

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS

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June 9, 2014
Start: 10:21 a.m.
Recess: 11:39 a.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Rm,
16th Fl.

B E F O R E:
BEN KALLOS
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
David G. Greenfield
Mark Levine
Ritchie J. Torres
Steven Matteo

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Gale A. Brewer
Manhattan Borough President

David Ng
Representing
Assemblywoman Nily Rozic

Al Kurland
Representing
Police Athletic League
Teens On Board Group

David Crenshaw
Uptown Dreamers Alumni Association

Francine Berris [sp?]
Founder and Executive Director
Future Voters of America

Sarah Zeller-Berkman
Director of Community Development
Youth Development Institute

Milan Taylor
President and Founder
Rockaway Youth Task Force

Sarah Andes
Site Director
Generation Citizen

Michael Mialdi [sp?]
Youth Leader
Asian American Student Advocacy Project
Coalition for Asian American Children &
Families

Alan Schulman
Center for the Study and Practice of
Social Studies

Raymond Spence
Representing

Police Athletic League
A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)
Francesca Chaney
Representing
Police Athletic League

Damaris Dunn
Teacher
Boys and Girls High School

Bobby Digi
Executive Director and Founder
Island Voice

Fe Florimon
Chair
Youth and Education Committee
Community Board 12

Rozella Clyde
Representing
Social Studies Educator

Benjamin Howard Cooper

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[background comments]

[pause]

[gavel]

MALE VOICE: Quiet please.

CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Good morning and welcome to a hearing of the Committee on Governmental Operations; I'm the Committee Chair, Ben Kallos; you can tweet me @BenKallos, so if you're in the audience and I do not see you with one of these in your hand and you are not tweeting, I will actually be offended; this is the new media [laughter] Council. I would like to thank my colleagues, advocates, community board members and members of the public for being here today.

Today we'll be hearing a resolution which calls on the New York State Legislature to allow 16- and 17-year-olds to serve on our City's community boards. Often referred to the most local form of local government, community boards provide a way for members of the public to stay apprised of what's going on in the neighborhood, where they live or work, provide feedback to government agencies about how city services should be distributed and weigh in

2 on how land use and other key decisions are likely to
3 affect their communities.

4 As a former public member of Community
5 Board 8 and also a full member in Manhattan, I know
6 firsthand how vital these boards are and how
7 important it is to have dedicated and active members;
8 in fact, when I was on Community Board 8, I served
9 with a 16-year-old high school student, Jonathan
10 Ehrlich, and together we were able to found a Youth
11 and Education Committee that hadn't been on that
12 board before, so I've seen firsthand how much it
13 means to have a youth voice on the boards.

14 The knowledge and experience gained
15 through serving on one of our City's 59 community
16 boards encourages greater civic participation and is
17 a great asset to our city; in fact our current
18 comptroller started on a community board when he was
19 just 16 and some of us are calling this the Scott
20 Stringer Resolution. [background comment]

21 As we pass the torch of leadership to new
22 generations, we must ensure that knowledge,
23 experience and desire to help one's community is
24 passed on as well. Young civic-minded individuals
25 should be allowed to offer their insights, learn

1 about their community and participate in the process;
2 not only will they be better served by getting
3 firsthand experience as advocates and organizers, but
4 the City will benefit tremendously from their unique
5 perspectives, especially in areas like education and
6 utilization of public spaces. Many young people
7 already play important roles in their communities and
8 there is no reason why they should be held back if
9 they want to do more. The resolution will give them
10 the opportunity to go through the vetting and
11 selection process just like any other perspective
12 board members. I'd like to thank Manhattan Borough
13 President Gale Brewer for her leadership on this;
14 this was in fact one of her resolutions that I have
15 introduced on her behalf and at her request. And I'd
16 also like to thank my colleagues on the Committee,
17 particularly Council Members Levine and Torres, as
18 well as Council Member Jimmy Vacca, who was a
19 district manager himself, for co-sponsoring this
20 resolution with me. I look forward to another
21 productive hearing and would like to invite you to
22 offer your testimony.

24 GALE BREWER: Thank you very much, it's
25 an honor to be here at this committee with the Chair

2 and the policy analyst and the attorney, very
3 fabulous people. So thank you for the opportunity to
4 testify today in support of New York City Council
5 Resolution 0115-2014, introduced jointly by the
6 Council Member Ben Kallos and by me.

7 As he indicated, this resolution is in
8 support of legislation currently pending in Albany,
9 sponsored by Senator Lanza and Assembly Member Rozic,
10 and it would amend the current statute by allowing
11 Borough Presidents and Council Members to appoint 16-
12 or 17-year-olds to serve on New York City community
13 boards.

14 And I too was on a community board and
15 know the importance of these boards and the need for
16 lots of voices, but this bill does not require, I
17 emphasize, does not require such appointment, it
18 simply allows for a more inclusive process at the
19 discretion of the Borough President and the City
20 Council Members.

21 As the Manhattan Borough President, one
22 of my responsibilities, as mandated by the Charter,
23 is the appointment of members to serve on our
24 designated community boards, and as we all know,
25 community boards have a variety of responsibilities

2 that center on assessing the needs of their
3 neighborhoods and addressing concerns and/or
4 complaints raised by residents.

5 My office, as well as those of the other
6 borough presidents therefore has an interest in
7 seeking to appoint a diversity of individuals who
8 reside, work or who are actively involved in their
9 communities to represent their districts.

10 I spent the morning with the former
11 Borough President of Manhattan, now Comptroller Scott
12 Stringer, who was referenced earlier, and just in
13 terms of this issue of people who have a variety and
14 diversity of interests -- let me be specific. The
15 comptroller was a student at Kennedy High School and
16 he was appointed by then Borough President Percy
17 Sutton, but with him... and he's done pretty well; he
18 actually says that that appointment and that
19 participation helped him become borough president.
20 At the same time, Michael Gelobter -- some of you
21 who've been around for a very long time might know
22 who he is -- Michael Gelobter was appointed at the
23 same age on the same board. Michael Gelobter is
24 African American, he knew his parents, we know his
25 parents; they now live in New Orleans, they were very

2 involved with Katrina; more importantly, he is now a
3 full professor with a Ph.D. from Berkeley working in
4 different universities, but he is the expert in the
5 country on several specific environmental matters.
6 What does he credit his community board experience --
7 I spoke to him yesterday to ask him?

8 These are really important issues to
9 think about, because one of the ways that the
10 community boards play a role for young people, we
11 always, when we hear young scientists in the high
12 school, we wanna pluck 'em out, get 'em into a lab
13 and give them the opportunity to continue their
14 education. Well what we're saying on civic matters,
15 we wanna pluck them out when there's an interest in
16 high school, give them some opportunity to expand on
17 their skills, help us as adults learn more about
18 their interests and then they go on to become -- and
19 I'll talk about other young people too; Jonathan is
20 also phenomenal, we can talk about him -- but they
21 end up being, in this case, an amazing full professor
22 or an amazing comptroller.

23 Back to the bill. Participation is
24 completely voluntary and the individuals who apply to
25 serve on these boards, including young people, do so

2 because they feel it is their civic duty and because
3 they want to serve their neighbors. Currently we are
4 prevented from including youth as full participants
5 on these boards. While 16- and 17-year-olds can
6 participate on youth committees, they are currently
7 barred from serving as appointed community board
8 members. At a time when we are struggling to combat
9 youth disengagement and we are seeking to fund
10 programs and activities to give our youth a place to
11 grow and develop outside of the classroom, it seems
12 counterintuitive for us to turn away youth who want
13 to serve their communities in a more official
14 capacity during their free time.

15 As some of you know, I have been fighting
16 to lower the required age for community board
17 appointments for years, having introduced the first
18 resolution in 2008, when I was on the City Council.
19 I hope this is the year we can finally provide the
20 opportunity for community boards to include the
21 important perspective of youth as fully appointed
22 board members.

23 I have worked with hundreds of interns
24 over the years and have seen firsthand the meaningful
25 role that young people can play in shaping policy and

2 enhancing our neighborhoods. One of my former
3 interns is here today, Benjamin Howard Cooper, and
4 you'll hear from him. He served on Community Board
5 7, also as a young person, as a young man before
6 coming to work with me in my City Council office. He
7 credits his time serving on CB7 for inspiring him to
8 pursue a career in public service and he's gone on
9 for a career in several city and state agencies very
10 successfully.

