

Committee on General Welfare

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CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

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December 14, 2021
Start: 3:37 P. M.
Recess: 3:50 P. M.

HELD AT: REMOTE HEARING (VIRTUAL ROOM 2)

B E F O R E: Hon. Stephen Levin, Chair

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Darma V. Diaz
Vanessa L. Gibson
Barry S. Grodenchik
Brad S. Lander
Antonio Reynoso
Rafael Salamanca, Jr

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING:

Inez Barron
Carlos Menchaca

Committee on General Welfare

A P P E A R A N C E S

[N/A]

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Committee on General Welfare

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SERGEANT LUGO: Pc recording started.

Good afternoon everyone, and welcome to today's remote New York City Council Vote of the Committee on General Welfare.

At this time, would all panelists please turn on your video?

To minimize disruption, please place electronic devices to vibrate or silent.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Chair, we are ready to begin.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much, Sergeant.

Uh, good afternoon, and welcome everybody. Uh, hold on one second, let me get a gavel here.

[GAVEL]

Uh, good afternoon, and welcome to the last vote of this session on The City Council's Committee on General Welfare.

Today the committee will consider a bill that I introduced Proposed Intro 1358-A, aimed at creating transparency around the use of psychiatric medication for youth in foster care. As well as Proposed Intro 2081-A, sponsored by Council Member Moya, which would enhance the application for and the transparency of The One Shot Deal Program.

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2 Studies have found significantly higher rates of
3 psychiatric medication use for children of foster
4 care than in the general population.

5 News reports has also highlighted disturbing
6 accusations of the use of sedation for children from
7 Nicholas Scoppetta Children's Center when brought to
8 Bellevue for misbehaving.

9 Proposal Intro 1358-A will shed some light on the
10 use of psychiatric medication by children in ACS's
11 care.

12 The bill would require ACS to submit a report
13 identifying problematic prescribing trends within
14 foster care agencies including: information on how
15 many youths are prescribed a psychiatric medication
16 or medications, disaggregated by various categories
17 of medication such as anti-depressant, anti-
18 psychotic, anxiolytic or hypnotic medication, long-
19 acting anti-psychotic medication, medication to treat
20 opioid use disorder, and mood stabilizers.

21 ACS would be required to review the reports and
22 submit a description of actions it took to promote
23 best practices for use of psychiatric medication for
24 youth in foster care.

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2 This holistic approach to medication transparency
3 will let us know if ACS and foster care agencies that
4 properly rely on medications to change children's
5 behaviors, and require ACS to create a plan of action
6 to address identified harmful practices.

7 The committee will also vote on Propose Intro
8 2081-A sponsored by Council Member Francisco Moya to
9 improve the application for and the transparency of
10 The One Shot Deal Program.

11 The bill would require The Commissioner to post
12 information on emergency assistance grants including
13 rental and utility arrears grants on the HRA website
14 and to enhance applications for such grants including
15 creating an informational sheet for prospective
16 benefit applicants in plain language.

17 The bill would require DSS to report quarterly on
18 the administration of emergency assistance grants.

19 The bill offers an opportunity to improve client
20 experience and benefit applications in alleviating
21 some of the hardships faced in navigating city
22 services.

23 Both bills will provide greater transparency to
24 the process of serving children of foster care and
25 clients who are seeking One Shot Deals.

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2 I'd like to thank the advocates and providers,
3 and those with lived experience, who informed and
4 helped shape this legislation.

5 At this time, I'd like to acknowledge any of my
6 colleagues who are here today. Uh, I want to
7 acknowledge Council Member Barry Grodenchik, Council
8 Member Vanessa Gibson, Council Member Darma Diaz,
9 Council Member Inez Barron, Council Member Brand
10 Lander, Council Member Carlos Menchaca, uh, Council
11 Member Rafael Salamanca.

12 Uhm, I'd like to thank my staff, uhm, Jonathan
13 Boucher, my Chief of Staff, Elizabeth Adams, and
14 Nicole Hunt, my Co-legislative Directors, [INAUDIBLE
15 00:04:09] Kumar, uh, Legislative staff, and our
16 amazing committee staff.

