

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

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June 20, 2017  
Start: 11:57 a.m.  
Recess: 12:03 p.m.

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

B E F O R E:  
STEPHEN T. LEVIN  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:  
Annabel Palma  
Fernando Cabrera  
Ruben Wills  
Vanessa L. Gibson  
Corey D. Johnson  
Ritchie J. Torres  
Barry S. Grodenchik  
Rafael Salamanca, Jr.

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

[sound check]

[pause]

[gavel]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Good morning

everybody. I'm Council Member Stephen Levin, chair of the City Council General Welfare Committee. This morning we're going to be -- just doing my best Greenfield impression. Alright, this morning we are going to be [laughter] going to vote on two pieces of legislation intended to increase the amount of transparency and information available on essential services in the DHS shelter system -- Proposed Intro 929-A, sponsored by Council Member Johnson, in relation to requiring information on medical health services in shelters and Intro 932-A, which I have sponsored in relation to requiring information on mental health services in shelters.

Last November this committee held a two-part hearing to discuss the medial and mental health needs of the adults and children living in the DHS shelter system and those living on the street. At those hearing we discussed with the Administration, health care providers, shelter providers, and advocates about the significant health and mental

1 health needs of adults and children living in the  
2 shelters and sleeping on the street, in safe havens,  
3 and in drop-in centers. At those hearings we heard  
4 how services are not provided uniformly across the  
5 system, and depending on where an individual or  
6 family is placed, their level of service may range  
7 from full on-site clinic to simply a referral to an  
8 off-site provider.  
9

10 Intro 932, along with Intro 929, will  
11 provide the policymakers, advocates, health care  
12 professionals, and the public with critical  
13 information about the services we are providing to a  
14 population that has experienced significant trauma.  
15 The bills would include information on the types of  
16 mental health services that are available across the  
17 system, the most common mental health issues among  
18 both children and families in the shelter system, and  
19 the services provided to those individuals living on  
20 the street.

21 While these bills are only a first step  
22 in understanding the scope of this issue and more  
23 work is needed to improve the system, it is critical  
24 that we understand what our system is doing to meet  
25

1  
2 the needs of the 60,000 individuals that are served  
3 each night.

4 And so I'd like to thank the staff of the  
5 General Welfare Committee -- Andrea Vazquez, Senior  
6 Counsel; Tonya Cyrus, Senior Policy Analyst; Finance  
7 Analyst Nameera Nuzhat; and **[inaudible]** Ward, Legal  
8 Fellow -- for working on this legislation, as well as  
9 Dohini Sompura, the Unit Head. I'd also like to  
10 thank my Chief of Staff, Jonathan Boucher and Budget  
11 Director Ed Paulino, and now I'd like to turn it over  
12 to my colleague Corey Johnson to say a few words  
13 about the bill that he is sponsoring.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: Thank you,  
15 Mr. Chair. Homelessness is one of the most pressing  
16 and heartbreaking issues of our time; the crisis  
17 we're facing with over 60,000 people sleeping in our  
18 shelter system, 24,000 of whom are children, requires  
19 us to address both the short-term problems we face on  
20 a daily basis and the larger systematic issues behind  
21 them.

22 The need for this legislation arises from  
23 the startling lack of data regarding the health needs  
24 of our city's homeless population and the services  
25 available to them. It's impossible to address the

1 health issues facing our most vulnerable citizens if  
2 we don't know what those issues are and the current  
3 efforts we're undertaking to address them. If we're  
4 gonna do right by this population and address  
5 homelessness, we need a better understanding of the  
6 services currently available and where there may be  
7 gaps. With the passage of this bill we will have the  
8 information necessary to identify and supplement  
9 lacking services as well as address the systematic  
10 issues that exacerbate the most frequent chronic  
11 conditions homeless individuals face. This  
12 information includes the number of shelters with on-  
13 site services, the health services available at  
14 intake facilities, and the availability of health  
15 services to the unsheltered population. We have a  
16 responsibility to safeguard the health and safety of  
17 our most vulnerable New Yorkers; that is a promise  
18 our city made to these folks and that is a promise  
19 that we will keep. This legislation is an important  
20 step in this endeavor.

21  
22 I'd like to thank my good friend and the  
23 chair of this Committee, General Welfare Chair Steve  
24 Levin for his leadership and for us doing this  
25 package of bills together, and my colleagues who were

1  
2 in support of this legislation and all the advocates  
3 who worked tirelessly on behalf of our most  
4 vulnerable populations. I also want to thank Louis  
5 Cholden-Brown, my Deputy Chief of Staff and Andrea  
6 Vazquez, the Committee Counsel to the General Welfare  
7 Committee. And with that, I ask my colleagues to  
8 please vote in favor of this legislation. Thank you,  
9 Mr. Chair.

10 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you Council  
11 Member Johnson. Any of my other colleagues have  
12 anything they want to add to this? [background  
13 comment] Okay. And with that, I will ask the clerk  
14 to call the vote. Thank you very much.

15 COMMITTEE CLERK: Committee Clerk Matthew  
16 DeStefano, Committee on General Welfare, roll call on  
17 Intro Nos. 929-A and 932-A. Chair Levin.

18 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I vote aye on both.

19 COMMITTEE CLERK: Cabrera.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Aye.

21 COMMITTEE CLERK: Wills.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLS: I vote aye.

23 Congratulations to my colleagues.

24 COMMITTEE CLERK: Johnson.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: I vote aye.

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2 COMMITTEE CLERK: Salamanca.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Aye on all.

4 COMMITTEE CLERK: By a vote of 5 in the  
5 affirmative, 0 in the negative and no abstentions,  
6 the items have been adopted.

7 [pause]

8 [background comments]

9 [pause]

10 COMMITTEE CLERK: Continuation of roll  
11 call, Committee on General Welfare, roll call on  
12 Intro Nos. 929-A and 932-A. Council Member Torres.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: I vote aye on  
14 all, and I vote for Steve Levin.

15 [background comment]

16 COMMITTEE CLERK: The vote now stands at  
17 6 in the affirmative, 0 in the negative; no  
18 abstentions.

19 [background comment]

20 [pause]

21 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, with that, at  
22 12:03 p.m., this hearing is adjourned. Thank you.

23 [gavel]

24

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date July 12, 2017