

**TESTIMONY**

**BY**

**ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER FOR EMPLOYMENT AND  
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT**

**MARTHA JACKSON**

**NEW YORK CITY  
MAYOR'S OFFICE FOR PEOPLE  
WITH DISABILITIES**

**BEFORE**

**THE COMMITTEE ON MENTAL HEALTH, DISABILITIES,  
AND ADDICTIONS**

**OF THE  
NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL**

**SEPTEMBER 28, 2022**

I would like to thank Chair Lee and members of the Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities, and Addictions for inviting the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities to provide testimony at today's hearing.

My name is Martha Jackson and I am the Assistant Commissioner for Employment and Business Development and the Director of **NYC: ATWORK**, MOPD's public-private workforce program. I am pleased to provide testimony today about our office's approach to connecting New Yorkers with disabilities to jobs and careers and making it easier for employers to hire and support them.

### **Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities**

Conceived of more than 50 years ago and operating since at least 1973, the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD) is the liaison between New York City government and the disability community. In partnership with all City offices and agencies, MOPD consistently ensures that the rights and concerns of the disability community are included in all City initiatives and that City programs and policies address the needs of people with disabilities in the areas of transportation, employment, healthcare, housing, education, access to City services, and financial empowerment for people with disabilities.

### **The Need:**

In the field of workforce development, we talk about "two sides of the equation": on one hand, you have the supply of jobseekers looking for new or better jobs; and, on the other hand, you have employers with a demand for finding qualified talent. When I joined MOPD seven years ago, we found a huge need on both sides of this equation: among jobseekers with disabilities and employers. We found that New Yorkers with disabilities need more job opportunities with career pathways:

- There are approximately one million New Yorkers who have disclosed as living with a disability

- A much higher proportion of New Yorkers with disabilities are jobless (66%) - unemployed or not even looking for work - compared to those with no disability (39%).
- Relatedly, the proportion of New Yorkers with disabilities who live in poverty is nearly double that of the general population: 29% vs. 17%.

Additionally, we found an extensive need among employers to help make their workplaces more accessible to and inclusive of people with disabilities:

- Disability is not often included in organizations' definitions of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access.
- Many employers do not know what resources are available to them and their employees on disability awareness and education
- Most employers lack dedicated staff to support programs specifically for people with disabilities
- Even employers interested in hiring people with disabilities did not know how or where to find the talent

### **The Solution: *NYC: ATWORK***

In response, MOPD conceived of and launched a pilot program, ***NYC: ATWORK***, in 2017 to address both sides of the equation – the supply of jobseekers with disabilities and the demand of employers for qualified talent.

***NYC: ATWORK*** is an employment program that recruits, pre-screens, and connects New Yorkers with disabilities to jobs and internships with established employer partners in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. Participation in ***NYC: ATWORK*** is voluntary, and more importantly, self-driven. We empower our participants by offering them guidance to improve their chances of being hired, but it is up to them to implement our tips and proactively look for opportunities.

## **Partnerships and Coalitions**

**NYC: AT WORK** also builds partnerships and coalitions on the supply and demand side of NYC's labor market and acts as an intermediary for them.

On the demand side, we established a Business Development Council that includes nearly 100 employers to date from a diverse mix of sectors, including Finance and Business Services, Retail, Hospitality, Health and Wellness, Technology, Human Services, Non-profits, and Government. This Council has been the anchor for connecting our participants to jobs and internships and helping us to understand the need for talent among these employers.

On the supply side, as part of our outreach strategy, we built a Talent Coalition comprised of a diverse array of community-based organizations, state Vocational Rehabilitation provider agencies, public and private colleges, and other organizations. Through this Coalition of more than 60 member organizations, we have access to an extensive set of jobseekers across the five boroughs.

## **Direct Technical Assistance**

**NYC: AT WORK** also provides direct technical assistance and services to both stakeholder groups. For businesses this includes business-to-business meetings, disability awareness training, direct support building and implementing disability employment initiatives, and dissemination of best practices.