11 Based on my experience, I believe that
12 young people like Ben can serve as fully appointed
13 community board members as 16- or 17-year-olds.
14 Allowing young people to become board members would
15 benefit the boards by adding a youth perspective,
16 diverse skill set and by increasing the breadth of
17 community representation. It would also promote
18 civic participation among our youth. Studies have
19 shown that early engagement leads to lifelong
20 patterns of voting and continuing civic
21 participation.

22 Support for this proposal among elected
23 officials, advocates and community boards continue to
24 grow. Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams, Bronx
25 Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr. and Staten Island

2 Borough President James Oddo have joined me in
3 calling for the passage of this important legislation
4 in Albany, and I understand that my friend, Borough
5 President Melinda Katz has appointed a 19-year-old
6 from Rockaway to that local board, so she gets it
7 also, and 15 members of the City Council have signed
8 on as co-sponsors of the resolution before the
9 Committee today. The proposal also counts many youth
10 advocacy and service organizations -- and you'll hear
11 from a lot of them today -- as proponents -- the
12 Police Athletic League, and I wanna thank Al Kurland
13 for all of his efforts, the Boy and Girl Scout
14 Councils of NYC, the Children's Aid Society, Goddard
15 Riverside Community Center, Washington Heights Youth
16 Council, Rockaway Youth Task Organization, Generation
17 Citizen, and I know there are many others. Many
18 other cities have already lowered the age required of
19 similar civic bodies, including San Francisco and
20 Philadelphia.

21 I also wanna thank Future Voters of
22 America; that was the organization that Al and Shula
23 Warren from my office and I, we all started with this
24 discussion with that organization a long time ago; it
25 doesn't exist in its exact form, but I can tell you

1
2 the young people who participated in Future Voters of
3 America could easily have been 16- or 17-year-olds on
4 community boards.

5 Both the young people who are selected to
6 serve and the communities those boards represent
7 should benefit from this legislation and we urge the
8 State Legislature to enact this important bill that
9 will allow us to broaden the perspectives on our
10 community boards and encourage civic involvement by
11 our youth. I particularly wanna thank the
12 Assemblywoman Rozic, because she has championed this;
13 she's a young woman herself, she was elected I
14 believe when she was 28 years old, she speaks three
15 or four languages, and she is absolutely intent on
16 passage in Albany; she's gotten bipartisan support.
17 I'm not good at predicting things, but I predict in
18 the next two weeks this bill is gonna pass Albany.

19 Thank you very much for your
20 participation and listening.

21 [applause]

22 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you Manhattan
23 Borough President Brewer for your leadership on this
24 issue over the years. [background comments]

2 I'd like to call David Ng from
3 Assemblywoman Nily Rozic's office.

4 DAVID NG: Good morning everyone. My
5 name is David Ng and I am here to testify on behalf
6 of Assemblywoman Nily Rozic.

7 "My name is Assemblywoman Nily Rozic and
8 I represent the 25th Assembly District in Queens,
9 which includes Community Boards 7, 8 and 11. I would
10 like to thank Manhattan Borough President Brewer for
11 her longstanding leadership on the issue, Chair
12 Kallos, Members of the Committee on Governmental
13 Operations, and fellow supports for holding today's
14 hearing and offering representatives of our community
15 and other interested parties the opportunity to
16 provide testimony.

17 The idea of lower the minimum age of
18 appointment to a New York City community board to 16-
19 year-olds was first introduced in the State
20 Legislature in 2008. The bill was featured in the
21 New York City Times where it was accompanied by the
22 now well-known story of New York City Comptroller
23 Scott Stringer's appointment to his local community
24 board at age 16. Six years later, the minimum age is
25 still 18 and concerns over the lack of youth civic

2 engagements are rising. Having served on my local
3 community board, Community Board 8 in Queens for a
4 couple years prior to being elected, I understand the
5 importance of engaging in civic discourse early on
6 and how it can set a path for a future career in
7 public service and policymaking.

8 Our 59 community boards are a
9 neighborhood's first line of defense on a variety of
10 issues, including zoning matters, the City budget,
11 youth services, and education system. As you know,
12 it also is often the case that each community board
13 has a youth committee where members discuss issues
14 that affect young people. If the minimum age of
15 appointment were lowered so that 16- and 17-year-olds
16 could apply to serve, both community boards and its
17 respective communities and those appointed would
18 benefit from a new exchange of perspectives and
19 ideas.

20 Bill A.2448/S.4142 that I co-sponsored
21 with Senator Andrew Lanza of Staten Island will
22 provide 16- and 17-year-olds with an opportunity
23 learn outside the classroom in a setting that would
24 prepare them for a lifetime of civic participation,
25 whether it be as voters, community organizers or even

2 lawmakers. To be clear, our bill would not mandate
3 that the borough presidents appoint 16- and 17-year-
4 olds to community boards. If passed, it would make
5 the option available to those who are interested in
6 applying and appointment by a borough president would
7 be limited up to two 16- and 17-year-olds per board.

8 Young people who want to be active in
9 their neighborhoods should be able to look to
10 community boards as an option and not just to attend
11 meetings, but to participate in its process. If
12 community boards are going to truly represent their
13 communities and opinions presented before them, then
14 membership should be expanded to 16- and 17-year-olds
15 who are eager and ready to take on the
16 responsibilities that would help shape them into our
17 future leaders.

18 Youth civic engagement will continue to
19 decrease unless we address the heart of the issue.
20 This past Tuesday, June 3rd, 2014, the bill was
21 reported out of the Committee on Governmental
22 Operations with no objections and will soon be taken
23 up by the entire Assembly. It is co-sponsored by 32
24 assembly members from across New York City and by
25 organizations such as Generation Citizens, the Police

2 Athletic League, Inc., the Children's Aid Society,
3 Harlem IBI, and United Neighborhood Houses. Growing
4 support for the bill shows that we value our youth
5 and what they can contribute to better our
6 communities. If passed, your resolution would add to
7 the support as we continue to push for passage of
8 this legislation in this legislative session.

9 Thank you again for the opportunity to
10 offer testimony and for your consideration of my
11 comments."

12 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you very much;
13 thank you to the Assemblywoman [applause] for her
14 leadership on this issue and for making it happen in
15 Albany.

16 I'd like to call up the... I'd like to
17 first recognize that we've been joined by my
18 colleagues, Council Members Torres, Levine and
19 Matteo, and we'll call up the next panel and start
20 questions of them. We have multiple hearings today;
21 we actually have two Governmental Operations
22 hearings; we also have a Land Use hearing on which
23 many of us serve, so we'll actually be having a vote
24 shortly before 11 a.m. and then continuing to hear
25

2 the remainder of testimony so that it is entered into
3 the official record. And so I'd like to...

4 MALE VOICE: Wait, only two hearings,
5 you're slacking off there.

6 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: I... I... I know,
7 [background comment] so... so we... we had previously...
8 and we do need to thank our Counsel and Policy
9 Analyst, David and Tim, for this; I think we're the
10 first committee to have two hearings on the same day;
11 we previously were the first committee to have back
12 to back hearings, and if I am teased by my colleagues
13 any further we will have two hearings at the same
14 time next. [laughter] So I'm going to please call
15 up Al Kurland, from Police Athletic League and Teens
16 on Board, David Crenshaw from Uptown Dreamers Alumni
17 Association and Fran... [background comment] a person
18 with the last name of Berris [sp?] from Future Voters
19 of America. [background comment] And because there
20 are so many people, I think we have over 20 people
21 who are going to be testifying in support of this
22 resolution today and as far as I under... is there
23 anyone here in opposition? So with no opposition,
24 this is hopefully going to pass with the support of
25 my colleagues, who will give their statements in

2 support, hopefully, after this panel. So we're gonna
3 restrict you to three minutes; that is literally just
4 because time is short and there are so many people
5 coming after you and please don't make me gavel you
6 out, but so if you don't mind with your testimony,
7 the clock will begin. Thank you. You'll need to
8 turn on the microphone by pressing the red button.

