through public proclamations and worker cooperative-specific ad campaigns
- The Department of Small Business Services (SBS) should include worker cooperatives as options in all of their Small Business Solutions literature,

curriculum, and workshops, as well as direct entrepreneurs interested in cooperatives to existing worker cooperative development organizations

## **2. Insufficient organizational capacity to provide cooperatives with continuing technical assistance upon completion of the Coop Academy;**

### *The Problem*

Although graduates of the Coop Academy complete the program with a wealth of insight, legal incorporation, a logo, and website design in hand, they still have a long way to go in their development. Given our own limited funding and the overall lack of familiarity with cooperatives among entrepreneurial assistance programs, our graduates have had little support as they have had to face the many challenges that arise once a business begins operation. As a result they have not experienced the kind of growth experienced by their non-cooperative counterparts with access to mentors and skilled technical assistance (whether through their own social networks or start-up support programs).

### *What the City Can Do*

- Provide funding to worker cooperative developers
- Fund the development of a dedicated worker cooperative incubator with shared meeting/workspace/training facility in the Bronx. Green Worker Cooperatives and the pioneering nonprofit community development organization We Stay/Nos Quedamos have been in conversation to develop such a facility within one of Nos Quedamos' current buildings.

## **3. Lack of familiarity or outright bias against cooperatives by lenders and investors, resulting in reduced access to capital for cooperatives.**

### *The Problem*

Worker cooperatives are at a disadvantage when attempting to secure capital at any stage of development. Lenders typically require good credit histories and personal guarantees by the owners of a business for loans. This requirement becomes unwieldy for cooperatives and their multiple owners as the odds of not meeting lender requirements increase with every additional owner. Equity investors typically ignore worker cooperatives because their demands for partial control of the business are in direct conflict with the cooperative's adherence to worker control of the business. These obstacles mean that cooperatives have few opportunities to raise the capital needed to grow their business.

### *What the City Can Do*

- Provide tax incentives and capital funding to worker cooperative businesses.
- Make worker cooperatives a preferred contractor for city agencies. This would boost the financial viability of any cooperative and make them attractive to lenders and investors.



FEDERATION OF PROTESTANT WELFARE AGENCIES

## **TESTIMONY**

**Oversight Hearing:**

**“Worker Cooperatives – Is This A Model That Can Lift Families Out of Poverty?”**

Presented to

New York City Council, Committee on Community Development  
Hon. Maria Carmen del Arroyo, Chair

Monday, February 24, 2014

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## **Opening**

Good morning, Chairwoman Arroyo, and the distinguished members of the New York City Council Committee on Community Development. On behalf of Jennifer Jones Austin, Chief Executive Officer/Executive Director of the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies (FPWA), we want to thank you for this opportunity to testify on the issue of worker cooperatives as an economic combatant against poverty and unemployment for working families in New York City. FPWA also recognizes Chairwoman Arroyo's longstanding leadership, working with community residents, organizations and leaders, to address a variety of issues related to community development and much needed services for residents of the South Bronx.

## **Summary**

FPWA advocates on behalf of vulnerable New Yorkers to ensure that they have the economic means to support themselves and their families. Our network of human service organizations and churches operate over 1,200 programs throughout the New York City metro area. Together, we serve over 1.5 million low-income New Yorkers of all ages, ethnicities and denominations each year. With many of our member organizations serving low-income communities, FPWA strongly urges that worker cooperatives play a key role in the City's long-term community development strategy to lift families out of poverty and unemployment. FPWA has developed recommendations, which we will outline here, that the new Mayoral administration and City Council could implement to support existing worker cooperatives and encourage the advancement of more.

## **Worker Cooperatives for New York City**

Worker cooperatives are businesses owned and managed democratically by the employees. Worker cooperative businesses produce an array of economic benefits for low-income communities and effectively reduce economic disparity on a long-term basis. They tend to provide higher wages and better economic benefits than other small businesses. Furthermore, worker ownership provides workers with increased control over their work environment, reduced incidents of workplace abuse, and increased job security. Worker cooperatives are also less vulnerable to economic shocks.

Across the country, there are community groups, progressive think-tanks and elected officials seeking to integrate worker cooperatives into city-wide community development and workforce development policy. Cities like Madison, Wisconsin are integrating worker cooperatives into their business resources and planning department, while Reading, Pennsylvania is funding a worker cooperatives support center. In Richmond, California, the city is funding a cooperative development initiative that includes city support for cooperatives and funding a professional cooperative developer. Most ambitiously, the city of Jackson, Mississippi is embracing financial support for, and

sourcing from, worker cooperatives as a means for rooting city supported jobs, and city dollars in the community. They are engaging in policy efforts to establish a worker cooperative-friendly business environment as a means of creating economic security, jobs, and livable wages to help lift families out of poverty in their cities.

The city of New York too can be a leader nationally in this regard. New York City's economy is larger than Switzerland's, a size wherein the city has the potential to set new de facto standards. There is no other city in the U.S. where the development of significant worker cooperative policies would affect such a large amount of unemployed or underemployed residents. If achieved, new policies that support worker cooperatives in New York City would not only be the first of its kind, but also serve as a model for other cities in the United States.

### **Economic Benefits of Worker Cooperatives**

For the last dozen years, New York City has encountered persistent economic barriers that have trapped more than one out of five New Yorkers in poverty. Minimum wage and low-wage jobs do not provide enough economic boosts to lift these New Yorkers out of poverty. When the recession hit, most of the jobs that were lost were full-time and many of the jobs that are being created now are part-time and low-wage, which has added to income inequality in the city. Government economic development programs have made insufficient headway in reducing the numbers of low-wage workers. Although the unemployment level in New York City has dropped in recent months, it was still at an astoundingly high 8.1% as of January 2014, leaving still hundreds of thousands of residents without work.

Given this reality, New York City's efforts to reduce poverty, unemployment and inequality should not just be an opportunity for realignment, but for reinvestment. The development of worker cooperatives in New York City should be part of a new long-term strategy to address inequality. There are examples of low-wage workers in New York City who have formed worker cooperatives with the help of non-profits and have seen their hourly wages increase from \$10 to \$25 per hour within just a few years.