**Disability is Diversity:** Businesses lack education and awareness on disability etiquette, reasonable accommodations, and disclosure. We developed a Disability Etiquette & Awareness Training and delivered it virtually and in person, reaching over 4,000 city, state, and private employees. This training is presented by MOPD staff with lived experience

and covers physical, cognitive, visual, Deaf and hard of hearing disabilities, provides a brief overview of the Americans with Disabilities Act, appropriate and inclusive terminology, reasonable accommodations and resources.

On the service provider side, this includes facilitated connections to businesses, support for customizing programming, facilitated collaborations to design business training and awareness modules, opportunities to partner on business-related events and intermediation activities—connecting businesses to the provider communities to effectively match our jobseekers to internships and full-time or part-time jobs.

### **Program Outcomes:**

Over the first three years of this program, we exceeded our goals by engaging nearly 2,800 New Yorkers with disabilities and enrolled more than 1,500 into the **NYC: ATWORK** program. In addition, we hit 90% of our job placement goal by connecting nearly 600 New Yorkers to jobs and 79 to internships. Among jobseekers who found full-time employment, their average salary was nearly \$53,000.

### **A Public/Private Partnership**

**NYC: ATWORK** is the first public-private workforce development program for New Yorkers with disabilities. We raised funds for the first three years through a mix of state and private foundation sources, such as the Kessler Foundation and The Poses Family Foundation and the Charles H. Neilsen Foundation.

### **The Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic**

There was a real NEED for this program. And that need has grown over the past 2+ years due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the need for remote or hybrid opportunities; the need for new trainings and competitive jobs with sustainable wages that will be a part of our economic recovery.

## **Expanding the Impact of NYC: ATWORK**

With that in mind, in partnership with the Department of Small Business Services, we now plan to take **NYC: ATWORK** to the next level. Our goal over time is to increase the accessibility of the Workforce1 Centers and attract an increasing volume of New Yorkers with disabilities to seek services through Workforce1, either virtually or in-person.

- **SBS/MOPD obtained a grant from New York State, the SCION grant, of \$1.1 million over 3 years.** This grant provides the resources to hire 3 Disability Resource Coordinators (DRC) to collaborate on improving the participation of individuals with disabilities, including individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, in workforce systems and improve their employment outcomes via a sustainable, job-driven, inclusive model that involves businesses and workforce demand.
- To provide real systems change within the Workforce Career Centers, we are exploring which centers will receive **NYC: ATWORK** teams to support the Disability Resource Coordinators and to assist the Workforce 1 staff in accessibility and inclusion for the users of the centers who disclose as having a disability or request assistance in programs and services.

### **Leading by Example: The City as Employer**

- **City as Lead.** Acting as a recruitment resource, **NYC: ATWORK** has assisted DCAS to expand its recruitment and gain access to talent seeking opportunities in city government. The city is poised to lead by example for other employers and hire qualified people with disabilities by use of its 55-a program and this Mayor's commitment.
- MOPD has further enhanced its outreach and recruitment efforts by collaborating with the DCAS's Office of Citywide Recruitment ("OCR") in promoting the 55-a Program. The 55-a Program derives from the

New York Civil Service Law to allow qualified persons with disabilities to be appointed to competitive civil service positions without having to take a civil service exam for the position. OCR provides crucial support in the following ways:

- OCR sets guidance and best practices for the city agencies' use of the program
- OCR trains agencies' 55-a Coordinators on the application process and the effective use of the program to recruit and diversify their workforce
- After agencies' interview and select a candidate for their competitive position, OCR processes the 55-a applications by referring them to the New York State Adult Career & Continuing Education Services – Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) or the New York State Commission for the Blind to certify that the candidate has a disability and can perform the duties of the position sought with or without accommodations.
- MOPD and OCR also conduct robust marketing of the 55-a program both to internal City agencies and external job seekers about how the program can be used as their conduit into City government. Through our collaboration, we educate hiring managers, EEO Officers, Human Resources professionals and those involved in the recruitment and hiring process so that all City agencies can build a more diverse and inclusive environment.

