

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRATION

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September 6, 2017

Start: 1:09 p.m.

Recess: 1:25 p.m.

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

B E F O R E: CARLOS MENCHACA
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Mathieu Eugene
Daniel Dromm
Peter A. Koo
Rafael L. Espinal, Jr.

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

2 [sound check, pause]

3 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Buenos tardes.

4 [gavel] I'm Carlos Menchaca, Chair of the New York
5 City's Council on Immigration. Today, the Committee
6 on Immigration will hear amendments to two bills that
7 would benefit every single New Yorker regardless of
8 race, creed, religion, gender identity, nationality
9 or immigration status. New York City stands firm in
10 its commitment to continue building a safe and hate
11 free environment where all are welcomed and treated
12 with respect. [Speaking Spanish]

13 Addressing the need of immigrant New
14 Yorkers has never been more critical. The rapid rate
15 at which federal immigration policies are likely to
16 change creates a need for additional support for
17 immigrant New Yorkers as well as the agencies in this
18 city that serve them. Intro 1566 would expand the
19 role of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs by
20 requiring that they—that they establish a state and
21 federal affairs unit to follow changing federal laws
22 and policies; work closely with the Office of Civil
23 Justice Coordinator to assess the legal service needs
24 of immigrants and availability of all the free
25 services that we're building out of our City Council

2 and Mayor budget; to monitor city agency compliance
3 with laws and policies designed to protect
4 immigrants; report on these and other efforts to the
5 City Council; to consult with and advise city
6 agencies on U & TV self-certification Standards
7 issued by the city agencies, and then add and expand
8 on reporting specifically on metrics for MOIA
9 programs including our legal services. Intro 1578
10 would require MOIA to establish an interagency task
11 force that would create—that will be created so that
12 then we can meet regularly to coordinate city
13 services for immigrant New Yorkers and our city's
14 mixed status families regarding agency compliance
15 with relevant local laws relating to immigrants,
16 legal and policy developments at the state and the
17 federal level and their impact at our city level,
18 obstacles to assessing city programs and services, to
19 review MOIA's solicitation and consideration of
20 community input. Unique services needs are
21 particularly vulnerable in immigrant populations
22 including victims of crime, domestic violence, and
23 human trafficking. Individuals who are Lesbian, Gay,
24 Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex or Gender Non-
25 Conforming, individuals involved in criminal justice

2 systems and minors, our youth. The President's
3 irresponsible rhetoric and discriminatory policies
4 are an affront to all New Yorkers and do not fall in
5 line with our core values like inclusion, respect for
6 personal privacy, compassion, and rule of law. These
7 are the American values that make this country strong
8 and hold us together. Now, we must say, and we
9 continue to say, and I want to say thank you to all
10 the members of this Immigration Committee and the
11 City Council who yesterday came out in a strong voice
12 with the Speaker of the City Council and said very
13 clearly that we are with our DACA family. We are
14 with our immigrants, and we are with everyone who
15 makes themselves a New Yorker and the values that we
16 stand for. The things that are fueling our President
17 today are rooted in a racist, xenophobic and hateful
18 values, white supremacists. These are the people
19 that we will not stand—we will not stand for, and we
20 will continue to innovate in our ways as a city to
21 strengthen diversity inclusion, justice and fairness.
22 That is how we have overcome the odds and in the
23 past, and that is how we will keep moving forward.
24 Some I'm very happy that we're moving these pieces of
25 legislation with these amendments, and I now call on

2 our Council Member Danny Dromm to speak on his bill.
3 Thank you.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Thank you very
5 much, Chair Menchaca. Intro 1566-A aims to
6 strengthen our city's historic commitment to
7 immigrants by clarifying and expanding the duties of
8 the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs or MOIA.
9 This legislation encourages MOIA's coordination with
10 relevant entities to address concerns, namely
11 obstacles to assessing city programs, benefits and
12 services. It also requires MOIA to report to the
13 Council and the public on its progress on various
14 metrics. Particularly notable are the bill's
15 provisions related to encouraging immigrant crime
16 victims and witnesses to step forward and cooperate
17 with law enforcement. Our city needs to do better
18 when it comes to helping those individuals apply for
19 U and T non-immigrant statuses. The bill's
20 requirement that MOIA in short coordination and then
21 report back necessary data will help increase the
22 city's use of this important crime fighting tool. I
23 want to thank committee Counsel Indiana Porta, Chair
24 Menchaca, of course, Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez
25 and finally Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito for her