17 Uhm, and, I just want to take this moment to
18 thank them, uhm, you know, from the depths of my
19 heart, uh, they've been an incredible group of people
20 to work with these past eight years; uh, second to
21 none, uhm, incredibly professional, and have, uhm,
22 have really done the work of this committee by and
23 large.

24 And, so, I just want to thank Aminta Kilawan, our
25 Senior Counsel, Crystal Pond, Senior Policy Analyst,

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2 Natalie Omary, Policy Analyst, Dan Kroop, Financial
3 Analyst, and Julia Haramis, Financial Analyst as well
4 as, uh, our Unit Head Dohini Sompura, uh, at The
5 Finance Division, uh, Deputy Director Regina Poreda-
6 Ryan, and our director Latonia McKinney, uhm, as well
7 as, I see Jeff Baker is here, uhm, from the
8 Legislative Division, and Andrea Vásquez as well.

9 Uh, and, uh, now I'll turn it over to our
10 Committee Counsel, uhm, I'm sorry, excuse me, I'll
11 turn it over to William Martin, I believe. If
12 William is here, uh, Committee Clerk, to... Oh,
13 I'm sorry, Jonathan Ettricks, to call the roll.

14 LEGISLATIVE CLERK: Good afternoon, and, uh, this
15 is The Committee On General Welfare roll call vote on
16 Proposed Intros 1358-A and 1281-A.

17 We'll start with Chair Levin.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I vote aye on all.

19 Council Member Lander?

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Uh, with, uh, more thanks
21 to gratitude to The Chair for, like, all his work to
22 drag so much legislation, that's urgent, across the
23 finish line, uh, in these waning days of the term.

24 I proudly vote aye on all.

25 LEGISLATIVE CLERK: Thank you.

Council Member Gibson?

COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: (NO RESPONSE)

LEGISLATIVE CLERK: Council Member Gibson, please check your audio.

COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: [INAUDIBLE 00:06:19] hold on. Sorry, permission to explain, can you hear me?

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yes, I can hear you.

COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay, thank you so much. Well, I'll be brief. Uhm, I'm voting aye on today's agenda, and as this is our last committee hearing of The Committee on General Welfare, I just wanted to join, uhm, our Chair, Steve Levin, in thanking the entire Committee of The General Welfare team.

Thank you for all of the work. Uh, there's no one else I'd rather spend eight hours with than all of you! On all of the hearings that we've had over my time in the City Council that I've been here in the eight... I... eight years I've served.

Uhm, Thank you, Chair Steve Levin for all of your leadership, your commitment on behalf of foster youth, runaway and homeless youth, on behalf of so many children and families that have relied upon so many support systems and safety net programs that we have fought relentlessly over these past eight years.

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2 It's been an honor to work with you and walk with you
3 on this journey. I'm especially grateful for your
4 leadership on Fair Futures, and that is
5 groundbreaking and transformative, and we are
6 creating access and opportunity for so many foster
7 youth across the city of New Yorker.

8 So, again, thank you Steve for your leadership,
9 for your compassion, uhm, in definitely getting so
10 many bills to the finish line. It's been an honor to
11 work and serve with you on this committee, uh, that
12 I've been on all eight years of my time.

13 And, with that, again, thank you to the staff and
14 The Speaker, and everyone at The Council. I really
15 appreciate the time that we've shared together.

16 And, I vote aye on today's agenda.

17 Happy Holidays, my colleagues and staff.

18 LEGISLATIVE CLERK: Thank you.

19 Council Member Grodenchik?

20 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Uh, thank you, and I'm
21 not even going to ask for... I'm not going to ask
22 for permission to explain my vote. But, I am gonna
23 explain it.

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2 Uh, I do vote aye, and I don't want to thank
3 Chair Levin, uhm, following the comments made, uh, by
4 Council Member Gibson and Lander.