The Administration has doubled down on this approach when, in August, Mayor Adams announced the following two steps:

- Renewed commitment to fully utilize the 55-a program by educating and encouraging city agencies in its use to employ more qualified people with disabilities into the City's workforce
- Taking steps to ensure that City employees receive Disability Etiquette and Awareness Training produced by DCAS in collaboration with MOPD so that hiring officials and City staff are familiar with our fellow New Yorkers and all that they have to offer to the workforce.

### **A Forthcoming Plan**

In March 2022, Mayor Adams' Blueprint for Economic Recovery tasked MOPD and Mayor's Office for Talent and Workforce Development to deliver a comprehensive plan to include increasing the accessibility of career training and employment opportunities.

MOPD and Mayor's Office for Talent and Workforce Development are currently developing that comprehensive plan to address these issues. Once we have finalized the plan, we would be happy to share it with the members of this Committee.

### **Conclusion**

I am grateful to have been given the opportunity over these past 7 years to be part of a systems and culture change for New Yorkers with disabilities and their families. In building **NYC: ATWORK**, we have seen the potential, progress and the resiliency of our staff, jobseekers and all our partners through the past 2 and a half years during the pandemic. Under the leadership of Mayor Adams and our new Commissioner, Christina Curry, I am optimistic our next steps and future plans will continue to prove that at work, it's what you *can do* that matters.

# NYLPI

## JUSTICE THROUGH COMMUNITY POWER

New York Lawyers for the Public Interest\* 151 West 30th Street, 11<sup>th</sup> Floor, New York, NY 10001-4017\*

tel: (212) 244-4664 fax: (212) 244-4570

Comments by

**Eman Rimawi, Access-A-Ride Coordinator and Organizer  
New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, Disability Justice Program**

on

**Employment of, and Accessibility for, Persons with Disabilities**

before the

**Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities and Addiction**

**September 28, 2022**

Thank you Council Members Lee, Brewer, Gennaro, Hanif, Hudson, Lewis, Powers, Riley, Sanchez, and Ung for listening to our concerns about employment and access for people with disabilities.

My name is Eman Rimawi-Doster and I am the Access-A-Ride Coordinator and Organizer at the Disability Justice Program of New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI), which has advocated for over 45 years for the rights of persons with disabilities in New York.

If you think unemployment is generally bad, it's even worse in the disability community. The most recent report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics states that only 19.1 percent of persons with disabilities were employed. <sup>1</sup>

Instead of being reactive, we need to change our approach and be proactive. **Employers must send job listings to organizations and agencies that may come in contact with individuals**

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/disabl.pdf>.

**with disabilities, including independent living centers, college disability offices, and state vocational rehabilitation agencies.**

I tried obtaining employment help from disability advocacy organizations, which told me time and time again that, because I “didn’t have mental problems” and was “overqualified” for many available jobs for people with disabilities, I couldn’t get help and I had to just “be patient” as I searched and applied alone! Even the Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD) merely told me to join my Community Board and become its president! That was in 2017. I got no referrals and no one told me about the independent living centers – organizations that are run by people with disabilities and exist in every borough. **We need to connect people with disabilities to advocacy organizations that actually assist in finding employment, and we need to adequately fund those organizations.**

And by the way, I received zero help to keep my Medicaid – the lifeline for people with severe disabilities – when I found work. **We need to help people with disabilities retain Medicaid when they start working.**

Historically, I have never had an issue getting in the door for a job. But once I got hired, and they could see my lupus flare-ups, employers would change their tune and suddenly say and do things that would be deemed discriminatory. I wasn’t believed by one employer when I was having mini-strokes and nearly died. I wasn’t accommodated while working at a different organization when I asked to work from home once a week, which led to me pushing myself to come into the office and finally quitting because it wasn’t worth the physical pain it was causing me. And one of the last organizations I worked at, a few years before I began at NYLPI, wouldn’t allow me to go part time, and literally told me, “push through your pain and exhaustion because we need you here full time.” I ultimately quit that job too, which is often what people with disabilities in my situation are forced to do. I’m educated. I have an extensive amount of organizing and facilitation experience. I’ve worked for a number of nonprofits and agencies throughout the city since 2000. I’ve been around the world and I’ve made all kinds of contacts with whom I still talk and with whom I continue to work. And while doing all of that, I had, and still have, Lupus.

