

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON COURTS AND LEGAL SERVICES

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July 19, 2017  
Start: 2:07 p.m.  
Recess: 2:14 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Rm.  
16<sup>th</sup> Fl.

B E F O R E: RORY I. LANCMAN  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Andrew Cohen  
Vanessa L. Gibson  
Ben Kallos  
Carlos Menchaca  
Paul A. Vallone  
Barry S. Grodenchik

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

2 [sound check, pause] [gavel]

3 CHAIRPERSON LANCMAN: We're joined by

4 Council Members Barry Grodenchik, Paul Vallone, Ben

5 Kallos, Vanessa Gibson, Carlos Menchaca, and our

6 guest Mark Levine. We're here to vote on Intro 214-

7 B. With that, I'd be happy to invite the sponsors to

8 say a few words, if they feel compelled to do so.

9 [laughter] Council Member Levine.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: Well, with that

11 encouraging introduction I just have a brief ten-page

12 statement I'd like to read. I-I will be brief, and

13 I'll be speaking more tomorrow. I just want to thank

14 this committee and you, Chair, for having shepherded

15 this through a long and complicated legislative

16 process. The fact that you founded this committee

17 and have pushed forward the notion that we need to

18 invest more in legal services, I consider to be one

19 of the critical developments that made the ultimate

20 passage of this bill possible, and thanks to all the

21 founding committee members as well. They're so much

22 a part of this. The hearing that we did last fall in

23 this committee, as you recall, Mr. Chair, lasted

24 something around nine hours. That-that was decisive

25 and-and the momentum that we gained toward ultimate

2 passage here. So, with that I'll just express my  
3 gratitude to you, Mr. Chair and the members of the  
4 committee on reaching this milestone, and encourage  
5 everyone to vote aye. I—I also want to give a shout  
6 out to my dear colleague who is also a committee  
7 member, the great Vanessa Gibson without which this  
8 would not have been possible. So, thank you, Vanessa  
9 for your leadership and your passion.

10 CHAIRPERSON LANCMAN: Well said. Council  
11 Member Gibson.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Thank you very  
13 much, Chair Lancman and good afternoon. So, my  
14 speech isn't 10 pages, it's 12 pages. Just joking,  
15 but a good afternoon to all of my colleagues and I am  
16 truly so grateful to be here. Today is really a  
17 great day for many tenants and families in the city  
18 of New York, and a really historic day, and after  
19 almost four years of advocating, of rallying, of  
20 marching together, we will see groundbreaking  
21 legislation pass that will really curb the  
22 homelessness crisis that we're having, and really end  
23 the cycle of homelessness and many evictions that are  
24 in our city. Passing this bill today, Intro 214-B  
25 will confirm what we already know that housing is

2 truly not a luxury, but it is a fundamental right.

3 Thanks to so many of the protections that are

4 provided by this legislation, the right to counsel,

5 we will decrease the number of evictions, stabilize

6 families in their homes and really keep people and

7 families out of the shelter system. We will reduce

8 the burden on our shelters and maintain long-term

9 housing for thousands of tenants and families. Over

10 the next five years as this legislation is phased in,

11 we as the City Council will work to ensure with the

12 Administration that more and more New Yorkers have

13 these legal protections, and I'm so proud to say that

14 also includes residents of the New York City Housing

15 Authority because they, too, deserve these

16 protections and many of them are struggling

17 themselves to remain in their homes and facing the

18 threat of eviction every single day. More and more

19 New Yorkers will grow to understand and be empowered

20 by their rights as tenants. This bill will make a

21 critical investment in our families, and when we

22 invest in our families, we invest in our children,

23 and when we invest in our children we invest in the

24 future. I have been so blessed and honored with the

25 opportunity to work on this important legislation

2 alongside our colleague and our friend Council Member  
3 Mark Levine whose dedication and determination has  
4 been a huge factor in getting us here today. Thank  
5 you so much, Mark. I also want to thank our Mayor  
6 for his leadership and support, our Council Speaker  
7 Melissa Mark-Viverito for her commitment to fairness  
8 and equity for so many tenants. I want to recognize  
9 Chair Rory Lancman and the members of this committee,  
10 Chair Ritchie Torres and the members of Public  
11 Housing as well as Chair Jumaane Williams and the  
12 members of the Housing Committee for their support  
13 and all of our colleagues who signed on as sponsors  
14 of this bill. I also want to recognize Rob Newman,  
15 Matt Gewolb and Kelly Taylor, the dynamic trio that  
16 worked so hard on this legislation. You have no  
17 idea. I am so thankful to every tenant advocate,  
18 every—every rally that we've been to. It would be  
19 impossible to list everyone, but certainly Council  
20 Member Levine and I would not be here if we did not  
21 have the incredible support of Andy Shara (sp?) and  
22 the New York Law School, Susanna Blankley, Shayla  
23 Garcia, Randy Fitzroy, Carmen and all of the family a  
24 CASA Bronx, the entire Right to Counsel Coalition,  
25 Housing Court Answers, Legal Aid Society, Bronx

2 Defenders, the Central Labor Council, DC-37, Urban  
3 Justice, Live on and AARP. We are trying making a  
4 difference in this city with passage of this bill,  
5 and I could not be more proud of today's vote, and I  
6 urge all of my colleagues to vote in the affirmative  
7 on Intro 214-B because the collective journey that we  
8 have been on has truly been for the betterment of so  
9 many residents in this city, so many tenants that  
10 deserve a fair opportunity in Housing Court. I  
11 represent Housing Court in the Bronx so I know the  
12 numbers, and I see the faces of families that are  
13 facing eviction every single day. So, for many of us  
14 this is the deeply personal. So, I thank you. Thank  
15 you Council Member Levine, thank you Chair Lancman,  
16 and thank you to all of my colleagues, and I look  
17 forward to today's passage as well as tomorrow's  
18 passage by the full City Council. Thank you to all  
19 of my colleagues. Than you Chair Lancman.

20 CHAIRPERSON LANCMAN: Thank you, Council  
21 Member. With that, please call the roll.

22 CLERK: William Martin Committee Clerk,  
23 roll call vote Committee on Courts and Legal  
24 Services, Introduction 214-B, Chair Lancman.

25 CHAIRPERSON LANCMAN: Aye.

2 CLERK: Gibson.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: I vote aye.

4 CLERK: Cohen.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER COHEN: I vote aye.

6 CLERK: Kallos.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Permission to  
8 explain my vote.

9 CHAIRPERSON LANCMAN: [pause] Yes, if--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: With  
11 congratulations--

12 CHAIRPERSON LANCMAN: --it is only-- (sic)

13 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: --with--with  
14 congratulations to Council Member Levine and Gibson,  
15 and on behalf of the Progressive Caucus I'm proud to  
16 vote aye. We made this happen and congratulations.

17 CLERK: Menchaca.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: [off mic] I  
19 vote aye.

20 CLERK: Vallone.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER VALLONE: Aye.

22 CLERK: Grodenchik.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Aye.

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2 CLERK: By a vote of 7 in the  
3 affirmative, 0 in the negative and no abstentions,  
4 the item has been adopted by the committee.

5 CHAIRPERSON LANCMAN: Thank you very much  
6 and since we've had a full house, there's no need to  
7 keep the committee vote open.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Yay. [background  
9 comments]

10 CHAIRPERSON LANCMAN: That is that.  
11 [gavel] [laughter]

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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 31, 2017