9 AL KURLAND: Okay, my name is Al Kurland;
10 I currently work for the Police Athletic League and
11 volunteer for this coalition called the Teens on
12 Board Group, which is advocating for passage of the
13 resolution here at the City Council and the companion
14 State legislation to make a reality for fully vetted
15 16- and 17-year-olds to be able to serve their
16 communities with their passion, their education and
17 their dedication to improving those communities.

18 I started in Youth Services back in the
19 1980s, working with youth groups that had no money
20 and virtually no adult staff and ran after-school
21 programs, ran civic programs; ran community
22 improvement programs solely on their person power of
23 teenagers and young adults, okay, to address those
24 issues in Washington Heights in Inwood. That was a
25 time of severe crisis; it was a very, very violent

1 neighborhood, we had 110 homicides a year at our
2 local precinct, we had landlords that were burning
3 down their own buildings and older adults were wary
4 and leery about coming out to go to community
5 meetings and to build human capital and
6 infrastructure. During that period of time it was
7 actually teenagers who stood up and manned and
8 peopled the homework help rooms and after-school
9 programs, went to community board hearings to
10 advocate for reestablishing use of the parks and for
11 getting improved services from the Police Department
12 or where there was cooperation between members of the
13 community and members of the Police Department.

15 During this time, one of the concerns
16 among some adults were, could young adults, teenagers
17 handle this level of responsibility, which is going
18 to school, coming to a youth services agency for 10-
19 15 hours a week and also be able to do well in school
20 at the same time, and that's a legitimate concern.

21 And I could say, you know from my personal and
22 professional experience during this time for the
23 1980s with the Southern Heights Community's organizer
24 of public service [sic], the 1990s with the Ivy
25 League and the 2000s with PAL and their In-STEP

1
2 program, these young people not only handled their
3 civic responsibilities, but they excelled in school,
4 got accepted in college and 90 percent of them
5 graduated from college with college degrees and went
6 on to graduate work. It was almost as if the demands
7 that were made upon them to tap into their talent and
8 their interest helped them to organize their universe
9 and helped the community to organize its universe so
10 that both the community and the young people could
11 both do well.

12 Today we have a new generation of civic
13 activists. 'Kay, we have young executive directors
14 that are shepherding civic improvement in their own
15 neighborhood, from Far Rockaway [bell] to Staten
16 Island and we're hoping that this committee will
17 validate their work.

18 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you.
19 Absolutely. David. [applause]

20 DAVID CRENSHAW: Good morning; I'm glad
21 you all would have me here; my name is Dave Crenshaw;
22 they call me Coach Dave; I'm from the Uptown Dreamers
23 Alumni Association. My Alumni Association is made up
24 of adults 30-40 years old that started doin' sports
25 and Scouts with me in the 70s and the 80s and the 90s

1
2 and the thing about this is, while we had a lot of
3 trips and we won a lot of trophies and we got some
4 great tee shirts, what they appreciate the most are
5 the workshops, the mentors and the projects that help
6 them grow, the projects that help them prepare for
7 the storms that life is gonna bring to you; they
8 don't talk about the parties as much as they talk
9 about -- remember that community service project and
10 the adults didn't show up but they did. I have a lot
11 of young people who are the most effective, are the
12 ones who appreciate learnin', who appreciate
13 education and what we all talk about is, the best
14 championship is really a scholarship, and we believe
15 this resolution is important to pass to put our
16 community on the path that appreciates education and
17 learning and give our kids the right motivation to
18 stay in school and stay around people of education
19 who care about their community. If I wanna be a ball
20 player, I'm gonna try to be on my high school
21 basketball team, if I wanna be a dancer, I'm gonna
22 try to make the talent show. But what happens if I
23 just wanna improve my community? What happens if I
24 just wanna help other people out? There's no real
25 mechanism for me to stay in and get with it. For me

1 to be on a community board in the in the 11th or 12th
2 grade, I've gotta start in the 9th or 10th grade;
3 I've gotta start having a plan; now high school has a
4 focus. I've got a few young people over there; most
5 of them would never be ready for the community board,
6 but there's one young man over there, he's takin'
7 notes right now, he's the best essay writer; if I
8 want him to be on a community board and help out my
9 community, I have to start trainin' him when he's
10 young so that he can get to the community board and
11 be an asset. He has ideas that's already helpin' me
12 at the age of 10, so imagine what he's gonna be like
13 when he's 15, 16 or 17. The other part of it is
14 this, if they sit in a room, it's not the two people
15 who's gonna make the community board, it's the dozens
16 of kids who are gonna try to make the community
17 board. If you pass this resolution, now the child
18 who doesn't wanna be a entertainer, the child who's
19 not a athlete now has another path to do that says,
20 I'm proud of myself, I got a title I want to attain
21 and I wanna be in a room with folks who can help me
22 get a scholarship.

24 So in closing, I would like to ask you
25 all to please pass this resolution and do not limit

2 yourself to a group of people that help you see your
3 community in another way, 'cause when you get teens
4 on the community board, you just don't get their
5 perspective as teens, they also will tell you what
6 their little brothers and sisters are thinking about;
7 they will also tell you what their single parents are
8 thinking about, 'cause on a community board you don't
9 have a lot of folks who can get to the community
10 boards and make that commitment in the younger age
11 group or parents who are workin' around the clock and
12 the teens will bring you information that you cannot
13 get anywhere else. Thank you very much.

14 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you. One
15 thing I'd like to ask is, when you start, please say
16 your name, your organization and also your Twitter
17 name, 'cause it'll make it a lot easier for me to
18 tweet [laughter, background comments] you guys while
19 you're giving testimony. Does your organization have
20 a Twitter name?

21 DAVID CRENSHAW: We will by the end of
22 the day. [laughter]

23 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Perfect.

24 DAVID CRENSHAW: Okay?

CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you. And next up.

FRANCINE BERRIS: Thank you. My name is Francine Berris and I was the founder and Executive Director of Future Voters of America; our organization was obviously formed to give youth a voice in the City. As we tried many different venues, we finally decided to do an Annual Youth Congress and in 2005 at our Youth Congress 300 students from all over the City of private, public and parochial schools asked for a resolution to allow 16-year-olds to vote in local elections. Although I think that's a great idea, I think that idea was a little early and so on the next 2006 Congress they amended this resolution to read that 16- and 17-year-olds be allowed to sit on community boards with a vote. So this is very exciting for me, very exciting to remember the wonderful youth participation of those students across the City that put this resolution into its form and worked very hard for a number of years to try to pass it. So I'm excited here to say that I hope this is the year that this will happen and I remember all of those youth voices that made it a real resolution. Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you very much.
3 So I'm a huge supporter, so I just want to clarify.
4 So you're telling me that if we require... if we
5 appoint 16- and 17-year-olds who are in high school
6 to community boards and they're spending all these
7 hours on community boards that their grades will
8 actually go up and that they will actually be more
9 likely to graduate and graduate not only high school,
10 but college?

11 FRANCINE BERRIS: I think it's a self-
12 selecting group; I think that those young people that
13 think that they can do it and we... I will see to it
14 that they're vetted and we talk with them and see
15 that they are ready; I think they certainly can do
16 it.

17 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: And... [interpose]
18 [background comments]

19 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: You need to bring
20 the microphone over.

21 AL KURLAND: Yeah, Fran mentioned them
22 being a self-selecting group; they're also a group of
23 young people that challenge themselves to do well,
24 otherwise they wouldn't be involved in the first
25

2 place, and that self-challenge is what brings the
3 grades up.

4 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you. And a
5 lot of people criticize, saying, will a 16- or 17-
6 year-old be as active on a community board as a
7 senior citizen or as a 35-year-old or something like
8 that. What is your answer to that argument?

9 DAVID CRENSHAW: I think the average 16-
10 or 17-year-old is not ready for this, but I think the
11 all-start 16- or 17-year-old that you pick, that you
12 approve to be on a school [sic] board would probably
13 be more active, because they know they have a long
14 career coming up and this is gonna be their life, and
15 they're not just gonna do it out on the streets, but
16 they're gonna do it on social media, so more folks
17 are gonna know what's goin' on in the community board
18 and in the community than just if you was... if you
19 just had the average adult on it. The 16- or 17-
20 year-old is gonna add to the community board in a way
21 we can't do it.

