

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON CIVIL RIGHTS

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March 8, 2016
Start: 2:25 p.m.
Recess: 2:43 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Rm,
14th Fl.

B E F O R E:
DARLENE MEALY
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Mathieu Eugene
Daniel Dromm
Deborah L. Rose
Andy King
Brad S. Lander
Jumaane D. Williams

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

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2 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Good afternoon, I am
3 Darlene Mealy; I am the Chair of the New York City
4 Council's Committee on Civil Rights.

5 I would like to introduce the other
6 members of the Council who have joined us this
7 afternoon; we have Council Member Mathieu Eugene and
8 Danny Dromm. And today the Committee on Civil Rights
9 will vote on five bills.

10 Int. No. 0805-A, sponsored by Council
11 Member Dromm, is a Local Law to amend the
12 Administrative Code of the City of New York in
13 relation to expanding the protections of the City of
14 New York Human Rights Law with regard to public
15 accommodations and making certain technical
16 corrections.

17 Int. No. 0814-A, sponsored by Council
18 Member Lander, is a Local Law to amend the
19 Administrative Code of the City of New York in
20 relation to construction of the New York City Human
21 Rights Law.

22 Int. No. 0818-A, sponsored by myself, is
23 a Local Law to amend the Administrative Code of the
24 City of New York in relation to provisions of
25 attorney's fees under the City Human Rights Law.

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2 Int. No. 0819, sponsored by Council
3 Member Mendez, is a Local Law to amend the
4 Administrative Code of the City of New York in
5 relation to repeal of Subdivision 16 of Section 8-107
6 of such code relating to applicability of provisions
7 of the Human Rights Law regarding sexual orientation.

8 And finally, Int. No. 0832-A, sponsored
9 by Council Member Williams, is a Local Law to amend
10 the Administrative Code of the City of New York in
11 relation to prohibiting discrimination in housing
12 accommodations on the basis of an individual's status
13 as a victim of domestic violence.

14 Council Member Lander and Dromm would
15 like to give an opening statement, if they make it,
16 for their bills momentarily, soon.

17 But first I'm proud to discuss the bill
18 I've sponsored, Int. No. 0818-A.

19 First, the bill would allow the
20 Commission on Human Rights to award attorney's fees
21 and expert fees to a complaining party who wins in a
22 matter brought before the Commission.

23 Second, the bill makes clear that courts
24 may include expert fees when expert fees when
25 awarding attorney's fees to a winning party.

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2 Lastly, to the extent that the hourly
3 rate of an attorney is factored into the attorney's
4 fees award, this bill will direct courts to consider
5 the hourly market rate charged by attorneys of
6 similar skills and experience in New York County,
7 which usually has the highest attorney rates in New
8 York City and that means some of our lawyers usually
9 [sic] in Brooklyn would get less pay than ones on
10 Park Avenue; now they will get the same market rate
11 wage.

12 It is our hope that all of these bills we
13 are voting on today will have a positive impact on
14 the lives all New Yorkers.

15 Thank you, members of this committee, and
16 thank you, Members Danny Dromm, Lander, Mendez;
17 Williams for your hard work on all these bills. I
18 would also like to thank Alicia Brown, Counsel to
19 this Committee -- thank you so much -- and would also
20 like to thank Caruso, Wes Jones, Juan Parks and Annie
21 Decker. Thank you all for your hard work on this
22 bill.

23 I hope that my fellow committee members
24 will support these bills today so we can vote on them
25 tomorrow at a Stated Meeting. Thank you again for

1 taking the time to vote on such important
2 legislation.

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4 And I see that Mr. Williams is not here
5 and we've been joined by Andy King of the Bronx in
6 this matter. So we will have... [background comment]
7 we will vote until -- if Lander and Williams make
8 this hearing they can give you their opening
9 statements. I turn it over to our clerk.

10 COMMITTEE CLERK: William Martin,
11 Committee Clerk, roll call vote Committee on Civil
12 Rights; items are coupled. Chair Mealy.

13 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: I vote aye on all.

14 COMMITTEE CLERK: Eugene.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER EUGENE: I vote aye.

16 COMMITTEE CLERK: Dromm.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Aye on all.

18 COMMITTEE CLERK: King.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER KING: Aye on all.

20 COMMITTEE CLERK: By a vote of 4 in the
21 affirmative, 0 in the negative and no abstentions,
22 all items have been adopted.

23 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Thank you, but we
24 will be having a statement from our colleague,
25 Jumaane Williams, who is here now; we would love to

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2 hear his statement; he did a whole lot of work on
3 this legislation and he has helped me on mine just as
4 well.

5 [pause]

6 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Thank you. Wow.
7 [background comments] And I have to thank our Eisha
8 Wright [background comment] from Finance. Thank you
9 so much for helping us on this legislation, and
10 debriefing me. Thank you so much [background
11 comment] whole staff [sic]. Thank you. Thank you.