But having Lupus for 24 years, and being an amputee for the last nine years, has shown me just how strong ableism is. I’ve been treated like my accessibility asks are too much, when they’re always reasonable and adhere to Americans with Disabilities Act (and city and state non-discrimination law) requirements. I’ve been made to feel bad or wrong when I’ve addressed discrimination which I knew was there. **Employers must be aware of the requirements of disability laws and they must provide people with disabilities with the necessary supports and accommodations to perform their jobs.**

I’ve been making it work for five years at NYLPI. NYLPI has seen the dedication I have put into my work every day. Not only does my work get results, but it gets NYLPI media coverage on a regular basis, so that we can educate broadly about how crucial disability rights are. I just

needed someone to give me a chance and believe me and believe in me. And accommodate me pursuant to non-discrimination law mandates.

NYLPI strongly supports Int. 0681-2022 and Int. 0682-2022, but offers the following suggestions to make them even stronger:

- Insert findings regarding unemployment and underemployment of people with disabilities, as well as statistics regarding exclusion of people with disabilities due to lack of access.

#### Int. 0681-2022

- Mandate that MOPD compile lists of specific jobs around the city, post them on their website, and update them in real time.
- Mandate that MOPD offer regular information sessions to employers regarding workplace accommodations for persons with disabilities, rather than offer such sessions solely in response to requests for the sessions by employers.

#### Int. 0682-2022

- Mandate that the accessibility plans also include data related to the number of persons with disabilities in the employ of each department, office, and agency, disaggregated by race and gender, in order to uplift intersectional diversity.
- Add incentives to ensure compliance with the accessibility plan mandate, and remove the disincentive which promotes non-compliance by mandating that MOPD create and submit an accessibility plan on behalf of offices, departments, and agencies that fail to create and submit their own plans.

My plea to you is not only that you pass Int. 0681-2022 and Int. 0682-2022 – with our above proposed amendments – but that you also find a way to hold businesses accountable to the bills' mandates. If we don't hold people accountable on multiple levels, the most vulnerable among us will never get help. Yes, I'm capable. At the same time, I'm still disabled, and Black, and Palestinian, and a woman, which means I -- and many others like me -- are more susceptible to intersectional discrimination. So we need to make sure we put protections in place for people like me. I'm still a New Yorker who pays my bills, shops at local businesses, orders from local restaurants, and engages with my neighbors. Why should I be treated any differently, simply because I have Lupus and am an amputee?

#### About New York Lawyers for the Public Interest

For over 40 years, NYLPI has been a leading civil rights and legal services advocate for New Yorkers marginalized by race, poverty, disability, and immigration status. Through our community lawyering model, we bridge the gap between traditional civil legal services and civil rights, building strength and capacity for both individual solutions and long-term impact. Our work integrates the power of individual representation, impact litigation, organizing, and policy campaigns. Guided by the priorities of our communities, we strive to achieve equality of opportunity and self-determination for people with disabilities, secure environmental justice for

low-income communities of color, create equal access to health care, ensure immigrant opportunity, and strengthen local nonprofits. Through our Disability Justice Program, we fight for eliminating discrimination against New Yorkers with disabilities in all walks of life.

## **Melissa Lent testimony: Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities and Addiction**

My name is Melissa Lent. I am a policy researcher and digital media specialist at the Center for an Urban Future, a think tank focused on creating a more inclusive economy in New York City. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

There are nearly 1 million New York City residents with a self-identified disability. In 2021, according to a report from the Center for an Urban Future, nearly 17 percent of all working-age New Yorkers with a disability were unemployed—more than double the pre-pandemic level. Systemic barriers have prevented thousands more from entering the labor force in the first place.