22 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you very much.
23 I'd like to turn it over to my... to the sponsors on
24 this legislation, Council Member Torres and Council
25 Member Levine, in that order; Council Member Matteo,

2 do you wanna speak to this as well or? [background
3 comment] Okay.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: First of all I'm
5 honored to... I'm the youngest elected official in the
6 City, so [background comment] this bill has
7 particular meaning to me and so I'm honored to co-
8 sponsor this resolution with Borough President Gale
9 Brewer, with the Chairperson Ben Kallos and my
10 colleague, Mark Levine and you know I see...
11 [background comment] and Council Member Vacca, yes,
12 and actually, I got my start in the community board
13 as Council Member Vacca's district manager for a day
14 in 2005, [background comments, laughter] so... so not...
15 not as a member of the community board, but as a
16 district manager for a day, [background comments] and
17 look where it got me, so... [interpose]

18 AL KURLAND: How old were you?

19 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: it's a natural
20 trajectory. I believe I was 16... 16, yes, which is
21 the perfect age. But I see youth participation in
22 our community boards as a game changer... [interpose]

23 DAVID CRENSHAW: Yes.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: you know as you
25 rightly pointed out, it is the mechanism, it's a

1 natural vehicle for becoming a leader [background
2 comment] in your community and I see youth
3 participation to civic life what campaign finance is
4 to political life; it increases people power, it
5 makes our society more democratic, so you know some
6 people might dismiss this as trivial; I very much see
7 it as a debate about the future of our democracy and
8 the future of civic engagement in New York City and I
9 couldn't be prouder to endorse this resolution. So
10 thank you so much.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: 'Kay. Thank you,
13 Council Member Torres; thank you Chairman Kallos; I'm
14 following orders here; my Twitter handle is
15 @MarkLevineNYC [laughter], I expect to see a lot of
16 activity. [laughter] [background comment] I... I
17 can't tell you how impressed I am by the coalition
18 which has come together around this issue, great
19 leaders like our borough president, like Assembly
20 Member Rozic, like yourself, Chairman Kallos, and
21 some of the individuals here testifying today I know
22 very well -- Al Kurland, Dave Crenshaw, are two of
23 the most admired people in Northern Manhattan and
24 it's part because they've been living the kind of
25 youth work that we're talking about here, empowering

1 young people of all ages. They show that it's
2 possible and they show that the benefits are enormous
3 and we need to expand this citywide and this
4 resolution gives us a chance to do it. You know,
5 it's not just important that we have youth voice on
6 issues like schools, education, after-school
7 programs, pretty obvious, but I want to hear youth's
8 opinion on every park we redesign; I wanna hear youth
9 opinion on policing strategies in the neighborhood; I
10 wanna hear youth opinion on how we reconfigure a bus
11 stop; I wanna hear youth opinion on public health
12 strategies like how we can improve diet and exercise
13 in the neighborhood. You'd be hard pressed to find
14 any issue in which the debate wouldn't be enriched by
15 having the viewpoints of young people, and so there's
16 great benefits for 16- and 17-year-olds themselves,
17 which we've heard expressed eloquently. But for the
18 benefit of the broader city and for community boards,
19 we need to do this. And I've heard pushback from
20 people who say, well you know, you're diluting the
21 pool or you're weakening the standards, you're
22 lowering the bar; we're not doing any of those
23 things. Everyone under this legislation, whether
24 they're 16 or 60, still has to adhere to the basic
25

1 requirements for joining the board, everyone, no
 2 matter what their age, they have to have a strong
 3 connection to the community, they have to be able to
 4 converse in a productive manner about local policy
 5 issues, they have to be able to work effectively in a
 6 team, in a diverse team; very difficult, they have to
 7 have the commitment to attend meetings and do the
 8 hard work of being a good community board member, and
 9 let's be real, there are some adults right now who
 10 are not meeting all those standards. [background
 11 comment, laughter] And I have a feeling that young
 12 people will be more eager to prove themselves, more
 13 grateful for the opportunity and are gonna exceed
 14 expectations.
 15

16 I just wanna close by observing how
 17 absurd it is that we're passing -- hopefully
 18 passing -- a resolution today [cough] as opposed to
 19 an introduction; I wanna explain what that means. We
 20 are simply, if we pass this reso today, expressing
 21 the will of the City Council in support of [cough]
 22 state legislation, but this is policy which only
 23 affects the five boroughs and whether it's setting
 24 our own rent law or setting our own minimum wage; for
 25 god sakes, setting the speed limit here, we have to

1 go to Albany on matters that only pertain to the five
2 boroughs. I know this would have passed a long time
3 ago easily if the City Council had the ability to
4 determine the policy for something like community
5 boards, which only exist in the five boroughs of New
6 York City. I'm optimistic that because we have
7 strong leadership from people like Assembly Member
8 Rozic, that we're gonna win in Albany, but we
9 shouldn't even have to be going through that step, it
10 should be determined by the will of [cough] people of
11 New York City. But because of the coalition that's
12 come together, groups like Generation Citizen and all
13 the activists I mentioned before, I'm confident we're
14 gonna win in the Council and in Albany and that's
15 gonna make all our community boards better. Thank
16 you.
17

18 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Council Member
19 Matteo.

20 [applause]

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: I wanna commend
22 my colleagues on this important resolution and Mark,
23 you so eloquently explained the issue. But Coach
24 Dave, I just... I was very impressed with your... with
25 your testimony; not only are you saying you support

2 the resolution, but you're providing the standard,
3 which I think we all strive for our young folks to
4 meet, but for this, I appreciate that you said that
5 you're going to prepare them; that they're going to
6 be ready, because being on the community board, you
7 know [background comment] it's... it's important, it's
8 important that we hear the voice of the community and
9 anytime we can involve young folks to... in government
10 and give us a fresh perspective is always a good
11 benefit to government. So again, your testimony was
12 spot on; I appreciate it and I wanna thank my
13 colleagues, especially Senator Lanza for sponsoring
14 for this reso. Thank you.

15 DAVID CRENSHAW: Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: I'm gonna give my
17 colleague, Council Member Torres one minute for a
18 question and then we will be taking a vote so that my
19 colleagues can get to the next committee hearing.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: So I wanna hear
21 your response to one common argument that I hear, is
22 that whether there is enough interest out there to
23 fill community boards with young people, that
24 community boards, especially in the Bronx, have
25 trouble getting 20-year-olds or 30-year-old; in some

1 cases 40-year-olds on the community board, so how do
2 we get 16- and 17-year-olds; what are your thoughts
3 on outreach to ensure that we live up to the promise
4 of this resolution?
5

6 FRANCINE BERRIS: I think it's been
7 mentioned a lot today about the wonderful youth
8 organizations that are involved in this and the
9 wonderful young leaders of these organizations and in
10 speaking to a number of them, I think that they're
11 the ones that are going to reach out for leadership
12 and they're gonna train their leaders and they're
13 going to again pick those ones that perk up at the
14 top and want to really work like you do and did at 16
15 years old. So I really would rely on youth
16 organizations to do that outreach and train and vet
17 their leaders.

18 DAVID CRENSHAW: If I might add to that,
19 you... in each of your districts, you can go to any
20 Scout unit and you'll find at least one Scout who's
21 on the path to bein' a Eagle Scout and he can help
22 the community board right now. In each of your
23 districts you can go to any one of your top schools
24 and you'll see somebody running student government
25 that is right now ready to help make this city

2 better. I don't think you'll have trouble filling
3 the spots; I think you're gonna have to work a little
4 too hard tryin' to future out which ones you wanna
5 keep. [laughter]

6 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Okay. I'd now like
7 to open up the vote on this resolution.

8 COMMITTEE CLERK: William Martin,
9 Committee Clerk, roll call vote, Committee on
10 Governmental Operations, Resolution 115. Council
11 Member Kallos.

12 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Aye.

13 COMMITTEE CLERK: Levine.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Proudly vote aye.

15 COMMITTEE CLERK: Torres.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: Proudly vote aye
17 or wish we could go as low as 15 now, but.

18 [laughter]

19 COMMITTEE CLERK: Matteo.

20 [background comments]

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MATTEO: Aye.