Within four years of starting their house cleaning business, *Sí Se Puede's* worker-owners, many of whom did not speak fluent English, tripled their wages to as much as \$25-an-hour. In 2011, the company with 37 worker-owners had grossed \$1.6 million, with more than 1,500 customers on its house-cleaning client list, had a group income of approximately \$600,000 a year, and monthly income for the total cooperative reached between \$50,000 and \$60,000 a month. To achieve these economic outcomes, "one of the key principles of *Si Se Puede!* is that worker-owners receive 100% pay for their work – there are no placement fees and no organizational middlemen".

Of course, the most significant example of the economic success of worker-cooperatives can be found in the Bronx with Cooperative Home Care Associates (CHCA), which, at 25-years old, is the first worker-owned home care cooperative in the U.S. and is currently the largest worker cooperative in the country, with over 2,000

members. CHCA is also an example of how worker cooperatives not only create level pay structures, but also help worker-owners build wealth and equity. The company pays “annual dividends sometimes 25% of initial equity investment.” Worker-members can often borrow off of their membership share, they receive a payout of their membership share at retirement or whenever they leave the firm, and their membership share will also often receive a low fixed-interest dividend.

### **Current State of New York City Worker Cooperatives**

New York City’s worker cooperative movement today has a host of 23 businesses in various sectors ranging from healthcare to tech consultation to home cleaning. Additionally, the city also has a central worker cooperative organization working to solidify the community – as well as a support system for worker cooperatives including incubators; technical and legal assistance services; and a limited amount of public and private funding in recent years. It is these services that make up the institutional support of worker cooperatives.

Yet, since government support for worker cooperatives is a relatively new issue in New York City, this effort has not received a substantial amount of attention as an economic development strategy. As a result, public and private funding, legal and technical assistance, incubators, and other resources for expanding the cooperative movement are limited in availability. This lack of public support and policy misalignment has created a barrier to the development of worker cooperatives.

### **City Administration Policy Recommendations**

While the benefits of worker cooperatives are clear, they are widely unknown and underutilized in the ongoing and ever present fight against poverty and unemployment. One decisive action the Mayor can take is issuing a proclamation, taking a loud and public stance on its support for worker cooperatives, and raising awareness of their benefits. A formal city proclamation designating one week a year dedicated to worker cooperatives with a corresponding series of city-organized events and conferences during that week would be an effective statement.

The another key to success for worker cooperatives lies in connecting cooperatives to public funding that already exists, and targeting the support of city agencies already in place. New York City has long been defined by an entrepreneurial spirit and already makes assisting small businesses part of public policy through the New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) and the New York City Department of Small Business Services (SBS). By providing advice, regulatory assistance, and funding tools specifically tailored to worker cooperatives, NYCEDC and SBS could play a larger role in growing the number of cooperatives in New York City.

FPWA proposes that the NYCEDC take on worker cooperatives as a “functional horizontal” sector itself across different industries, similar to its focus on entrepreneurship. NYCEDC could provide assistance and advice on the identification of

business creation opportunities for worker cooperatives, and the development of feasibility studies and business plans for worker cooperatives. To achieve this, NYCEDC should conduct a feasibility study on business markets to find which industries offer the best potential for the growth of worker cooperatives. NYCEDC could target worker cooperatives for those industries with its various entrepreneurial and capital loan programs. In addition, the NYCEDC currently provides grants and incentives to businesses so as to attract investment dollars. It can expand the criteria to include worker cooperatives. NYCEDC could also develop sub-contracting opportunities for worker cooperative businesses on the city's infrastructure development projects, such as construction projects.

In regard to SBS, FPWA proposes that it could include the worker cooperative model as a part of the curriculum that SBS uses for training individuals looking to start or grow their own businesses. SBS can also help connect cooperatives, which typically have trouble obtaining traditional bank loans, with alternative lenders such as credit unions or non-profit organizations that provide investment capital. Such lenders can be a fixture of the agency's portfolio. Specifically, these loans could be used for a variety of purposes, including: property and equipment acquisition, working capital, and business expansion. SBS should also promote procurement opportunities to prioritize existing and emerging worker-cooperatives. Furthermore, SBS should provide training and development opportunities to worker cooperatives that would allow them to bid for city contracts, such as how they might respond to Request for Proposals (RFPs) and submit proposals. Finally, in relation to SBS, it should provide grant funding for the technical assistance providers to incubate new worker cooperatives and to increase the survival rate of worker cooperative businesses.

### **City Workforce Development Programs**

Most importantly, as the new Mayoral administration revamps its workforce development plans and policies, FPWA urges the city to include worker cooperatives as a useful tool to achieve broader goals in the workforce system. Given the scale of workforce funding already being allocated to New York City, it would not be a far stretch to retool existing programs to make a large impact.

In light of the employment generation capacity of worker cooperatives, it becomes compelling to consider ways of utilizing worker cooperatives to meet the workforce development challenges facing New York City. FPWA suggests the following workforce development proposals:

- 1) Creating a city program to help unemployed people operating in the informal economy (businesses not paying taxes) to start formal worker cooperative businesses.
- 2) Having new city workforce development contracts include provisions that permit job placement for unemployed persons in a worker cooperative as an approved placement opportunity.

- 3) Having new city workforce development contracts provide funding for capacity building, industry skills training, and resource development for worker cooperatives which include persons that have been chronically unemployed. In regards to the various city agencies funding workforce development programs, these programs should partner with cooperative incubators to lend guidance and expertise to cooperatives, refer workers to cooperative incubators, or even become incubators themselves. Such a partnership can direct more workers and resources to the cooperative sector.

In order to better picture how these programs might look in the real world, it is helpful to provide a walk through on how typical participants might go from a workforce development program to being employed long-term at a worker cooperative.

In one example, five or so years ago, the Center for Family Life in Brooklyn was running a traditional employment center, helping people prepare resumes and go on job interviews. As the economy began to get worse, staff noticed that it was getting harder and harder for people with language barriers or undocumented status to find work. The staff developed a 10-week educational program for women that would attend an ESL class at the nonprofit and became interested in worker cooperatives. This program prepared workers for their new business, including training in customer service, marketing, cleaning skills/products, and the challenges of democratic business governance. The women later went on to form what is now Si Se Puede, a house cleaning worker cooperative.