Despite this, enormous changes in the ways people live and work are creating the conditions for a major expansion of economic opportunity: remote and hybrid work; advances in assistive technologies; and a surging number of unfilled job openings.

The City Council should seize this opportunity to help make New York City a national leader in employment for people with disabilities.

First, city leaders will have to tackle several long-standing challenges. Our research shows that providers of career training to disabled New Yorkers struggle to access public funding because contracted services rarely prioritize clients with disabilities or factor in the costs of delivering effective *and* accessible programs. Likewise, workforce development organizations that serve the general population need capacity-building grants and technical assistance to build accessibility into all of their programs and services.

At the same time, key publicly funded initiatives are effective but still far too small scale. For instance, the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities is succeeding in connecting people to living wage jobs, but MOPD's entire annual budget is just over \$800,000, significantly less than the per capita funding for similar agencies in Chicago, Los Angeles, Boston, Houston, and Washington, DC. Alarming, city funding for contracted programs serving New Yorkers with intellectual and developmental disabilities has plunged 82 percent over the past two decades after adjusting for inflation.

The City Council should take steps to strengthen and restructure the existing system to foster greater economic opportunity for New Yorkers with disabilities. City officials should consider launching the nation's first Accessibility Training Challenge, a \$10 million competitive grant program designed to enable workforce organizations and disability services providers to partner on integrating accessibility throughout existing programs.

In addition, the City Council should introduce legislation establishing mobile small business accessibility teams, operated in partnership between SBS and MOPD, with the goal of helping 2,500 workplaces become fully accessible to employees with disabilities by 2025.

To help coordinate these providers, employers, and investments, the city should build a central directory of career services providers for people with disabilities and employer programs and raise the profile of these opportunities by hosting the nation's first Accessible Careers Week.

The City Council can also accelerate change by establishing a 7 percent hiring target for people with disabilities in city jobs and hired through city-funded contracts, replicating a key initiative at the federal level, and leverage existing programs like 55-a to help accelerate progress toward these goals.

New York City should seize this moment to lead the nation in expanding employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



**Therapeutic Horsemanship:  
Changing the Lives of  
New Yorkers with Disabilities**

e: Info@GallopNYC.org  
p: 855.925.5661  
f: 212-945-1243

88-03 70th Road  
Forest Hills, NY 11375  
www.GallopNYC.org

**Board of Directors**

Sol Reischer,  
*Chairman*  
Heather Aspegren  
Amanda Barshall-Cain  
John Genova  
Anna Laptok Goldman  
Natalie Heim  
Paul Hinton  
Constance Hunter  
Alicia Kershaw  
Carlos Lamadrid  
Nicola Short  
Jagdish Singh  
Rene Theriault  
Lucie Claire Vincent  
James Wilson,  
*Executive Director*

Testimony from James Wilson  
Executive Director, GallopNYC  
Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities and Addiction  
Wednesday, September 28, 2022

I'd like to first thank the Councilmembers for allowing me to testify today on behalf of GallopNYC, and I'd like to offer my specific thanks for Chairwoman Lee for taking up the issue of workforce development for people with disabilities. It's a very important issue, and I'm gratified to see this committee taking action.

My name is James Wilson, and I'm the Executive Director of GallopNYC, an organization that is dedicated to improving the lives of New Yorkers with disabilities through therapeutic horsemanship.

GallopNYC has been providing therapeutic riding lessons to New Yorkers for more than 15 years, and we have seen firsthand the impacts that unemployment and underemployment has on the lives of people with disabilities and their families. We've seen young people who age out of the system, and are left with few opportunities on a day to day basis. Without meaningful job skills, these young people do not have the opportunity to work.

We have seen this need in our community, and have developed a program to address it.

Our program is very simple - we teach people with disabilities the skills necessary to have a successful work-life, and then give them a chance to work in a safe, supported environment to practice those skills. All work is paid, of course.

