

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

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November 29, 2017  
Start: 11:35 a.m.  
Recess: 11:59 a.m.

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

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

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

ANNABEL PALMA  
FERNANDO CABRERA  
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)

[gavel]

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Good morning

everybody. I am Council Member Stephen Levin, Chair of the Committee of General Welfare here at the City Council. This morning the committee will be voting on seven bills aimed at improving the services provided to clients by two of the agencies that this committee has jurisdiction over; ACS and HRA. I am proud to have sponsored three of these of these bills and I want to thank my colleagues Council Member's Johnson and Rose, Salamanca and Cabrera for their work on the others. This morning we are joined by Council Member Salamanca of the Bronx, Council Member Cabrera of the Bronx, Council Member Grodenchik of Queens and Council Member Torres is out in the hallway, also of the Bronx. And I hope to be joined by other Council Members, I think more from the Bronx as this hearing goes on. First the committee will be voting on two bills related to improving the level of services provided to HRA clients at job centers and SNAP centers, these... the locations where individuals can apply for benefits. These bills are in line with HRA's ongoing work to improve how clients move through the various systems. Proposed Intro 1461-A

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2 sponsored by myself in relation to requiring the  
3 Department of Social Services to provide client  
4 services training to certain employees and proposed  
5 Intro 1635-A which is sponsored by Council Member  
6 Johnson which is in relation to HRA job centers. We  
7 will also be voting on a package of legislation  
8 related to ACS's Child Welfare Preventative Services  
9 Systems. Over the past several years this committee  
10 has focused on ACS's child welfare system with the  
11 intent to both ensure the protection of children and  
12 improve the experiences of families who must interact  
13 with the system. Several of today's bills aim to  
14 improve ACS's system of preventative services which  
15 are essential to keeping children safely in their  
16 homes. ACS continues to expand and improve its  
17 preventative services and this committee would like  
18 to have... would... sorry, would like to continue to  
19 support these efforts. I have sponsored the following  
20 two bills, proposed Intro 1374-A which is in relation  
21 to the utilization of preventative services and  
22 proposed, proposed Intro 1598-A in relation to  
23 preventative services surveys. We will also be voting  
24 on the following three bills; proposed Intro 1590-A  
25 sponsored by Council Member Cabrera in relation to

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2 training for preventative services employees and  
3 proposed Intro 1609-A which is sponsored by Council  
4 Member Salamanca in relation to requiring the  
5 Administration for Children Services to report  
6 annually on the aggregate findings and  
7 recommendations of a child fatality review. Proposed  
8 Intro 1607-A which is sponsored by Council Member  
9 Debi Rose of Staten Island is in relation to  
10 requiring the Administration for Children Services to  
11 conduct a study regarding protective caseloads and  
12 workloads. I would like to acknowledge the staff of  
13 this committee Andrea Vazquez, Senior Council; Tonya  
14 Cyrus, Senior Policy Analyst; Nameera Nuzhut,  
15 Legislative Finance, General Analyst; and Dohini  
16 Sompura, Finance, Finance Unit Head for their work on  
17 these pieces of legislation. And I want to  
18 acknowledge Jonathan Boucher my Chief of Staff and  
19 Edward Paulino my Legislative Director and I will  
20 turn it over to the sponsors of, of 1590-A and 1609-  
21 A, Council Member's Cabrera and Salamanca.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Thank you, good  
23 morning Chair Levin and Committee Members. Thank you  
24 for your support of Intro 1590-A which will  
25 strengthen the effectiveness of preventative services

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2 provided by ACS. This bill requires the ACS to  
3 provide training to all individuals providing,  
4 providing preventative services on an ongoing basis  
5 and no less frequently than once per year. Since  
6 we've heard... first heard last June we received  
7 valuable input and have worked with the advocates in  
8 ACS to craft a piece of legislation that will better  
9 equip ACS staff to protect children. Ongoing training  
10 will help shorten the length of time a child needs to  
11 be in foster care, reduce the likelihood that a child  
12 who has been discharged from foster care will be  
13 returned to foster care and keep the family unit  
14 intact. In closing I want to thank Andrea Vazquez,  
15 Senior Legislative Council and the staff for the work  
16 on this legislation. Thank you so much.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much  
18 Council Member Cabrera, Council Member Salamanca.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Thank you Mr.  
20 Chair. I'm proud to stand with my colleagues to bring  
21 meaningful reform to the Administration for Children  
22 Services through this package of legislation we are  
23 hearing again today. I'm proud to be the lead sponsor  
24 on one of the bills, Intro 1609-A. This bill will  
25 require the Administration for Children Services to