In another model, Arizmendi Bakery in San Francisco, California, has placed workers into existing and new worker cooperative bakeries. They recruit unemployed and underemployed people during renovations about six months before the anticipated opening of a new bakery. The recruiting committee is made up of veteran members of existing bakeries. For the first months, the new workers are placed in internships at the existing bakeries. During this time, the workers learn to do marketing, establish relationships with vendors, and prepare other aspects of the startup. The training team is made up of bakers from the existing member businesses. These bakers will work part-time at their home bakery and part-time in the new development. The trainers oversee new members' work, working alongside of them for as long as six months.

These models are just two examples of many success stories showing how worker cooperatives transformed and empowered the lives of ordinary unemployed and underemployed people who had taken the initiative to create or become part of their own businesses. They provide examples of how workforce funding could be utilized as a catalyst to grow worker cooperatives.

### **City Council Recommendations**

While FPWA is hopeful that the new Mayoral administration can implement some of these worker cooperatives policy recommendations, particularly related to workforce development, the City Council can also play a critical role as well. Firstly,

representatives from New York City's 23 cooperatives could be invited to attend a Council ceremony to receive a proclamation announcing the City's support and recognition of cooperative businesses during Worker Cooperative Month in October. In order to create greater awareness about worker cooperatives, City Council members could also sponsor a legislative briefing here for others in the Council to discuss the economic research conducted by FPWA about the potential labor market impact of more worker cooperatives in New York City. Although some budget funding has been provided in the past by the City Council, FPWA believes that a new Council initiative for worker cooperatives could be targeted citywide to meet more specific high-need communities or populations, such as a Council Initiative for a Worker Cooperative Jobs Program in the districts with highest city unemployment rates. Finally, the Council could introduce legislation to reduce financial documentation required for worker cooperatives with large number of worker owners to qualify for city loan funds or introduce legislation to establish business or contracting set-asides that are exclusively directed at worker cooperatives and other social economy businesses.

### **Closing**

While worker cooperatives in and of themselves are not a panacea to economic distress, they are a substantial step in the right direction. In short, the development of worker cooperatives in New York City should be part of a long-term community development strategy to address inequality. In inviting our testimony at today's oversight hearing, FPWA applauds Chairwoman Arroyo and the members of the Community Development Committee for understanding the importance of public input on this discussion of worker cooperatives as a model to lift families out of poverty. We are grateful for the opportunity to submit this testimony, and would be pleased to provide whatever additional information you may require.

Elizabeth Mendoza  
City Council Hearing Testimony  
2/24/2014

My name is Elizabeth Mendoza and I am a member of the Beyond Care Cooperative. I arrived in New York 22 years ago with my husband. We came to work and have a better life, like so many, we had the illusion of the American Dream. The first obstacle I encountered was the English language. Also, shortly after arriving, I realized that I was pregnant. In part, I was happy, but on the other hand, I was worried, about not having money, we didn't have work, clothing, furniture... But, bit by bit, my husband began working and things came together. My first child was born, and within months, I began to work as well.

We worked in clothing factories earning the minimum they paid which was \$2.75/hour. I lived in Bushwick for the first year I was here and then we moved to Sunset Park where I established myself and where I continue to live today.

My husband started to work in a store where he earned a little more, but we also worked in factories where we were paid for each piece of clothing we sewed. 1 cent for a t-shirt, 3 cents for putting hooks on, 8 cents for a pleat, We worked with desperation to get \$40 or \$60 in a 10 hour day. We also worked cleaning or in restaurants for a similar pay. We were always working to try to give a better life to my children.

In 2008, I had the opportunity to begin working with the Cooperative Beyond Care. My life changed completely, personally, professionally and economically. The beginning of the cooperative was not easy. No one knew about our coop, we did volunteer work at organizations and universities and offered gave childcare in exchange for opportunities to market our group in the places we volunteered. I had basic English then, I have learned so much more. I have also learned to use computers. My salary is better. I work the amount of time I want to work, I can spend time with my children. I can give them the comfort of living in an apartment, before we all lived in one room. My first daughter will graduate from college in June. My youngest son is in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. The best benefit of all of this is giving my children the opportunity to have a better education.

The city should recognize cooperatives a valuable tools for creating fair jobs and promoting living wage jobs. Coops help reduce income inequality, promote democracy in workplaces. In the coop we recognize the work that nannies do. We do not just watch the children we work with, we teach them our language and other things about life, treat them with the care they deserve while their parents are working.

The coop began with 25 members. Today we have 40 members and we continue to grow, giving more and more opportunities to work to others in our community. I have gone from earning \$10 or less per hour before the cooperative to earning \$16 and hours.

The city should contract work with cooperatives whenever possible. We are trained and have experience. We care about our work. We have CPR certification, we have studied nutrition. We participate in workshops on child development.

The city could offer industry training to cooperatives and English courses. Cooperatives would benefit from workshops offered at more accessible prices that would help improve our work. Also, we would

love to work with the city to have opportunities and support to open cooperative daycares.

City support of cooperatives will help in the development of more living wage jobs allowing more NYC residents to work in respectful and dignified conditions. What's more is that cooperatives allow for the personal, professional and economic growth of those involved in them. Unlike other jobs, cooperatives promote the development and growth of all workers.



**Good morning, I am Edith Peña-Harper and Jamie Jones, we are founding members of the South Bronx Artists Cooperative, a local organization with the goal of exposing our community of artists through education and global access for the purpose of creating financial independence for our members.**

Our cooperative is in the beginning stages and we have been fortunate to be nurtured in this phase by the Green Workers Cooperative.