GallopNYC is currently offering supported employment to people helping take care of our more than 20 horses and to people who support our therapeutic riding lessons.

Our program is new and growing. At this point, we have 8 young people working in our program, and the same number of trained job coaches. Each staff member is paired with a job coach to support them and help ensure their success.

Thus far we have generally recruited our job skills participants from the ranks of our riders, which allows for people who have shown a deep interest in horses and in therapeutic riding the chance to learn more skills and gain meaningful experience.

It is ultimately our goal to transition our workers to employers other than GallopNYC - the skills we are teaching are not specific to horses, they are transferable skills. In our program, workers learn how to arrive on time, how to communicate with their



**Therapeutic Horsemanship:  
Changing the Lives of  
New Yorkers with Disabilities**

supervisor, how to plan their work to be able to accomplish in the allotted time, and how to meet customers and address their questions, along with so much more.

One brief success story: Earlier this year, we hired the first customer facing role through the job skills program. Claudine is passionate about supporting people with disabilities, and as she was one of our therapeutic riders, she has her own lived experience of the benefits of therapeutic riding. This passion translates to a wonderful energy on site with our riders, our volunteers and our families.

This is a win-win situation for Claudine and for GallopNYC - we have an engaged, committed person that demonstrates our values, and loves to come to work. And Claudine is able to learn and practice the skills that will allow her to have a more full, engaging life.

I'd like to pause here and ask for your support. GallopNYC wants to do more, and an allocation of \$50,000 through the new Citywide Young Adult Entrepreneurship Program Initiative, we would be able to expand our program and offer more opportunities to people like Claudine. This allocation will allow GallopNYC to employ up to 5 more young people with disabilities each week, which includes the job coach support needed for their success and development.

Finally, I'd like to invite Chairwoman Lee to come out and see our program for yourself. There are few things more impactful than seeing our work first hand, and it would be my pleasure to show you.

Thank you for your consideration and thank you for your time.



**Therapeutic Horsemanship:  
Changing the Lives of  
New Yorkers with Disabilities**

e: Info@GallopNYC.org  
p: 855.925.5661  
f: 212-945-1243

88-03 70th Road  
Forest Hills, NY 11375  
www.GallopNYC.org

The Hon. Adrienne E. Adams  
Speaker, New York City Council  
City Hall  
New York, NY 10007

July 8, 2022

Dear Speaker Adams:

**Board of Directors**

Sol Reischer,  
*Chairman*  
Heather Aspegren  
Amanda Barshall-Cain  
John Genova  
Anna Laptook Goldman  
Natalie Heim  
Paul Hinton  
Constance Hunter  
Damyn Kelly  
Alicia Kershaw  
Carlos Lamadrid  
Esada Qazi  
Jagdish Singh  
Lucie Claire Vincent  
James Wilson,  
*Executive Director*

I write today to thank you for your support for GallopNYC, and to offer our support to help changes the lives of more of our fellow New Yorkers.

With your support for FY2023, we received full restoration of funding levels from FY22 for the Autism Initiative (\$124,916) and Speakers Funding (\$25,000). We received \$68,000 of a requested \$85,000 in Veterans Initiative funding, and we are hopeful that our proven track record of working with Veterans in NYC will help to fully restore this funding to FY22 levels.

As you know, GallopNYC is New York City's premiere therapeutic riding organization - through proven effective therapeutic riding lessons, our instructors and our horses have changed the lives of literally thousands of New Yorkers in over the past 15 years. GallopNYC offers both horseback riding and therapeutic horsemanship programs to New Yorkers, particularly riders with disabilities, veterans, and seniors.

In early June, I offered GallopNYC to support your vision for New York by offering more programs for seniors in parks and employment training for people with disabilities.