5 Uh, Steve, it's been an honor to serve with you.
6 I've been with you, uh, since I first entered The
7 Council, uh, six years ago. And, I especially want
8 to thank you for your work with me on, uh, Emergency
9 Food. Uhm, I never imagined when I was running for
10 office that that would be one of the... The most
11 important things, if not the most important things
12 that I did here at The Council. But, and we never
13 imagined the pandemic. But, when the pandemic hit,
14 uhm, the food pantries were there, and they were
15 ready in large measure because of the work that you
16 did. And, I really want to thank you for being my
17 partner in that, along with The Speaker, who
18 obviously had a lot to do with that as well. Uhm,
19 and you have been a voice for the voiceless and a
20 champion for people who, uhm, who will never know you
21 -- people that have no idea who Steve Levin is. But,
22 I hope that when you lie down at night, and you think
23 about, uhm, your time in The Council, uhm, you have
24 helped people that will never know what you did, and
25 that in many ways is the highest of helping people.

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2 So, thank you for your, uh, for your chairmanship,
3 and it has been a true pleasure and an honor to serve
4 with you, uh, in my time in The Council.

5 With that, again, uhm, Mr. Clerk, I vote aye on
6 all.

7 And, I do of course want to thank all of the
8 staff as well as, uh, The Chair mentioned.

9 Thank you.

10 LEGISLATIVE CLERK: Thank you.

11 Council Member Salamanca?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Yeah, I vote aye on
13 all.

14 Thank you.

15 LEGISLATIVE CLERK: Council Member Darma Diaz?

16 COUNCIL MEMBER DARMA DIAZ: I vote aye. And, it's
17 definitely been a pleasure to serve with you, Chair
18 Levin.

19 LEGISLATIVE CLERK: Thank you.

20 Chair Levin, by a vote of 6 in the affirmative,
21 zero abstentions, and zero negatives, both bills are
22 adopted.

23 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much, uhm, Mr.
24 Ettricks.

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2 And, uhm, just to my... To my colleagues and
3 all, uhm, all of the staff with The Council, Sergeant
4 At Arms, the clerks, and my colleagues, the council
5 members, I just want to, uhm, you know, express my
6 deep gratitude to you all.

7 Uhm, this is, uh, a committee, that is tasked
8 with looking out for the most vulnerable New Yorkers,
9 uhm, whose purpose is to make sure that services are
10 equitable in our city, uhm, that they're reaching
11 those in greatest need, and that we lift up their
12 priorities as all of our priorities, and as a city
13 and as a society, uhm, and that, uh, we don't leave
14 anybody behind. And, that, uhm, no matter who you
15 pray to or what you pray to, uhm, that, you know,
16 we're all... You know, we're all God's children, and
17 we are here to take... to look after one another.
18 And, uhm, and that's been the mission of this
19 committee. I am sure that that'll be the mission of
20 the committee under the next Council. And, there's
21 still a lot more work to be done.

22 But, I want to thank all of my colleagues for
23 their conscientiousness, their thoughtfulness, uhm,
24 and their decency and compassion, uhm, as we tried to
25 do to our best to serve our fellow New Yorkers.

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2 And, with that, I'll, uh, I'll adjourn The
3 Committee.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Steve, you've really been
5 just... Just such a tremendously and amazing Chair.
6 I mean, the staff, with props to them, and all of us
7 are good, but you... you've really been an
8 extraordinary Chair of this committee, and just like,
9 use this platform to push for New Yorkers who need it
10 so very powerfully and deeply. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: That means a lot, thank you,
12 Brad, thank you.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: I second what Mr.
14 Landers said.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, thank you. Now,
16 you're embarrassing me so...

17 [LAUGHTER]

18 UNKNOWN: [INAUDIBLE 00:12:38]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: We don't care. You
20 can be embarrassed once in your life.

21 [LAUGHTER}

22 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you. Uhm, I feel like
23 Tom Sawyer at the, uh, you know, when he goes back
24 and looks at his... Like, he and Huck go and look at
25 their funeral.

1 UNKNOWN: Not until you're 120.

2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Yes.

3 Uhm, and thank you all very much. Thank you all.

4 And, it's been a great... It's been the honor of my
5 lifetime to, uh, to chair this committee with all of
6 you.
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8 And, with that, this hearing is adjourned.

9 **[GAVEL]**

10 UNKNOWN: Goodbye.

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date January 30, 2022