Our decision to start a cooperative was an organic occurrence, propelled by the kinetic energy of a group of neighbors of an artistic bent, but with no local outlet or means of communication. As we discussed our aspirations and challenges we realized that together we could establish a coop that would meet these needs. We have seen how other organizations have successfully followed this model to financial independence with the leadership of their own members. In addition we appreciate the possibility of improving our community by including new artists in the neighborhood as they manifest, which is unique to the model of a coop. We believe that a coop can provide the opportunity and route out of poverty for many families. Many coops such as ours are locally based which means that members can stay close to their homes and families improving the quality of life, the education of their children and care for their elders if needed. For all these reasons, the city should recognize worker cooperatives as a valuable tool in job creation and promoting living wages.

Because of this the city should lend financial support to the establishment and the development of worker owned cooperatives wherever and whatever way possible. It provides an opportunity, please give us that. **Lets Create, Teach and Inspire!**

These are the main reasons we would like to start our worker cooperative, but on a personal level I have a diverse perspective on this. I have dedicated myself to a career for over the last 17 years and have lived in California for over 16 years. I found myself moving back to The Bronx, a place where I grew up and learned my craft. I have fought over the last 8 years in this community to develop a way to showcase and get more artists involved, I participate in the SYEP program so I can teach the younger community to focus on something positive. Im representing the needs of the community, we need to acknowledge their talent, redevelop this identity that we have been given to be the poorest neighborhood. We are more than that. It has been and continues to be proven that this model works, people invest more, they are happier and they willingly give back.

So it's a back-to-basics philosophy; when people have a stake, they feel more empowered, which makes them healthier and motivated to work harder. I hope you consider supporting cooperative businesses and what they contribute to society.

**Thank you,**

**Edith Peña-Harper & Jamie Jones  
The South Bronx Artist Cooperative**

Margarita Ruiz  
Member of Beyond Care Cooperative  
Public Hearing Testimony  
February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2014

Good morning, my name is Margarita Ruiz and I am a member of the Beyond Care Cooperative.

I came to this country at a very young age with the American dream to help my parents. At that time I was getting paid \$3.25 an hour. After several years I changed my job and started working as a house keeper. I worked for long hours receiving only minimum pay without having sick days and holidays paid for. But thanks to the Center for Family Life for opening coops my life has changed in many positive ways. The Center and the cooperative have given me the opportunity to grow as a person and gain valuable skills that help me at my job as a babysitter. I am able to spend more time with my family and have a reasonable salary. My rights as a worker are respected and the working conditions of my environment are much better.

I think I speak for all the coop members in Beyond care when I say that this coop has changed the lives of the 33 members, 18 founding members including myself and the other 15 members of later generations. Our working conditions are much better than before.

This is why it is important that we get the support of all the city officials here today. We need more coops like Beyond care to provide more opportunities for workers, to have their rights respected and to get a salary that is fair and just.

## WORKERS JUSTICE PROJECT | PROYECTO DE JUSTICIA LABORAL

*Member of the National Day Laborer Organizing Network and National Domestic Workers Alliance*

My name is Rosa Palaquibay. I am member of the **Workers Justice Project (WJP)** and Apple Eco -Cleaning, LLC.

Apple Eco -Cleaning, LLC is a green cleaning and worker-owned cooperative founded in 2010 with the support of **Workers Justice Project (WJP)** and Urban Justice Center. We were founded by a group of female day laborers who against odds have found a way to organize themselves in the quest for a better job, better treatment and eventually a better quality of life for our families.

As a worker-owner of Apple Eco-Cleaning, I am able to provide to my family. The cooperative provides me job stability, which was impossible to have when looking for work in the street corner. Now I can support my daughter's dream to become a mechanical engineer with a salary of \$25 per hour, which was hard to do it before with salary of \$10 per hour. My work allows me to think and protect my health using green cleaning products and Personal Protective Equipment. I work in a healthier environment without the pressure of the employers.

My work at the cooperative allows me think about my family and my health as well. Now I can take time off to attend to my medical appointments without fear of losing my job. It also offers me a flexible schedule that allows me to spend quality time with my kids.

These positive changes would have not been possible without the cooperative and the support of the Workers Justice Project (WJP) that allows us to organize to protect our rights and dignity at work while building a just economy based on dignity and care.

For this reason, it is important for the City support the development of this models within our communities by providing funding for cooperative developers like Workers Justice Project and make our cooperative as a preferred contractor for the city.

Now it is the time to work together to build a new economy that provides dignity and justice for all workers.

## TESTIMONY FOR MAKE THE ROAD NEW YORK

Monday, February 24, 2014

New York City Council Community Development Committee - Chair Carmen Arroyo

Hi, my name is Saduf Syal and I am here on behalf of Make the Road New York. I want to thank Chair Carmen Arroyo and the members of the City Council Community Development Committee for the opportunity to testify on behalf of immigrant workers and the effectiveness of the worker cooperative model in providing solutions to the economic barriers that our communities face.

Make the Road was established in 1997 to promote civil rights and economic opportunity as well as the rights of all workers to a living wage, dignity, and freedom to organize on the job. Today we have nearly 14,000 dues paying members. Our organizing work gives voice to thousands of low-income New Yorkers, builds community, and wins major public policy victories. Our work over the last 15 years has been driven by the engagement and the experience of our working class, predominantly immigrant members who make critical decisions regarding our programs and campaigns and are elected to our board of directors. As an organization at the forefront of campaigns for paid sick days, living wages, and against wage theft, we are interested in cooperative development because we know all too well the harsh realities of the workplace environments that can be found within the low wage sectors typically open to immigrant workers. Assisting in the formation of worker cooperatives allows us to build power, leadership and community-driven economic and workforce development as well as to create the kind of democratic and just workplaces we want to see.

Daily, we see first-hand the impact of the economic crisis on our communities. These groups can face prolonged unemployment, severe underemployment or lack of upward economic mobility due to barriers of language, enormous financial restraints, employer discrimination and/or a lack of access to workforce training or academic programs. At the same time, many individuals possess a wealth of knowledge and skills from their countries of origin, including prior business ownership or cooperative involvement, yet are unable to transfer degrees or utilize the full breath of those skills within their current jobs. On the employer side, unfortunately there continues to be a lack of accountability around compliance with labor law at workplaces throughout the City, especially in immigrant communities. The problems of exploitation and mistreatment are pervasive in every low wage industry, including domestic work, restaurant, manufacturing, garment, commercial laundry, retail, non-union construction, security and non-union building maintenance. It is common for workers to not get paid for work, not get minimum wage, and/or not receive overtime pay. Wage theft is rampant and the techniques are harmful from stolen tips to illegal lack of breaks. Low wage immigrant workers also commonly face sexual harassment and workplace violence.

