

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S ISSUES

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May 15, 2012  
Start: 9:51 a.m.  
Recess: 9:55 a.m.

HELD AT: Council Chambers  
City Hall

B E F O R E: JULISSA FERRERAS  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:  
Charles Barron  
Margaret S. Chin  
Annabel Palma  
Ruben Wills

CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Good

morning. My name is Council Member Julissa Ferreras and I am the chair of the Women's Issues Committee. I'd like to thank my colleagues, Council Member Lander and Mark-Viverito for their sponsorship of today's resolution on which we will be voting today.

On April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2012, this Committee held a hearing on Resolution 1226-A calling on Village Voice Media to stop accepting adult service advertisement on its online classified site, Backpage.com as it serves as a platform to traffic minor and adult victims of sex. This was an extremely productive hearing where we heard from district attorney's office, Village Voice Media and several concerned advocates and service providers. We also heard from a survivor of trafficking, who explained how she was brokered on Backpage. Social networking sites are increasingly being used to market victims of trafficking. According to attorney generals of all over the country and our own district attorney in New York City, Backpage is being used in most trafficking cases. As a society it is imperative

1  
2 that we take a stand. We need to make it known  
3 that buying and selling women and children is not  
4 okay. We need to put our voices behind what is  
5 the right thing to do. We need to find ways to  
6 minimize these activities and further protect  
7 victims brutalized by traffickers. Additionally,  
8 I strongly believe that corporate responsibility  
9 can be a powerful tool in making the world safer  
10 for women and children. Again, thank you to  
11 Council Member Lander and Council Member Mark-  
12 Viverito, who will now say a few words.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MARK-VIVERITO:

14 Thank you, Chairwoman Julissa Ferreras. I want to  
15 thank you also for helping really shepherd this  
16 and I know that this Committee has stood very  
17 strong on the issue of sex trafficking, having  
18 done several hearings on it, and I think that the  
19 more visibility we bring to this issue, the more  
20 important it is, and as a Council that we take a  
21 stand, so I really want to thank also obviously  
22 the strong support of our Speaker about this  
23 matter and again, encouraging Village Voice Media  
24 to stop and cut and basically end Backpage.com,  
25 which an advertising section, which is not only

1  
2 here in the United States, but it also is  
3 international, and we know that primarily the  
4 victims of sex trafficking are young women, are  
5 women, are girls and primarily women of color and  
6 young girls of color, so this is a really relevant  
7 position that we're taking. There's a resolution  
8 supporting it continuing to raise visibility  
9 around it, and I want to thank the leadership of  
10 D.A. Hines [phonetic] in Brooklyn, and those that  
11 have really brought attention to this matter—the  
12 attorneys general nationally that are also calling  
13 for Backpage to end and also many other advocates.  
14 I was at a conference recently on sex trafficking  
15 in Boston about two weeks ago after we had the  
16 hearing on this reso, and a lot of conversation  
17 happening about how we really have to focus on the  
18 demand and of this industry and really penalizing  
19 and criminalizing those that buy and purchase  
20 because they are in fact, promoting and continuing  
21 to ensure that this industry is alive. I really  
22 want to thank all the colleagues that have signed  
23 on to the reso, people that are supporting of this  
24 matter and I look forward to the continued work  
25 that we as a Council will take on this matter to

1  
2 protect the lives of young women and girls.

3 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Thank you  
4 very much, Council Member. I'd like to urge all  
5 of my colleagues to vote aye on this resolution  
6 that is very important to us as a city, and I  
7 guess you can call the vote.

8 COMMITTEE CLERK: William Martin,  
9 Committee Clerk. Roll call vote in the Committee  
10 on Women's Issues, Resolution 1226-A. Council  
11 Member Ferreras?

12 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: I vote aye.

13 COMMITTEE CLERK: Palma?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: Aye.

15 COMMITTEE CLERK: Chin?

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Aye.

17 COMMITTEE CLERK: by a vote of  
18 three in the affirmative, zero in the negative and  
19 no abstentions, item is adopted. Members, please  
20 sign the Committee Report. Thank you.

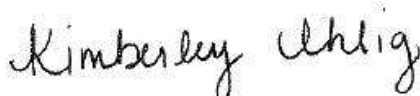
21 CHAIRPERSON FERRERAS: Thank you.

22 [gavel]

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Kimberley Uhlig certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.

Signature

Handwritten signature of Kimberley Uhlig in cursive script.

Date

5/25/12