**Advisory Council**

Audrey Abbott  
Deanie Barth  
Jessica Bent  
Georgina Bloomberg  
Alan Brownfeld  
Michael John Carley  
Anne Marie Chance  
Sissy DeMaria  
Nicole Epps  
Iris Gold  
Sasha Blair Goldensohn  
Chris Irwin  
Sarah Maslin Nir  
Ken Paterno  
Janet Rose  
Herbert H. Sambol  
Judith Place Sloan

GallopNYC has been offering a recreational and socialization program for older adults at our City Park site in Lindenwood for several years. Funded through DFTA, our program invites local senior adults to come to our programs, learn new skills, volunteer with our riders, or even ride themselves. We are grateful for the City Council's support to fund this program, and we would be thrilled to expand this program to support your vision.

GallopNYC has created an innovative job skills program utilizing the work that is required to operate our stables and take care of our horses to teach young people with disabilities the skills needed to successfully work for other employers. GallopNYC started this program in 2020 and we would welcome the opportunity to expand it to help meet the needs of New Yorkers with disabilities, and employers that desire a more equitable and inclusive team.

With an allocation of \$50,000 through the new Citywide Young Adult Entrepreneurship Program Initiative we would be able to expand our existing program to provide meaningful, individualized supported employment opportunities for up to 5



**Therapeutic Horsemanship:  
Changing the Lives of  
New Yorkers with Disabilities**

young people with disabilities at GallopNYC. While the initiative does not specifically speak to working for people with disabilities, I feel that it is vitally important for them to be included. Many companies are now seeing the value of expanding their workforce to include people with disabilities, and it is clear that DEI efforts that include people that have a diverse way of thinking leads to a more robust workforce, improved culture and morale, even reduced turnover. We've seen this impact happening at GallopNYC over the past year as we grown and developed our Job Skills & Workforce development program.

Our innovative, individualized, supported employment allows young adults with disabilities to learn the skills necessary to successfully enter the workplace, and gives them a safe space to practice those skills. All while working in a fun, challenging and inclusive environment.

This \$50,000 allocation will allow GallopNYC to employ up to 5 young people with disabilities per week, which includes the job coach support needed for their success and development. It would include self-advocacy training to develop these young adults into leaders of their own lives and leaders at GallopNYC.

We stand by, ready to do more for NYC's seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities and would welcome any opportunity to deepen our partnership with the City Council.

I'd like to close by once again inviting you and your staff to visit one of our barns and experience therapeutic riding and horsemanship for yourself. We offer lessons six days a week and have two full time barns in Queens – one in Lindenwood and one in Forest Hills.

I would be glad to discuss these opportunities with you or your staff, or if I or GallopNYC can be helpful in any other way, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Sincerely,

James Wilson  
Executive Director

Hi My Name is Joseph Damiano and I am here today representing Downstate NY Adapt. I am a person with a disability and also advocate for people with disabilities.

I am in support of INT 0681. As a person with a disability who works with people with disabilities I have to say that anybody who has a disability should be treated the same as a person without a disability and should get any help they need in regards to employment.

Employment is beneficial to anyone who has a disability. A lot of people want to work but don't know where to start. With this bill I think it will achieve that and possibly more. It can help people get ready for a job and also be able to help them keep it.

When we have programs in place for this it releases the burden that people have to do it on their own and without any help.

Based on numbers from the arc new York

93% of providers saw a decrease in job applicants this year

Statewide vacancy rates increased 75% since prepandemic levels

25% of all DSP positions are currently vacant statewide

48% of providers were forced to close or reduce programs due to lack of staff

39% of providers did not reopen programs due to staff shortages

Sometimes we are afraid to ask for help but it shouldn't matter for the most part we should receive it regardless.

Thank You for your time today.

Joseph Damiano

**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: MARTHA K JACKSON

Address: W 101st St NYC 10025

I represent: NYC MORI

Address: 100 GOLD ST NY 10028

**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: 9/28/2022

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kadian Outar

Address: 1 Centre Street

I represent: DCA3

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: Je'Nean Jones

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

I represent: Department of Small Business Services

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: James Wilson

Address: 88-03 70th Rd Forest Hills 11375

I represent: Galloper NYC

Address: above

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: EMAN RIMAN - DOSTER

Address: Greene Ave

I represent: New York Lawyers

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

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