Due to the unique barriers to employment and economic advancement facing the communities which MRNY serves, it is clear that alternative solutions that will further expand economic opportunities for immigrant workers are needed. The worker-owned business based on cooperative principals is a model that we believe addresses the many unique challenges facing

our communities. Worker cooperative elements that are particularly synergistic with the needs of our community include: the ability of workers to come together, pool resources and knowledge; the ability to engage in effective centralized strategies for marketing, communication, training and other needs that can improve financial success, and the ability to avoid abusive workplace environments through collective decision-making and shared values for local community development.

So, when Center for Family Life announced its Request for Proposals for a new cooperative development technical assistance program funded by the City Council, Make the Road eagerly applied. Since then, we have been working with a group of members to form a new worker cooperative in the cleaning industry, an industry in which many of our members have worked yet have had difficulty finding dignified and sustainable jobs or entering into unions. Through the support of CFL, the Urban Justice Center and advice from other cooperatives and cooperative developers, we launched our own training program and guided the group through training, as well as the decision-making and incorporation process. That technical support was critical for us in launching our own cooperative development program and, moving forward, we are now well equipped to continue to assist in the development of more cooperatives in the future.

Throughout the past year, it has also been astonishing to see how other cooperatives have helped us as well. Members of Si Se Puede, another cleaning cooperative, provided training and guidance to our members on safe and effective cleaning methods, Caracol, the interpreting coop providing much needed interpretation services for our trainings, ABC Bookkeeping Coop will be providing the cooperative with bookkeeping and financial training, Palante Technology, a coop with the same name as the one assisted by us, upon discovering that another group and incidentally chosen the same name said they were honored to share the name with our group whom they've never met, and the list goes on. With limited funding for our coop development program, this support and encouragement from other cooperatives has been inspiring and critical to our success.

Supporting these worker cooperatives and their development is good economic development and workforce development policy. As staff of Make the Road's Workforce Development Program, I can say that the creation of a worker cooperative has allowed us to assist people that the system leaves behind. We wholeheartedly support the policy recommendations put forth to encourage the city to assist worker cooperatives and coop developers. Thank you for taking your time to listen to me and others today on this important topic.

# **TESTIMONY**

**Oversight Hearing:**

**“Worker Cooperatives – Is This A Model That Can Lift  
Families Out of Poverty?”**

Presented to:

New York City Council, Committee on Community Development

Hon. Maria Carmen del Arroyo, Chair



Monday, February 24, 2014

**The Working World**

Brendan Martin, Executive Director  
Karen Haskins, Director of Finance  
228 South Park Avenue, Ste. #27395  
New York, NY 10003  
[www.theworkingworld.org](http://www.theworkingworld.org)

## **OPENING**

First of all, we would like to thank Chairwoman Arroyo, and the New York City Council Committee on Community Development for this opportunity to testify on how worker cooperatives can build real economic opportunity for working families in New York City.

My name is Karen Haskins, and I work for the Working World, which is a non-profit organization providing technical assistance and loans to worker cooperatives. We made our first loans in Argentina ten years ago, and then started an office in Nicaragua. Now, we also work in the United States in Chicago, Baltimore, and New York City. Locally, we are working in Queens, Brooklyn, and the Bronx, where we have created a loan fund in partnership with Green Worker Cooperatives. In cities around the world, we have worked with government, and we have seen how the policy of city government is crucial for a thriving cooperative economy.

## **SUMMARY**

As mentioned previously, at The Working World we manage a loan fund for worker cooperatives, so I can tell you about some of the major challenges we've seen these businesses face in accessing financing and also the ways that government can help.

At The Working World, we understand that it takes money to make money. Most business loans require personal guarantees which means that people have to put their personal assets on the line to start a cooperative. If our goal is to be inclusive, to create work for those who need it most, then that barrier has to be overcome. This is what The Working World fights to do by making financing accessible. The City of New York could do the same by putting money into loan funds as it has done for the tech sector or by offering loan guarantees as it has done for small business development. The City of New York could help foster a thriving local business community through initiatives similar to these.

In addition to guarantees, another challenge to new cooperatives is access to technical assistance. This includes assistance such as classes like that provided by the Green Worker Academy, incubation like that provided by the Center for Family Life, and legal assistance like that provided by the Urban Justice Center. We have seen how cities that provide funding and support for Cooperative Development can have a dramatic effect on the creation of new cooperatives, and this is something New York can do as well.

## **CONCLUSION**

With small changes, our policy can be a force for inclusive economics, and provide new economic opportunity to those who need it most. Now, more than ever, New York City has a chance to grow our cooperative economy and build a more sustainable and equitable community.



**Cidadão Global** FOR THE RECORD  
BRAZILIAN COMMUNITY CENTER

43-12 34<sup>TH</sup> Avenue, Long island City, NY 11101 – (718) 619-8529

## Testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Community Development:

### “Worker Cooperatives – Is This A Model That Can Lift Families Out Of Poverty?”

Monday, February 24, 2014

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Good morning and thank you, Chairperson Arroyo and members of the Committee on Community Development. My name is Stephanie Mulcock and I am Executive Director of Cidadão Global, a nonprofit advocating on behalf of Brazilian immigrants in New York City. Cidadão Global appreciates the opportunity to present testimony to the City Council today in support of worker cooperatives.

First, we would like to thank the Committee for providing a forum to have this important discussion. This is an essential step towards finding innovative ways to eliminate poverty in New York City.

Cidadão Global (CG) is dedicated to advocating for the human rights of Brazilian immigrants while strengthening citizen participation and political visibility through fostering leadership development, community organizing, civic engagement, and culture preservation, while providing essential services. CG’s social justice vision is to raise the political visibility of Brazilian immigrants to ensure that the community has the tools and resources to collectively advocate for their human rights through systemic change. CG’s programmatic purposes emanate from that vision and focus on increasing knowledge of rights, increasing economic opportunity, providing a platform to build leaders from within the community, and empowering the most underrepresented members of the Brazilian immigrant community – domestic workers, youth, and LGBTQ members.