22 COMMITTEE CLERK: By a vote of 4 in the
23 affirmative, 0 in the negative and no abstention;
24 item has been adopted. Members, please sign the
25 Committee Report. Thank you.

2 [cheers, applause, comments]

3 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: We're... we're gonna
4 hold the vote open for our last committee member, if
5 they should make it before the end of the hearing.
6 And that being said, thank you to our first panel and
7 I will now call up the next panel, which is Sarah
8 Zeller-Berkman from the Youth Development Institute,
9 Milan Taylor from the Rockaway Youth Task Force, and
10 Sarah Andes from Generation Citizen.

11 [tapping]

12 SARAH ZELLER-BERKMAN: Is it on? Yes.

13 [background comment]

14 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: You may begin.

15 SARAH ZELLER-BERKMAN: Okay. Greetings
16 Chairman Kallos and Committee members; I'm gonna keep
17 this brief, 'cause I know we have a lot of people
18 that want to speak and express their support today.

19 My name is Sarah Zeller-Berkman and I'm
20 the Director of Community Development at the Youth
21 Development Institute. I'm testifying today in the
22 hopes of impressing upon the Committee the importance
23 of Resolution 0115.2014, allowing 16- and 17-year-
24 olds to serve on community boards. In my field in
25 youth development, we work really hard to both

1 support and build capacity to have youth voice, but
2 there are few places in New York City where young
3 people are actually listened to, and so this
4 resolution would provide a means for young people to
5 have a say about issues that impact their life and as
6 Council Member Levine said, it's not just about
7 issues related to education or juvenile justice or
8 things specifically around young people, but having
9 young people's expertise on a variety of issues that
10 affect communities.
11

12 I'm a person that's both studied youth
13 participation, kind of in my doctoral path, and then
14 also for the past 10 years support organizations to
15 do that work and build capacity around adults to
16 partner with young people. And I am, you know, very
17 convinced and there's a lot of research that supports
18 the idea that there's multiple levels of impact, so
19 this has an impact on young people, but it also has
20 an impact on adults, programs, communities and
21 institutions, and I think that with a City Council
22 and a Mayor that are so committed to equity and an
23 engaged citizenry, it's really important to have
24 things in place where young people can have a say in
25

2 their communities and have an impact and that we can
3 all benefit from their expertise.

4 So please support Resolution 0115 and
5 allow us all to benefit from young people's wisdom
6 and commitment.

7 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you.

8 SARAH ZELLER-BERKMAN: Thank you.

9 MILAN TAYLOR: Good morning everyone. My
10 name is Milan Taylor; I'm the President and founder
11 of the Rockaway Youth Task Force and I'm also the
12 chair of Youth Services for Community Board 14 out in
13 Queens. I was appointed to Community Board 14 at 19
14 years old, I don't know why I was interested in being
15 on the board, but luckily I was appointed and very
16 quickly I realized that every single thing pertaining
17 to youth would go directly to me, and I honestly
18 didn't feel comfortable speaking on behalf of every
19 single young person in my community and I looked
20 around and I wondered where are the other young
21 people, so that's what motivated me to actually start
22 the Rockaway Youth Task Force to gain... to gather more
23 youth voices in our communities and it's just so
24 important to have other young people to be able to
25 offer their voices and opinions and not only have

1 very old adults represent an entire demographic.
2 [laughter, background comment] Sorry; [laughter] had
3 to be careful. [background comments] But also,
4 we've been success... [bell] the Rockaway Youth Task
5 Force has been successful in getting a 19-year-old
6 appointed by Borough President Melinda Katz and I
7 think it's very ironic that her argument is that
8 young people aren't seasoned, they're not ready, but
9 she appointed a 19-year-old, so [background comment]
10 just wanted to put that out there.

12 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you very much.

13 SARAH ANDES: Good morning, my name's
14 Sarah Andes and I'm the New York City Site Director
15 for Generation Citizen; our Twitter handle is
16 @GenCitizen, right? [background comments, laughter]
17 Yeah. And I'd like to thank you, Chair Kallos and
18 the rest of the members of the Committee for having
19 us and inviting us all to participate in this really
20 important discussion.

21 Over the past three years Generation
22 Citizen has worked with thousands of middle and high
23 school students from across the five boroughs of New
24 York and those students prove to us time and time
25 again that they are capable not only of identifying

2 local, neighborhood, school and city-based issues of
3 concern, but they're capable of strategically and
4 creatively addressing and tackling those problems in
5 really lasting and meaningful ways, whether it's
6 mobilizing their peers to lobby for pedestrian safety
7 legislation; whether it's developing in-house
8 curricula to address bullying incidents at their
9 school. When given the opportunity, I think that
10 we've seen, and that we would [background comments]
11 hope others realize too, that young people can and
12 will speak up.

13 In reference to Councilman Torres'
14 question about the preparation of these young
15 applicants, it's also our hope that this opportunity
16 for 16-; 17-year-olds to serve on local community
17 boards will actually prompt a larger conversation
18 within schools, a conversation that isn't happening
19 from the work that we've done, even in 12th grade
20 participation in government classes, in over 50
21 schools throughout the City this year, and if young
22 people have this opportunity to engage in community
23 board participation, there's a strong... we hope that
24 teachers and educators and families will then be
25 talking about this opportunity; that young people go

2 back and talk about this opportunity and not only
3 encourage the individuals themselves to apply for
4 board membership, but also to just mobilize young
5 people about being engaged; perhaps serving as public
6 members of these community boards as well and
7 bringing community board responsibilities and
8 activities to a new audience, which is a little bit
9 harder for them to access because of age differences,
10 which Milan referenced before.

11 And then lastly, I think the point to
12 underscore with this resolution and with the
13 accompanying state legislation is that youth
14 participation will still remain optional on boards,
15 but we think that certain boards' reticence to
16 include youth members shouldn't preclude the
17 possibility and the opportunity for other boards
18 which are interested in strengthening and
19 diversifying their membership by including youth
20 participation. So thank you all for your support of
21 the resolution and I'm excited to see it make its way
22 through Albany as well.

23 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you very much;
24 I wanna just remind everyone to please make sure to
25 try to submit written testimony; while the things

2 that you're giving as testimony will be in the
3 official record, it will not be search engine
4 optimized, [laughter] so please feel free to email
5 that in to Policy@BenKallos.com. And at this time
6 I'd like to recognize my colleague and Chair of the
7 Land Use Committee, Council Member David Greenfield,
8 who needs to go to his committee hearing, but if you
9 have any questions, comments or would like to cast
10 your vote, we welcome it.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GREENFIELD: I vote aye.
12 Thank you.

13 [background comments, laughter]

14 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you.

15 COMMITTEE CLERK: Final vote on
16 Resolution is now 5 in the affirmative, 0 in the
17 negative and no abstention.

18 [background comments]

19 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Congratulations on
20 unanimous passage.

21 [cheers, applause] [background comments]

22 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: I recognize Council
23 Member Levine for a question. [interpose, crosstalk]

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Milan, before you
25 escape, sorry; you're off the hot seat in a moment.

1
2 [laughter] I wanna dig a little deeper on an issue
3 you brought up, which is what... assuming that we win
4 this fight and we can get one or two youth members on
5 every community board, what do the adult members need
6 to do to make young people feel welcomed, included;
7 not overburdened that they have to speak for an
8 entire generation every time they open their mouth;
9 what advice do you have for the adults?

10 MILAN TAYLOR: The biggest piece of
11 advice I think that I would have for older adult
12 members of community boards that are looking to
13 support youth is to put themselves in the shoes of
14 youth -- just remember when they were young. Very
15 often I would get criticized for making comments and
16 saying, oh that's been done before, that's been tried
17 -- touched a soft spot. [laughter] But seriously, I
18 would definitely say for them to have very open minds
19 and to be patient, very patient and to act as a sort
20 of history book and to explain to the youth what's
21 been tried and try to come up with solutions
22 collectively for new and improved ideas to those old
23 problems that can be fixed with the joint effort of
24 youth and adults.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Very eloquently
3 said, your board's lucky to have you as a member.