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2 report annually on the findings and recommendations  
3 of child fatality reviews during the previous  
4 calendar year. Such a report will include the number  
5 of fatalities known to ACS for the previous year, the  
6 cause of death in such fatalities, the age, gender,  
7 race and ethnicity of children with these fatalities,  
8 any relevant trends identified and systematic  
9 recommendations and a summary of case practices,  
10 findings and agency, agency policy changes made in  
11 response to child fatalities in the previous 12  
12 months. In late 2016, ACS came under increased  
13 scrutiny in reports highlighting a persistent lack of  
14 progress in meeting... in meeting its own targets for  
15 how investigations surround the fatalities are  
16 conducted, supervised and managed. Our Public  
17 Advocate Letitia James in 2016... in a 2016 report  
18 found that lacks oversight and neglect by ACS which  
19 contributed to the brutal... the brutal deaths of eight  
20 children in 13 months. Additionally, an investigation  
21 last year by City Comptroller Scott Stringer  
22 uncovered multiple incidences in which ACS failed to  
23 follow official protocol in handling investigations  
24 of fatalities and earlier this year the Department of  
25 Investigation found inadequate staffing, case

1  
2 practice, supervision, and training within ACS  
3 emergency children services unit. Clearly reform is  
4 needed and while I believe that the Administration  
5 had taken steps to rectify problems at ACS, it is my  
6 belief that this committee is taking meaningful and  
7 needed steps towards... forward to reforming ACS  
8 through this legislation. While we will never forget  
9 the names of Michael Guzman, Jaden Jordan, Zymere  
10 Perkins these three beautiful kids who tragically  
11 lost their lives on a fatality list that's way too  
12 long. My hope is that we can prevent all fatalities  
13 of young children in the future. I thank you Chair  
14 and congratulate my colleagues on their work on these  
15 bills and I urge you to support Intro 1609-A, thank  
16 you.

17 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you very much  
18 Council Member Salamanca and Council Member Cabrera,  
19 congratulations on the two pieces of legislation,  
20 they're very meaningful pieces of legislation and  
21 will go a long way towards ensuring that the children  
22 of New York City, the most vulnerable children of New  
23 York City are, are protected and they are, are, are  
24 served by the... by the government of this city and  
25 those that are tasked with protecting them. So, I



1  
2 want to thank you both very much for this very  
3 thoughtful legislation and with that I will call on  
4 William Martin, Clerk to the Committee to call the  
5 roll and I encourage an aye vote on all items.

6 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: William Martin,  
7 Committee Clerk roll call vote committee on General  
8 Welfare, all items are coupled, Chair Levin?

9 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Aye on all.

10 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Cabrera?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Aye on all.

12 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Grodenchik?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Aye.

14 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Salamanca?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Aye on all.

16 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Council Member  
17 Torres?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: [off-mic] Hold on  
19 for one second, I vote proudly aye.

20 COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: By a vote of  
21 five in the affirmative, zero in the negative and no  
22 abstentions all items have been adopted by the  
23 Committee.

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CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I'm going to keep the roll open for a few minutes, Council Member Gibson I believe is on her way, thank you.

COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Continuation of roll call, the Committee on General Welfare, Council Member?

COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: I vote aye on all... [cross-talk]

COMMITTEE CLERK MARTIN: Gibson... final vote in today's Committee on General Welfare all items have been adopted by a vote of six in the affirmative, zero in the negative and no abstentions. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Okay, at 11:59 this hearing is adjourned.

[gavel]

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

December 15, 2017