## **THE EXPLOITATION OF IMMIGRANT WOMEN**

CG works with Brazilian immigrant women engaged in a variety of domestic work, including babysitting, care for the ill or the aging, cleaning and housekeeping. We estimate that at least 70% of Brazilian immigrant women living in New York City are domestic workers. Once Brazilian women immigrate to the United States, they often find themselves without the language skills, the training, or the immigration status required to find employment in a more “mainstream” category. As a result, they accept employment in another family’s home and engage in domestic work.

They often suffer an array of abuses such as, unpaid wages, discrimination, harassment, sexual crimes, psychological abuse, physical abuse, and even witness domestic violence within the family they work for. Their employers often abruptly end the employment relationship, sometimes in retaliation for speaking out against an injustice, and always without warning or notice. The worker is left unemployed, often ineligible for state-paid unemployment, without prospects of future jobs, and with an uncertain financial future. Lack of stability is a key challenge for informal workers in any economy, but specifically with domestic workers. Many of the women have no idea how long a job might last - job security is minimal. Most of these women are one paycheck away from homelessness.

In our regular know-your-rights presentations and employment law clinics, we often emphasize a domestic worker’s ability to contract for any desired outcome, such as a contractual clause explicitly prohibiting the employer from firing them without just cause, or without a certain number of well-recorded warnings. The most voiced concern by the women is the idea that, once they ask the employer to add such fair clauses to the contract, the employer will then move on to hire another domestic worker – one who does not appear to be as knowledgeable of her rights. This concern by the women is a real and valid issue, reflecting a basic lack of bargaining power by the worker. Thus, the employer-employee relationship starts off in an unequal footing and does not lend itself to healthy negotiation. The worker remains the abused or fearful party and all future negotiations will be made through those lens.

## **RESTORING WORKPLACE DIGNITY**

CG is currently working on ways to incubate a worker cooperative among the domestic workers of the Brazilian immigrant community. The development of a domestic worker cooperative acts to ameliorate a number of negative aspects of the traditional domestic worker experience. A cooperative can have a standard contract that affords fair protections to the domestic worker, including the right not to be fired without notice, the right to be paid weekly, and to have access to her employment records. A cooperative can ensure a livable wage and opportunities for growth. Ultimately, a cooperative can increase the bargaining power of domestic

workers so that they feel a sense of dignity in their work and control over their environment.

We fully support the following policy recommendations to the Mayor and City Council:

1 - The City should recognize worker cooperatives as valuable tools in job creation, promoting living wages, reducing income inequality, and encouraging democratic workplace.

2 - The New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC), the Department of Small Business Services (SBS) and City workforce funding should be utilized to support and grow worker cooperatives within the City.

3 - Make worker cooperatives a preferred contractor for city agencies.

4 - Provide funding to worker cooperative developers.

5 - Provide capital funding to worker cooperative business.

We encourage the Mayor and City Council to invest in worker-owned cooperatives as a way to lift people, especially immigrant women, out of poverty. We believe that, if cooperatives can be supported by our elected officials and by our government agencies, we will empower our communities to excel.

**FOR THE RECORD**

**New York City Council**

**Committee on Community Development**

**Chair Person Maria de Carmen Arroyo,**

**Oversight Hearing:**

**“Worker Cooperatives: Is this a model that can lift families out of poverty?”**

**Monday, February 24, 2014**

**Testimony of the New York State Nurses Association**

My name is Leon Bell, and I am the Director for Political Affairs and Public policy at the New York State Nurses Association. I want to thank the Committee for holding this hearing on Worker Cooperatives.

NYSNA represents 37,000 frontline nurses throughout New York and more than 20,000 nurses in the New York City area.

My testimony will focus on the creation of hospital cooperatives as a solution to the ongoing crisis in healthcare in New York.

The ongoing healthcare crisis in Brooklyn and throughout the City has been the result of a long history of failed healthcare policy that has failed to meet the needs of communities served by safety-net healthcare providers.

These vital service providers are urged or forced to mimic the practices of insurance companies, equipment and technology manufacturers, pharmaceutical companies and other for-profit entities.

In this failed model, patients and local communities are viewed as sources of revenue rather than people in need of essential services.

The failure of policy is visible for all to see in the case of Interfaith Medical Center, a 287 bed hospital that is located in and provides healthcare services to some of the most underserved communities in Brooklyn.

Since late 2012 Interfaith has been in bankruptcy proceedings that were brought on by ongoing operating deficits and crushing debt burdens.

The State Department of Health has pressed for the closure of the hospital, which remains open largely due to the united efforts of the Coalition to Save Interfaith (a movement of local community groups and residents, healthcare workers and local elected officials) that has waged a tenacious fight to save the hospital.

The closure of Interfaith will have a devastating impact on healthcare and will also rip a hole in the economic fabric of the community through the loss of local jobs and more than \$500 million in local economic activity.

Against this backdrop, we believe that the time has come to create a new, alternative vision of what a hospital should be and how it should work to provide healthcare in the community.

We propose to create an **Interfaith Medical Center Cooperative** that will be a model for restructuring our hospital and healthcare delivery system in Brooklyn, based on the following principles:

1. The primary purpose of the organization will be to identify and address the healthcare needs of the community in its service area;
2. The organization shall be controlled by and directed in its activities by a board of directors or other directing body that is constituted by members of the local community, patients and employees;
3. Decision making powers at all levels of the organization shall be made in a democratic manner that shall include equally the community, patients and the employees;
4. All managers or other supervisory employees shall be accountable to and under the direction of the community members, patients and employees who constitute the membership of the hospital cooperative;
5. The cooperative shall establish internal structures to ensure that the decision making process regarding the manner and method of delivery of care, the method and manner of internal work organization, and the allocation of resources and funding within each department/service and local unit/site of the hospital cooperative is determined democratically by the local community, patients and the employees who constitute the membership of the cooperative.