4 MILAN TAYLOR: Thank you.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: And I think to
6 the extent that young people are eliciting responses
7 like, oh we've done that before, they're succeeding,
8 because we need to challenge boards to break out of
9 group think and look at all problems anew, and this
10 is a problem for community boards, that young people
11 with a fresh perspective might help us solve. So
12 you've made a very powerful argument for inclusion of
13 your peers on boards. Thank you. [crosstalk]

14 MILAN TAYLOR: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you very much
16 to this panel. I'd like to call up Michael from CACF
17 and ASAI, Alan Schulman from the Center for Study and
18 Practice of Social Studies (CSPSS) and Ramon [sic]
19 Spence from PAL.

20 [background comments]

21 MICHAEL MIALDI: Good morning. My name
22 is Michael Mialdi [sp?] and I am a youth leader from
23 the Asian American Student Advocacy Project (ASAP),
24 under the Coalition for Asian American Children and
25 Families (CACF). We would like to thank Chair Kallos

2 and members of the Government Operations Committee
3 for holding this important oversight hearing on
4 calling upon the New York State Legislature to pass
5 and the Governor to sign into law A.2448 and S.4142,
6 which would allow 16- and 17-year-olds to be
7 appointed to New York City community boards.

8 CACF is the Nation's only Pan-Asian
9 children's advocacy organization and works to improve
10 the health and well-being of Asian Pacific American
11 (APA) children and families in New York City in three
12 key policy areas: education, health and child
13 welfare.

14 ASAP, a youth leadership project,
15 comprised of New York City public high school
16 students from all five boroughs, it has been a
17 program under CACF for the past 10 years, working to
18 empower youth people to learn, to make positive
19 changes in education through advocacy.

20 I would like to take this opportunity to
21 state that ASAP supports laws A.2448 and S.4142 and
22 believes that it will have a long-term positive
23 impact on college readiness for our next generation
24 of all the communities in NYC.

2 I am also here today to represent my
3 fellow ASAP members and to testify and highlight
4 challenges of APA youth in NYC public schools and how
5 ASAP has worked to address those issues as an example
6 of high school youth that are making positive changes
7 for their community.

8 As today's hearing is focused on youth
9 involvement in community action, we would also like
10 to take this opportunity to address issues within the
11 APA community and highlight our needs and concerns.
12 Currently 29 percent of APAs live in poverty, the
13 highest of all racial groups in NYC and APAs have the
14 highest rate of linguistic isolation, 42 percent;
15 meaning that no one over the age of 14 in a household
16 speaks English well. If you would like to hear more
17 about these issues and ASAP's work, we invite you to
18 our community briefing this Friday and there's
19 information on this flyer that I will be passing out.
20 Many studies have analyzed the correlation between
21 poverty in the community and education attainment and
22 success. For APA youth, may face the challenges of
23 coming from low-income backgrounds; in addition, many
24 also face issues of being the first in their families
25 to attend schools in this country. In public school,

1
2 1 out of 5 Asian Pacific American students is an
3 English language learner. As immigrants or being
4 children of immigrants, many APAs face the daunting
5 challenges of learning how to navigate the education
6 system, learn English and stay on track to graduate
7 and be college ready.

8 As there are certain pervasive notions
9 that Asian Americans are doing well and do not need
10 support or assistance, we are here today to provide a
11 clear understanding on how to fully support our
12 community. Currently one out of four Asian Pacific
13 American high school students do not graduate on time
14 or at all. It is important, when considering the
15 realities of these numbers to notice that many in our
16 community come from working class and/or immigrant
17 families; these social circumstances impact
18 development of APA youth, which currently make up
19 approximately 14 percent of New York City public
20 school population.

21 As one can see, APA youth in NYC face
22 many challenges that impact their education. In ASAP
23 we work to identify issues in the community, develop
24 solutions and we advocate for improvements. In our
25 work we have conducted research in our communities

1 and ASAP realized that the quality of student support
2 [bell] provided by guidance programs in New York City
3 public schools is different at every school. Not all
4 schools have the same type of guidance program which
5 impacts the types of support that youth experience.
6 Many APA youth come from immigrant families, struggle
7 to get the support they need at home to navigate high
8 school, since their parents are either not home,
9 working all the time, or do not understand the school
10 system themselves. One of the ways I played a
11 meaningful role in my community was through my
12 involvement with ASAP. Recognizing the issues of APA
13 youth, ASAP developed a college and career readiness
14 campaign, called Campaign Bridge, to better support
15 youth to be post-high school ready, in counseling
16 roles to help ensure all students have the guidance
17 they need to... [interpose]

19 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Do you mind wrapping
20 up so we can have time for everyone else?

21 [crosstalk]

22 MICHAEL MIALDI: Of course. We would
23 like to commend members of this committee that have
24 been so supportive and invested to ensure that all
25 New York City youth have the opportunity to voice

1
2 their opinions and get involved in community boards.
3 ASAP believes that youth are just as important as
4 decision-makers and if given a role, they will have a
5 positive impact on the community. Thank you for
6 giving us the opportunity to speak with you all
7 today.

8 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you.

9 ALAN SCHULMAN: Good morning. Hi. I'm
10 Alan... [bell] [laughter] I almost was Alan Schulman.
11 I'm Alan Schulman; I'm representing the Center for
12 the Study and Practice of Social Studies and I sit on
13 the Executive Board of the Association of Teachers of
14 Social Studies of the United Federation of Teachers.

15 We got into this conversation about what
16 to do about the community boards three years ago and
17 I wanna congratulate Al Kurland and the team that
18 pushed this thing into a resolution here. It's an
19 issue that we've been dealing with... I'm a former
20 Projects Coordinator for the Department of Education
21 and a former school teacher and a former student
22 government advisor, and I've always understood the
23 potential for the nexus between student government,
24 social studies and the community boards' potential to
25

1
2 act as an educational asset to the local neighborhood
3 schools.

4 So we've separated out the conversation
5 of K-12 to a senior high school conversation and for
6 us the social studies program in the senior high
7 schools is built around the civic component of the
8 soc... and it's been unevenly developed in most high
9 schools and the whole issue of student empowerment is
10 gone. So what we've developed out at Boys and Girls
11 High School, with the cooperation of the former
12 Superintendent of Alternative High Schools, Bernard
13 Gassaway, who has now come back to Boys and Girls
14 High School as the principal, is that the issue of
15 what goes on inside the school and the professional
16 staff's ability to prepare the young high school
17 adults for their future as adults is conditional on
18 the neighborhood and the communities that Boys and
19 Girls High School sits in. And so what we've
20 developed is a model that's now called the Boys and
21 Girls High School Student School Neighborhood and
22 Community Organization, and the model has not only
23 the entire school population being wired for student
24 government, but the president of the student
25 government now sitting on the cabinet of the

2 principal with a vote with a student government
3 advisor on the cabinet as the advisor to the student
4 government, but our model reaches out into the
5 community and in our model we have representatives of
6 the student government sitting on each of the
7 Community Board 3 Brooklyn committees, there are
8 seven of them, and the president of the student
9 government sitting on the executive committee of the
10 student. What this does for us is it completes the
11 model for us, because now we have a permanent seat
12 that's minted for the representative of the student
13 government at Boys and Schools High School to
14 represent the entire student body and the will of the
15 student body. We've got two other people who are
16 gonna speak on this, Rozella Clyde and Damaris [sp?]
17 Dunn. But the one piece [bell] that's different
18 about our model, and Damaris is gonna talk about it,
19 is that in support of this student participation at
20 the community board, we're developing a course called
21 Participation in School Neighborhood and Community
22 Affairs in Government that'll be a social studies,
23 credit-bearing course in preparation for the student
24 activist who will then be out in the community
25 representing the student government. [interpose]

2 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: If you could share
3 that course material with our committee, we would
4 love it. Thank you for your testimony.

5 ALAN SCHULMAN: We're inventing it this
6 summer.

7 [laughter]

8 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Great.