12 [pause]

13 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Yes, we've been
14 joined by our Council Member Jumaane Williams; in
15 regards to his legislation he would like to make a
16 statement. [background comments] Yes, we have
17 voted; all on affirmative.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you...
19 Hello. Thank you, Madame Chair for one, having the
20 hearing and the vote and thank all the committee
21 members for voting on this piece of legislation.

22 It's obviously horrific that anyone who
23 faced or still faces domestic violence and faces
24 discrimination because of the abuse; I'm happy that
25 New York City already has a strong Human Rights Law

1 on the books of any place in the United States; with
2 the passage of this legislation we're expanding the
3 Human Rights Law to protect domestic violence victims
4 against discrimination. The current administration
5 is doing substantial outreach in domestic violence
6 incidents and homicides are decreasing, but domestic
7 violence is a serious problem in New York City and we
8 must work tirelessly to make sure anyone who is
9 facing intimate partner violence can more easily find
10 safe housing. Women are disproportionately affected
11 by intimate partner violence, with more than 1 in 3
12 women experiencing rape, physical violence and/or
13 stalking by the intimate partner in their lifetime.
14 Victims often can't find safe and affordable housing
15 and landlords too frequently discriminate against
16 domestic violence victims; nationally [sic], 11
17 percent of evictions involve victims of domestic
18 violence who are evicted due to abuse and between
19 2000 and 2012 in New York City there were 864
20 domestic violence homicides; women account for about
21 80 percent of intimate partner homicides in New York
22 City and in 2014 there were over 280,000 domestic
23 incident reports.
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2 I wanna say thank you to The Speaker, to
3 the Chair, Matt Gewolb, Laura Popa, Rachel Cordero,
4 and Alicia Brown from the Legislative Division and
5 the many advocates who helped bring this day about,
6 including Sanctuary for Families, and also the
7 Commissioner of the Human Rights Commission and all
8 her staff for working to execute all of these
9 statutes; in addition, Nick E. Smith, my Legislative
10 Director and Deputy Chief of Staff from my staff.
11 Thank you very much.

12 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Thank you for giving
13 us that great statement on your legislation on
14 domestic violence. Thank you so much; looking
15 forward to voting for it tomorrow; I hope the whole
16 body will vote on all these five important
17 legislations.

18 We're just gonna take a few minutes to
19 see if Mr. Lander will come and give his statement
20 just as well; he worked on two of these legislations
21 also.

22 [pause]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you Madame
24 Chair for holding this hearing open, for holding this
25 hearing and for shepherding this whole package of

1 bills forward; it's wonderful to be celebrating
2 International Women's Day by strengthening and
3 advancing the New York City Human Rights Law, already
4 pioneering in so many ways and now in all of the ways
5 that these bills do to strengthen it further. I'm
6 honored to be co-sponsors with others and with you
7 and others on all of them; it's a great package, and
8 congratulations to you and Council Member Williams
9 and Council Member Mendez, Council Member Dromm and
10 I'm proud to be the prime sponsor for 0814-A.

12 The New York City Human Rights Law has
13 this just wonderful and unique phrase in it that some
14 folks in this room worked hard to get there, which is
15 that it is to be construed liberally for the
16 accomplishment of the uniquely broad and remedial
17 purposes of the law, even where state and federal
18 laws that look similar don't get read that way, don't
19 get interpreted that way by the courts, so we have
20 gone out of our way not only to spell out all these
21 rights in the law, but to say in the law to the
22 judges and to the Human Rights Commission, but
23 especially the judges, this law is to be construed in
24 the broadest way possible to protect the rights of
25 New Yorkers in all these ways and don't, if some

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2 court somewhere has construed or read those
3 protections to be narrow assume that that's what we
4 intended; we intended for those protections to be
5 construed liberally and as broad as they possibly
6 can, but that's tricky and it gets played out over
7 time in the courts and so by identifying court cases
8 where judges have done just that, have construed that
9 law liberally and encouraging other judges in the law
10 to construe liberally and to look to these cases to
11 do it, I believe that we're strengthening and
12 protecting that law for years and decades to come.

13 So thank you again; I'm proud to be a --
14 I appreciate your leadership; I appreciate The
15 Speaker's leadership and I look forward to passing
16 these bills. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON MEALY: Thank you. We have a
18 great package of these bills and we wanna thank
19 everyone for being here today, International Women's
20 Day, we rock. I can't hear ya. Yeah, alrighty.
21 **[inaudible]** international. Thank you. And looking
22 forward to voting for all these great bills tomorrow
23 at our Stated Meeting and Civil Rights hearing is now
24 adjourned.

25 [gavel]

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COMMITTEE ON CIVIL RIGHTS

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 March 25, 2016