The creation of a hospital cooperative at Interfaith and other community hospitals can be partially funded through the use of recently secured 1115 Waiver funds, totaling \$8 billion over five years.

The purpose of this funding is specifically to allow the transformation of existing hospitals in a collaborative manner that will foster innovative alternatives to current hospital structures.

A cooperative hospital would provide higher quality care in tune with the needs of the community. It would be focused exclusively on meeting community needs, and the inclusion of workers, patients and the local community in the actual management and control of the hospital would create a healthcare system more closely attuned to local needs.

We also believe that a hospital run on a cooperative basis will be able to provide care more efficiently and at higher quality because it will remove unnecessary and wasteful expenditures in the form of overhead and management costs. More resources will be available for direct patient care.

We also think that the direct involvement of workers and patients in the operation and control of the hospital will lead to more streamlined and cost effective patient care operations that are more responsive to patient needs.

There is no doubt in our minds that the current system of healthcare has failed our communities and that it is time to try new approaches.

The new mayoral administration shares our vision of eliminating income inequalities and healthcare disparities. The approval of the federal funding to transform healthcare offers an opportunity for us to make a break with the past and implement a new vision that will benefit our communities, provide better working environments and improve community health and economic vitality.

Thank you

**FOR THE RECORD**

2/24/14

Good morning. My name is Ana del Rocío Valderrama. I co-founded the Caracol Interpreters Cooperative in 2011 when I was on food stamps and expecting my first child.

With the support of the Coop Academy run by Green Worker Cooperatives, our team of worker-owners has been very successful in providing translation and interpretation services to organizations with multilingual bases.

In the three years since our launch, we achieved a 150% increase in the hourly fee paid to our interpreters. We have grown our team of interpreters by 25%, as we work diligently to meet the high demand for our services.

I am no longer on food stamps or any type of government assistance. I can't overstate the importance of my experience as a worker-owner in contributing to my financial independence, as well as my overall quality of life.

Following this success, I urge you to consider the ways in which you can incorporate the worker-owned business model into city agencies.

To illustrate this need:

7 days ago an article was published in the New York Post with the headline, "NYPD failed to translate mom's warning ahead of triple slay." As I read the piece, I learned that a 21-year old mother Deisy and her two little girls, Daniela and Yoselin, ages 2 and 1, were murdered by their father despite the fact that Deisy had explicitly warned the NYPD of her husband's homicidal threats. Deisy's words were in Spanish and they were not translated, against policy. I can't help but ask myself, as a professional translator and interpreter, whether my work, had it been called upon by the appropriate officials at the appropriate time, could have contributed to getting Deisy, Daniela, and Yoselin to a place of safety.

As a worker-owned cooperative, our work is imbued with a passion for social justice that is not found consistently in traditional businesses. We would have translated Deisy's words with care and with urgency, along with the cultural sensitivity that comes with our years of experience serving monolingual communities. Had there been interpretation at this hearing today, we would have ensured that every voice received equal audience and opportunity for participation, not only because that's our job, but also because our greater mission as a democratic organization requires us to do so.

It is a noble mission to lift families out of poverty, and to improve lives; however, the power of worker-owned businesses extends far beyond our ability to lift families out of poverty. We can also save lives, quite literally, as brought to light by the tragic case of Deisy, Daniela and Yoselin. I hope that the City Council invests in the growth of worker-owned cooperatives by providing capital funding and making them a preferred contractor for city agencies.

Thank you.



February 24, 2014

Re: Worker cooperatives as a model that can lift families out of poverty

Dear New York City Council Members,

I would like to thank you deeply for taking the time to discuss this issue. In my role as Director of Educational Programs for the North American Students of Cooperation, I work very closely with thousands of youth and student members of housing cooperatives and cooperative businesses across the United States and Canada. My work privileges me by allowing me to observe, on a daily basis, the myriad benefits that the cooperative model affords the youth I serve — cooperatives, in all forms, empower their members through true democratic control and afford their members a powerful amount of agency (which many of them do not experience in any other areas of their lives).

The worker cooperative model is one that I believe in very deeply, as it can truly revolutionize and improve the lives of those who practice it. Through democratic operations, member financial control, and equitable wealth distribution, worker cooperatives are capable of providing the support to individuals, families, and communities that is needed in our city and in this economy. As many other regions, states, and countries have done before us, now is the time for New York City to embrace the worker cooperative as a powerful tool to ameliorate poverty.

In solidarity with New York City-based worker cooperatives, I ask that:

- the city recognize worker cooperatives as valuable tools in job creation, promoting living wages, reducing income inequality, and encouraging democratic workplace.
- NYC Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC), the Department of Small Business Services (SBS) and City workforce funding should be utilized to support and grow worker cooperatives within the city.
- the city make worker cooperatives a preferred contractor for city agencies.
- the city provide funding to worker cooperative developers.
- the city provide capital funding to worker cooperative business.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Morgan Crawford", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Morgan Crawford  
Director of Educational Programs  
North American Students of Cooperation



**Testimony from the Street Vendor Project before the  
City Council Committee on Community Development  
February 24, 2014**

Hello, my name is Sean Basinski, and I am the director of the Street Vendor Project of the Urban Justice Center. We have more than 1,800 members who sell food and merchandise on the streets and sidewalks of our city. We appreciate the opportunity to testify today about worker cooperatives.

We believe that worker cooperatives are a natural fit for street vendors, and we pleased that City Council is interested in exploring greater use of this innovative model. Vendors are small business owners themselves, and savings can be had by grouping together in a cooperative fashion and cutting out the middle-man (and middle-woman). For example, we have hundreds of members who sell basic black umbrellas every time it rains. These umbrellas are imported from China by wholesalers and distributed to our members through various retail locations around town. The Street Vendor Project is interested in forming a cooperative whereby our members would be able to import these commonly-sold items directly themselves. We believe this would create substantial savings for our members.