9 RAYMOND SPENCE: How you doin'? My name
10 is Raymond Spence. Ever since I was a young kid I
11 always wanted to be President of the United States
12 and I knew that I was only able to do that by being
13 proactive. As Al spoke of earlier, I was one of the
14 teens who was first involved with this back in 2007
15 and 2008, when it was brought up. I knew back then
16 that only being proactive I was gonna go far in life.
17 Being proactive as a teenager got me to be police
18 commissioner for a day; being proactive as a teenager
19 got me a scholarship into one of the best business
20 schools in the country; being proactive had me
21 publish my second book by the age of 18. You know,
22 you can't say that teenagers aren't proactive and
23 don't wanna do things, because I'm a product of being
24 proactive; I'm a product of the Police Athletic
25 League; I'm a product of someone who helped out and

1 participated on community boards within my community.
2 I remember growing up, 'cause I grew up in the South
3 Bronx; a lot of people would tell me that you can't
4 do this, you can't do that or our people were only
5 able to do certain things because of the neighborhood
6 that we were brought up in. Being proactive helped
7 me break through those barriers and gain the level of
8 success that I have today. I'm in full support of
9 the bill; it's something that I'm fighting for; as
10 far as, you know the question that was brought up
11 earlier, teenagers that wanna get involved, last year
12 alone I got over 300 signatures within two weeks from
13 teenagers; that was from the Bronx alone. I got over
14 350 signatures again within two weeks about a month
15 ago for teenagers who are in support of the bill
16 being passed. You know, I thank you guys for
17 listening to us and I really hope that the bill goes
18 far. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you Raymond; I
21 just wanna [applause] let you know I... one of the ways
22 I got my start was testifying at this very committee
23 in front of then Council Member Gale Brewer on open
24 data and other transparency initiatives, so I think
25 you're off to a good start and Mark and I would like

2 a position in the cabinet [laughter] once you are
3 elected. So thank you and thank you for your
4 leadership.

5 I have a quick question for Coalition for
6 Asian American Children and Families. Do you believe
7 that by having youth on community boards,
8 specifically opening it and recruiting the population
9 served by your organization will help with some of
10 the issues your community is facing, including
11 linguistic isolation?

12 MICHAEL MIALDI: Yes, I do believe that;
13 as well I would like to add that if students see
14 diversity in their government, they will be able to
15 participate as well; they will look up to role models
16 and they will be more engaged.

17 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Council Member
18 Levine.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Raymond, do you
20 think I could be Director of NASA? [laughter,
21 background comment] Great, thank you.

22 In all seriousness, no one could meet you
23 [laughter, background comments] and hear you testify
24 and hear a little about your trajectory, including
25 having published a book before you're 18, if I heard

2 that correctly, and say that you're not qualified to
3 be on the community board. You're more qualified;
4 not to put anyone down, than plenty of people who I
5 know who currently sit on community boards. And we
6 don't need thousands of people of your caliber to
7 make this work, there's 59 community boards, so we
8 need two for each board, 118, and I think there's
9 maybe 200,000 people in this age cohort in the city,
10 so there probably are thousands of kids like you, but
11 at a minimum there is going to be a great supply of
12 leaders; probably the problem will be narrowing it
13 down for the two slots that we're hoping to make in
14 every board. Do you have a sense among your peers of
15 just how many young people out there would be
16 interested and qualified for this kind of role?

17 RAYMOND SPENCE: If I ask, they'll do it,
18 [laughter, background comments] you know. Like I
19 said, so far within the past two years I had 600
20 signatures, so right there along that's over 600
21 people that will be willing to do... and those are all
22 from 16- to 17-year-olds, so.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: And that was just
24 in your neighborhood, right? Right.

2 RAYMOND SPENCE: Yes, that was just in
3 the South Bronx alone.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Amazing.
5 Amazing. Great. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you very much.
7 I'd like to call the next panel. Francesca Chaney
8 from PAL Beacon Brooklyn, Bobby from Island Voice,
9 Inc. and Damaris Dunn from Boys and Girls High
10 School.

11 [background comments]

12 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Whoever's ready.

13 FRANCESCA CHANEY: Hello everyone, my
14 name is Francesca Chaney and I'm representing PAL,
15 the Beacon branch in East New York, Brooklyn today.

16 In order to fully serve the needs and
17 interests of all of the members of our community, we
18 need to be properly represented and all of the
19 members of the community need to be heard. Allowing
20 16- and 17-year-olds the open opportunity and option
21 to serve on community boards gives a voice to the
22 youth. [interpose, background comments] The
23 perspectives, experiences and ideas of young people
24 will add a different dynamic to the way that we see
25 our community, because we are fully aware of the

2 youth experience and we are getting a firsthand
3 account.

4 At the age of 16 I was involved in
5 multiple community organizations and I had already
6 started my own. Exclusion because of age is nearly
7 as bad as discrimination, because it's taking away
8 the voice of the youth, which in turn results in a
9 huge chunk of the community being silenced. Thank
10 you.

11 DAMARIS DUNN: Good morning. My name is
12 Damaris Dunn; Alan Schulman mentioned me; I'm a
13 teacher at Boys and Girls High School, and I will be
14 teaching the School Community and Neighborhood class
15 next semester, because our principal has approved it
16 and we're working on the curriculum. My students
17 have been very adamant about participating in their
18 own advocacy; they have already had a community
19 charrette, they've spoken to the stakeholders within
20 the building and they have found that some of the
21 same issues that they had in high school, they still
22 exist and by having that conversation, it made it so
23 that my students could see what was goin' on in the
24 community as far as their school in itself. I think
25 that 16- and 17-year-olds have a lot to say, they

2 have more to say than we think, and they're a lot
3 smarter than some of the people that... [laugh] on the
4 community board currently. You know, I went to Youth
5 and Services Committee for Community Board 3 and
6 there were no youth, and that is a pending question,
7 which I think you guys have addressed and I hope, I
8 really, really hope that they pass this in Albany.
9 Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you.

11 BOBBY DIGI: Hello, good morning; my name
12 is Bobby Digi; I'm the Executive Director and founder
13 of an organization called Island Voice and our
14 Twitter handle is @IslandVoiceInc.

15 I'm here representing Staten Island,
16 although my work takes me citywide and
17 internationally. I've been a youth advocate for over
18 a decade now and I draw from my experience growing up
19 in probably one of the worst projects on Staten
20 Island, which is Park Hill, where some of you know
21 Wu-Tang Clan came from. But most importantly, I felt
22 the need to be here today and to just really make a
23 statement, a strong statement in support of the
24 resolution and to also stand with my colleagues, and
25 I must comment Al for really pushin' the different

2 groups citywide, because we are all connected. Youth
3 issues are a big matter, the youths are the future;
4 they're a lot smarter than they are given credit for.
5 Yes, there are a few bad apples out there, but if we
6 continue to echo that, which is what happens, and not
7 provide solutions and opportunities and pathway for
8 them to find their way through the concrete jungle
9 and the social ills that are out there, then we
10 ourselves are at fault for breeding a generation that
11 isn't empowered.

12 I've produced youth summits across the
13 city and I can tell you for certain; I can put all of
14 my savings on it and say that, once you've given a
15 young person an opportunity to be in a position to
16 create, to lead, to come up with ideas, to develop;
17 you will find such inspirational energy just comes
18 from out of there, and I say that also as someone,
19 you know, a bit older, I'm gonna be 40, but I work
20 very closely with youths from inner city to
21 international groups and it's all the same; they
22 wanna be heard, they wanna be included in the
23 process, they want to be given an opportunity to give
24 ideas and be heard, and I say that this resolution
25 will be a seed in many other positive ideas, or

2 measures that can be given and created for young
3 folks citywide and internationally to connect,
4 because you talk about a community, a board in a
5 community and how can you have that without havin'
6 the youth voice on board, considering that when you
7 talk about parks, when you talk about education;
8 every aspect touches up on youths, and their insight
9 and input is critical to being able to resolve a lot
10 of the challenges that we face. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you all for
12 your testimony. I'd like to call the next [bell]
13 panel. I'd like to call somebody from Port George
14 Station, Fort George Station, I'd like to call
15 Rozella Clyde, a retired social studies teacher and
16 current Ph.D. candidate, and Benjamin Howard Cooper,
17 Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer's former
18 intern. If anyone else wants to testify, please see
19 the sergeant at arms and provide your name on one of
20 these slips of paper, and I wanna just thank everyone
21 for a very orderly and quick hearing. So without
22 further ado, whoever's ready.