2 tireless leadership when it comes to responding to
3 the needs of our city's immigrant population. I was
4 very proud the Speaker Viverito mentioned this
5 legislation as one of our first pieces in terms of
6 our response to the horrible decision by our racist
7 xenophobic President Donald Trump. In the wake of a
8 federal administration implementing policy that is as
9 cruel and xenophobic as it is misguided, New York
10 City is stepping up, and I'm very proud to be part of
11 his effort. Thank you very much.

12 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you, Council
13 Member Dromm, and now I'd like to hand it over to
14 Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez for a few words.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Thank you,
16 Chair Menchaca, and I also would like to thank my
17 colleague the sponsor on this legislation, Danny
18 Dromm as well as Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito for
19 making this bill a priority. Over the holiday
20 weekend when many families were away celebrating the
21 end of the summer, our President came to a terrible
22 decision to end the Deferred Action for Childhood
23 Arrivals Program started by President Obama to help
24 keep Americans who were brought here as children from
25 being deported. But yesterday we raised our voices

2 from New York—from New York City to Chicago to Boston
3 to Los Angeles and cities throughout the nation in
4 collective rejection of this heartless and cowardly
5 move, and today and tomorrow it will be legislate in
6 response as well. We are affirming that New York
7 City has always been and always will be a home in our
8 city and a city for immigrants. They are the ties
9 that immigrants face in our countries, today I—today
10 often looks as if it cannot be overcome from being
11 cut out from a section of public services to facing
12 the threat of deportation. It's xenophobia—it's
13 xenophobia, harassments and racism to not only
14 supporting themselves and their family here, but
15 often relatives back in their native countries, but
16 yet I remain impressed and astounded by the
17 resiliency and tendency in the face in this
18 persecution. I want to acknowledge Amanda Morales
19 Gera, a Guatemala mother of three now facing
20 deportation who is standing strong in the fierce
21 difference of unjust laws in a church in my district.
22 I want to acknowledge Edward Garcia Vasquez a member
23 of the Teamsters Union for over 25 years who now face
24 deportation just by having a family here where he has
25 contributed so much. Both of these brave individuals

2 fled violence in their home countries in Central
3 America. Yet, our government will seek to put them
4 at risk when they have nothing wrong in this country
5 but be productive members of society. I want to
6 acknowledge the many immigrants documented and
7 undocumented serving in the United States Arm Force
8 who are literally putting their lives on the line to
9 defend a country that often rejects their place in
10 it. I also want to acknowledge Alonso Guillen, a
11 DREAMer who gave his life in Texas last week while
12 saving the lives of others during and after Hurricane
13 Harvey. He wasn't asked to do this. He wasn't first
14 a—he wasn't a first responder. He was a radio DJ but
15 he believed in humanity, something it feels like
16 those in Washington today do not. He believe it was
17 his duty to save the lives of those in need, and we
18 speak in his face when we as a nation try to remove
19 people like him from our country. I was arrested
20 yesterday in an act of civil disobedience because I
21 believe so strongly that this city and this country
22 are for everyone. It is why I immigrate here as a
23 young 18-years-old, and it is why I sought out public
24 service. What is happening in this country today is
25 simply heartbreaking. We are letting—we are letting