Another place where the cooperative model can work is with shared ownership of vending garages. The Department of Health requires that, every night, vending pushcarts be stored at a DOH-approved garage, where they can be cleaned and where the food can be safely stored. Traditionally, these garages have been owned by bosses who charge exorbitant rents and often require the vendors there to purchase the food items from them, at significant mark-ups. In recent years, many garages have closed due to rising property values (especially due to gentrification on the West side of Manhattan), while others have raised the monthly rents they charge to vendors. This issue is a serious threat to all 10,000 or so workers who sell food on the streets of our city.

The Street Vendor Project is interested in opening a cooperatively-run garage, where vendors themselves would be the owners. This would reduce costs and allow vendors to source food from different suppliers, which would lead to greater diversity in the food that is sold on our streets.

We believe that, over time, cooperatively run vendor garages could be replicated throughout the city. However, as with any new venture, this idea will require start-up capital that our non-profit organization does not currently have. We are hopeful that the City Council and other institutional stakeholders will work with the Street Vendor Project and other groups of workers to provide resources to make worker cooperatives a more prominent force in our city.

Thank you again for the chance to testify today.



**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: JOSEPH HOLTZ

Address: 678 CARROLL ST 11215

I represent: PARK SLOPE FOOD COOP INC

Address: 732 UNION ST. BROOKLYN 11215

**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: Joe Rinehart

Address: 403 Park Pl Brooklyn 11238

I represent: US Federation of Worker Cooperatives

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**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: Claudia Leon

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Make the Road, Paints Cleaning Coop

Address: 92-10 Roosevelt Ave. Queens, NY 11372

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

**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: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: Saduf Syal (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 37-75 63<sup>rd</sup> Street

I represent: Make the Road New York

Address: 92-10 Roosevelt Ave Queens, NY 11372

**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: 2/24

Name: Carmen Huertas (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: CED Clinic CUNY School of Law

Address: 2 Court Square LIC 1101

**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: 2/24/14

Name: MELISSA KISSEN (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 2 COURT SQUARE LONG ISLAND CITY, NY

I represent: CUNY LAW CEDC

Address: SEE ABOVE

**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: 2/24/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Shane Smith

Address: 24 Rock St

I represent: Democracy at Work

Address: 65 W 15 St

**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: CHRISTOPHER VELASCO

Address: 55-10 Roosevelt, Woodside, NY

I represent: Ganja / Eagle Slope / Farm Bx

Address: 585 Westchester Ave

**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: 2/24/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Diana Freilla

Address: 409 Morris Park Ave Bx, NY 10460

I represent: Green Worker Cooperative S

Address: Same

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

**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: 2/24/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jamillah Jones

Address: 127 LINCOLN AVE BRONX NY 10454

I represent: The Shoppe - South Bronx Artist Cooperative

Address: 127 LINCOLN AVE BRONX NY 10454

**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: 24.2.2014

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: EDITH PEÑA - HARPER

Address: 112 LINCOLN AVE # 308

I represent: the Shoppe - SOUTH BRONX ARTIST COOPERATIVE

Address: 127 LINCOLN AVE

**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: MORGAN CRAWFORD

Address: 820 W 180TH ST #52

I represent: NORTH AMERICAN STUDENTS OF

Address: COOPERATION

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

**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: Kellie Terry  
Address: 895 Garrison Ave. Bronx, NY 10474  
I represent: The Point Community Dev. Corp.  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**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: Wanda Salaman  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
I represent: Mothers On the Move  
Address: 920 Interville Ave. Bx, NY 10455

**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: Anthony Winn  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
I represent: Nos Quedamos  
Address: 502 Melrose Ave Bronx, NY

**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: 2/24/14

(PLEASE PRINT)  
Name: EDWARD W DE BARBIERI  
Address: 123 WILLIAM ST 16TH NY NY 10038  
I represent: URBAN JUSTICE CENTER  
Address: 123 WILLIAM ST 16TH NY NY 10038

**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: 2/24/2014

(PLEASE PRINT)  
Name: Peter RANIC - PROFESSOR  
Address: 160 WEST END AV.  
I represent: CUNY  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**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: 2/24/2014

(PLEASE PRINT)  
Name: Noah Franklin  
Address: 480 7th Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11215  
I represent: Federation of Professional Welfare Agents  
Address: 281 Park Avenue South, NY, NY (CPWA)  
10010

**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: 2/24/2014

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Scott Trumbull

Address: 172 Clermont Ave

I represent: The Working World

Address: 10002 Park Ave, New York, NY

**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: Rosa PALARQUIBAY

Address: 35-21-62 St

I represent: APPLE ECO CLEANING

Address: PROYECTO JUSTICIA LABORAL

**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: Josh Zions

Address: 176 Grand St 3rd Floor

I represent: New Economy Project

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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

**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: 2/24/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sean Baislowski

Address: Street Vendor Project

I represent: 123 William St

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**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: Miguel Crayter

Address: 118 William St

I represent: NYCEDC

Address: 118 William Street

**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: 02-24-14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Margarita Ruiz

Address: 443 39 St. Center For family

I represent: Beyond care child coop.

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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



**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: 02-24-2014

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Elizabeth Neudoza

Address: 443 39 St. Center family life

I represent: Beyond Care Child Coops

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**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: Yadira Tragoso

Address: 140 E 2st Apt 1M Brooklyn NY 11218

I represent: 51st Pkdc women's cooperative and

Address: 443 NYNDWC 39st 4th floor

**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: 2-24-14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Karen Haskins

Address: 228 Park Ave So. 7th floor Bklyn

I represent: The Working World

Address: 228 Park Ave So. New York

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

**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: 2/24/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Evan Casper-Futerman

Address: 350 Lincoln Pl #1B Bklyn 11238

I represent: Solidarity NYC

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**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: 2/27/2014

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Christopher Michael

Address: 58 Kenmore St, #1, New York, NY 10012

I represent: NYC Network of Worker Cooperatives

Address: 244 Fifth Ave, #C230, New York, NY 10001

**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: Rebekkah Thompson

Address: 8811 Beach Channel Dr. Rockaway Beach

I represent: Rockaway Residence NY 11493

Address: Network

**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: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: Gregg Bishop (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Small Business Services

Address: 110 William Street 7th Fl

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

**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: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: Vanessa Brandenburg (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 443 39th St

I represent: Center for Family Life

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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