23 FE FLORIMON: I will. Good morning
24 everyone. My name is Fe Florimon; I am the Chair of
25 the Youth and Education Committee of Community Board

2 12; I also am the Treasurer and Borough President
3 Appointee to the Community Education Council for
4 District 6, but today I am not here wearing those
5 hats, but as an education advocate.

6 Mr. Chairman Kallos and all the City
7 Council members, I want to thank you so much for
8 making this public hearing possible and for allowing
9 us to stand up and speak on this important issue.

10 As an advocate of education, I am here in
11 support of the pending City Council Resolution
12 0115.2014 with the hope that this honorable and
13 mindful city body consider to open the gate of civil
14 engagement for our young people, our future
15 generation who are the future leaders of this
16 wonderful country. The same way your community has
17 opened the gate for each and all of you to be where
18 you find yourself today, I kindly and respectfully
19 would like to ask that you open the same gate of
20 opportunities for our young people by passing this
21 pending resolution that would allow for the
22 appointment of 16- and 17-year-olds in all community
23 boards in New York City. The passing of this
24 resolution will send a strong message to our
25 legislators in Albany and will perhaps encourage them

1 to open the same gate for our young people. I
2 personally feel that allowing the appointment of
3 young people in community boards in New York City
4 will create more opportunity for young people, which
5 is already happening in many cities. Here in New
6 York City we have our present comptroller, Mr. Scott
7 Stringer, as our Borough President pointed out early
8 this morning, and that offers us an immediate example
9 of success of teens on boards. I personally believe
10 that the passing of this resolution will help promote
11 civic engagement in their communities, get a better
12 understanding of the needs of their community, get a
13 better understanding of government functionality at
14 local level; it would also help young people to learn
15 how to interact professionally with adult
16 environment, the opportunity also to develop their
17 leadership skills and last, I also believe that this
18 legislation will also allow young people to become
19 active participants in the decision-making process
20 that will impact their community [bell] in a daily
21 basis. I wanna thank you all, but most important, I
22 also wanna thank my colleague, Al Kurland, and also
23 our Borough President. So and last, facing the
24 changing that this world is... or the changing that
25

2 this world is facing so rapidly, let's consider the
3 passing of this resolution. Mr. Chairman and the
4 rest of you, thank you dearly so much for having me.

5 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you very much
6 and thank you for your numerous leadership positions
7 and for coming here personally. Thank you.

8 [crosstalk]

9 FE FLORIMON: Thank you.

10 ROZELLA CLYDE: Hello, my name is Rozella
11 Clyde and I do sit on the ATSS/UFT, Association of
12 Teachers of Social Studies/United Federation of
13 Teachers Committee as the Special Projects
14 Coordinator and am Co-Chair of the Center for the
15 Study and Practice of Social Studies, but I come here
16 today representing a social studies educator, and I
17 taught social studies for... oh by the way, and my
18 hashtag... my Twitter account is Allezor, A l l e z o
19 r, which is Rozella spelled backwards. After being a
20 social studies educator for 46 years, 48 [sic] of
21 them in New York City public high schools, and now am
22 acting also as an Adjunct Professor for the School of
23 Education at Hofstra University, where I taught
24 adolescent psychology. Youth developmental education
25 skills through real life activities are essential,

2 but during the time... and I'm also currently a Ph.D.
3 candidate for instructional design for online
4 learning, with a focus on adolescent educational
5 issues.

6 During the 25 years that I was a mock
7 trial and a moot court team coach, I saw young people
8 rise to professional excellence, arguing moot court
9 cases in a framed atmosphere; those young people who
10 devoted that kind of energy and enthusiasm over those
11 imaginary cases, if they were given the opportunity
12 to direct those energies towards real life situations
13 would bring the same level of talent, energy,
14 enthusiasm and creativity, given that opportunity.

15 But more importantly, the New York State Board of
16 Regents has recently approved a new social studies
17 framework and as part of that new social studies
18 framework, which is built upon the C3 Framework for
19 National Council for the Social Studies, encouraging
20 students to become actively involved and to be
21 prepared as citizens, as their role... in their most
22 important role in this country as citizens, this
23 framework requires 9-12 students to be provided with
24 the opportunity to make informed decisions and to
25 take informed actions. I encourage... oh I laud your

2 support for the resolution, thank you [laugh] for
3 Resolution 0115, and maintain that by allowing the
4 students to have this opportunity that they would be
5 engaged in an educational activity that has already
6 been validated by the New York State Board of
7 Regents. Thank you very much.

8 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you.

9 BENJAMIN HOWARD COOPER: Good morning, my
10 name is Benjamin Howard Cooper and I'm here today to
11 speak as a private citizen. [bell] When I was 15
12 years old I was appointed to Community Board 7 on the
13 Upper West Side of Manhattan, which I believe makes
14 me the youngest community board member to date, and
15 while there are questions surrounding the legality of
16 my appointment [background comments, laughter] and my
17 votes, there is no doubt to the value that I provided
18 to Community Board 7. I was appointed to the
19 Executive Committee, serving as Co-Secretary and
20 served on both the Youth and Education and Landmarks
21 and Preservations Committees. To the point raised by
22 Council Member Levine, the value that I provided went
23 beyond my youth representation and the matters
24 pertaining to education and after school, but rather
25 to the entirety of the issues that were raised before

1
2 the Board. I remember my colleagues used to approach
3 me and ask me questions related to the ULURP process;
4 you know, here I was, a little 16-year-old who had to
5 rush home to do his AP chemistry homework, but the
6 Board really recognized the efforts and the talents
7 that I brought to the Board.

8 Beyond what I gave, it's really more
9 about what the Board gave to me. As mentioned by
10 Borough President Brewer in her testimony, after
11 serving on community board, I went to work... to intern
12 for the Councilwoman, I interned for District
13 Attorney Morgenthau and for Mayor Bloomberg.
14 Following my graduation from Middlebury College in
15 2012, I went to go work for the United States Agency
16 for International Development's West Africa Trade Hub
17 in Accra, Ghana as a policy analyst, and earlier last
18 year I returned back to New York to work at Empire
19 State Development on Governor Cuomo's economic
20 development agenda, and in every single one of those
21 experiences I can honestly say that my time on the
22 community board was instrumental in providing me the
23 skills and experience necessary to really thrive in
24 government; it's the reason why I'm sitting here
25 today; it's the reason why I've chosen to pursue a

2 career in government, and if we continue to hope and
3 encourage youth to take on similar roles, the best
4 way to do that is by catching them at a young age.
5 Thank you very much for all of your support in favor
6 or this resolution.

7 [applause]

8 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Do you think that
9 this resolution should be amended for 15-year-olds?

10 [laughter]

11 BENJAMIN HOWARD COOPER: I think I proved
12 that you can do it.

13 CHAIRPERSON KALLOS: Thank you very much
14 for all of you coming out today; I know that many of
15 you are teachers and youth and had other places you
16 may have needed to be, but thank you for being here
17 today and supporting this resolution; as you've seen,
18 it passed unanimously with the support of all the
19 members of this committee, in small part because of
20 the huge team that you built around this and the
21 organizing you've been doing for years; proud to be
22 Governmental Operations chair while this passed. It
23 will be coming up for a vote of the City Council on
24 June 11th... [background comment] 11th at 1:30;
25 everyone is invited back to the chambers; you can sit

1 in the balcony; we try to start at 1:30, hopefully
2 we... we've actually achieved national acclaim for
3 being a speedy council, so hopefully it should pass,
4 and it'll be a great day; hopefully the rain will
5 have gone away by then and we invite you and
6 [background comments] the folks who have worked on
7 this for so many years to join us on the steps of
8 City Hall; let people know how important this
9 resolution is to everyone and you can be there while
10 we make history as we pass this resolution, 'cause
11 it's a little bit easier to get here than it is to
12 get to Albany. [laughter, background comments]
13 Thank you to Assembly Member Rozic, as well as State
14 Senator Lanza for their leadership on that; once we
15 get this passed from the Assembly we're going to get
16 it passed through the Senate, and all of this needs
17 to happen before the Albany and... because they are not
18 year round, so. Thank you all for being here, thank
19 you for your leadership and have a great day. I now
20 adjourn this meeting.

21 [gavel]

22 [background comments]
23
24
25

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 _____ June 11, 2014 _____