2 racists, xenophobics and those with an exclusionary
3 sense of nationalism trample on the progress we made
4 as a nation. However, I and hundreds of thousands of
5 others of my colleagues in this room included are not
6 going to take this without a fight, and that's why
7 I'm so proud to have—see Carlos Menchaca chairing the
8 Immigrant Committee who will lead our fight. We will
9 continue to march. We will continue to lift up our
10 voices in defense of our brothers and sisters, and we
11 will stop these evil policies from being enacted and
12 enforced. This goes not only for immigrants, but for
13 the transgender community being shut out from our
14 military. It goes for our Muslim brothers and
15 sisters who are facing blatant discrimination to
16 their racist attempt at a travel ban. It goes for
17 everyone who has been impacted by the rise in hate
18 crimes and fear tactics perpetrated by cowards scared
19 of country that looks a little bit different than
20 them. Today, I'm calling for a national movement to
21 resist these policies through our non-violent civil
22 disobedience, and together with the Chairman of this
23 committee I am calling on 800,000 people to be the
24 voice of those who cannot always afford to fight for
25 themselves for fear of deportation. Together and

2 united, we can stand up to the Trump Administration
3 and demand the justice we deserve. I thank my
4 colleagues in this body for so often standing on
5 their right side of the issues, serving as a model on
6 how we can continue to resist policies that put our
7 neighbors at risk. I'm proud that we are responding
8 to the announcements of the past—of the past few days
9 so quickly with legislation that will remind our
10 immigrant brothers and sisters that this their home,
11 and will always be their home so long as they choose
12 to live here. That's why Intro 1566 co-led by
13 Council Member Dromm and myself is so important for
14 our city, and I thank the Chairman Menchaca and the
15 Speaker for helping us to pass this bill very soon.
16 Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you, Council
18 Member Rodriguez and all the voices that you lifted
19 in your statement, and your continued support of
20 Amanda and her family as we move forward in your
21 district. Our hearts and prayers are with everyone.
22 And so, I'm going to call the vote, but I do also
23 want to acknowledge that Council Member Koo and
24 Council Member Espinal are here as well today from
25 the Committee, and I want to highlight something very

2 important about these bills. Both of these bills
3 have been a result of the tireless work that this
4 session and this committee have done in our
5 leadership with this committee and the Speaker of the
6 City Council. The hearings that we've held are—have
7 been incredible here, and some of them for the first
8 time ever heard by this Council the day laborers and
9 domestic violence. We had a public hearing on mixed
10 status families and agency coordination. We had two
11 hearings about immigrant seniors, adult literacy
12 hearing, Dreamer's hearing, their voice in this
13 Council about their needs. Human trafficking, a
14 topic for the first time ever raised on ethnic media.
15 The upcoming U & T, Vs a hearing next week on
16 September 13th that I invite you all to be at. We
17 also had a hearing on legal services and the
18 unaccompanied minors and detained immigrants,
19 language access, and all these were accompanied by
20 the first time ever that we've had a budget
21 negotiations hearing, but actually holding a budget
22 hearing here where we brought the city to tell us one
23 thing: How is this budget impacting our immigrant
24 brothers and sisters and our immigrant families.
25 That is the power of this Council, and that is

2 something we continue to wield here and forever, and
3 with that, I want to call the vote. Thank you.

4 CLERK: William Martin, Committee Clerk.

5 Roll call vote Committee on Immigration. Chair
6 Menchaca.

7 CHAIRMAN MENCHACA: I vote aye.

8 CLERK: Dromm.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: I vote aye.

10 CLERK: Koo.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: May I explain my
12 vote? First, I want to thank Chair Menchaca for
13 doing a very wonderful, very good job for advocacy
14 and for our immigrants. Being an immigrant myself, I
15 condone a person trying for his actions in DACA or in
16 all the other things. I want to thank Council Member
17 Dromm and Rodriguez for their leadership in helping
18 immigrants in New York City. So, I want to add my
19 name to both of the two bills. Okay, and so with
20 that, I vote aye on all.

21 CLERK: Espinal.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER ESPINAL: Before I vote,
23 I'd like to add my name as a co-sponsor to both of
24 these bills and I vote aye and congratulations to the
25 sponsors.

2 CLERK: By a vote of 4 in the
3 affirmative, 0 in the negative and no abstentions,
4 both items have been adopted by the committee.

5 CHAIRPERSON MENCHACA: Thank you so much
6 and I now call close this hearing. Thank you.

7 [gavel]

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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 September 6, 2017