

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

December 18, 2017
Start: 12:22 p.m.
Recess: 12:33 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
Vanessa L. Gibson
Corey D. Johnson
Ritchie J. Torres
Barry S. Grodenchik
Rafael Salamanca, Jr.
Adrienne E. Adams

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

2 [sound check, pause]

3 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Good morning

4 everybody or good afternoon. [background comments]

5 Good afternoon. Good afternoon. I'm Council Member

6 Steven Levin, Chair of the Committee on General

7 Welfare and this morning we are also joined by

8 Council Members Corey Johnson, Fernando Cabrera,

9 Annabel Palma and Adrienne Adams, and we are

10 expecting a couple of other Council Members to join

11 us. They're across the street at Land Use vote.

12 Today, will be the last vote of the General Welfare

13 Committee for this session. I want to thank all of

14 my colleagues who have passed legislation and

15 participated in our oversight hearings in this

16 committee during the past four years. In this last

17 vote, we will be voting on five pieces of

18 legislation, three of which I am sponsoring, Proposed

19 Intro 1577-A, which is in relation to requiring the

20 Office of Operations or another agent, officer agency

21 to be designated by the Mayor to conduct a study

22 regarding client information management system.

23 Intro 1714-A, which is in relation to educational

24 continuity, and Intro 1739-A, which is in relation to

25 exits for domestic violence emergency shelters. We

2 will also be voting on Intro 572-A, which is
3 sponsored by Council Member Elizabeth Crowley in
4 relation to requiring the Department of Homeless
5 Services to post shelter census data, and Proposed
6 Intro 855-B, sponsored by Council Member Ben Kallos
7 in relation to a study regarding the feasibility of
8 notifying individuals who may be eligible for public
9 assistance. The legislation we are voting on today
10 covers key areas this committee has addressed this
11 session, how individuals and families interact with
12 multiple social services systems, homeless students,
13 domestic violence, improving—improving the ability to
14 apply for public assistance and the homelessness
15 crisis. I look forward to continuing to work on all
16 these issues in the upcoming session, and I want to
17 ask if there are any member sponsors of the bills
18 that are here that want to speak. We've also been
19 joined by Council Members Grodenchik and Salamanca,
20 and I want to also acknowledge committee staff who
21 have been so extraordinary during this term: Andrea
22 Vazquez our Senior Counsel; Tonya Cyrus our Senior
23 Policy Analyst; Damara Newhof, our Financial Analyst;
24 and Dohini Sompura, our Unit Head as well as Stacey
25 Ward who is our Legal Fellow. They have all been

2 extraordinary members of this committee staff who
3 have done great, great work. And just for the
4 record, none of this all gets done without the
5 amazing work of—from the staff who put in many, many
6 hours of research and prepare all the committee
7 reports for the Council and who are instrumental in
8 talking and meeting with leaders and advocates in the
9 field to ensure that this Council is being responsive
10 to the needs of the community. And in the case of
11 this committee, that is youth in foster care,
12 children involved in the child welfare system and
13 their parents, individuals and children who and
14 families who are—find themselves confronting the
15 challenge of homelessness here in New York City, and
16 again, it's the work of this staff that makes this
17 committee possible. So, thank you all very much for
18 your great work, and we've also been joined by
19 Council Member Vanessa Gibson. Hold one moment.
20 [pause] Okay, so we will ask the clerk to call the
21 roll.

22 CLERK: William Martin, Committee Clerk,
23 roll call vote Committee on General Welfare. All
24 items are coupled. Chair Levine. Excuse me. Chair
25 Levin.

1 COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE

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2 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: I vote aye on all.

3 CLERK: Palma

4 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: Aye on all and
5 respectfully request that my name be added to the
6 bill. Thank you.

7 CLERK: Cabrera.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Aye on all.

9 CLERK: Gibson.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: I vote aye on all
11 with my warmest congratulations our Chair. I hope
12 this is the last vote we'll have for the season.
13 Happy holidays to all of you. Great job for the
14 year. Looking forward to our continued partnership.
15 Aye on all.

16 CLERK: Johnson.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JOHNSON: I vote aye on
18 all and if I could add my name to the piece of
19 legislation that I'm not currently on. Thank you.

20 CLERK: Torres.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER TORRES: [off mic] I vote
22 aye.

23 CLERK: Grodenchik.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: With thanks
25 to the Chairman for his partnership on emergency food

2 and I hope that we will continue to partner with that
3 and all of our future colleagues, our present
4 colleagues that will stay here to feeding all New
5 Yorkers. I vote aye on all.

6 CLERK: Salamanca.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: I vote aye on
8 all. Thank you.

9 CLERK: Adams.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ADAMS: I vote aye on all
11 and respectfully request that my name also be added
12 to all pieces of this legislation.

13 CLERK: By a vote of 9 in the
14 affirmative, 0 in the negative and no abstentions,
15 all items have been adopted by the committee.

16 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Thank you, very-very
17 much, Mr. Clerk. I just want to also acknowledge
18 Daniel Koop for his work on the committee as well,
19 and I want to thank my colleague Annabel Palma for
20 her great work on this committee for 12 years being a
21 leader, and making sure that every child here in New
22 York City has the opportunities to reach their full
23 potential and-and have all of the benefits that the
24 city has to offer, and-and so I want to thank you,
25 Annabel, and I look forward to working with you in

2 your new position with the Administration starting in
3 January. Congratulations.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: We'll miss you, but
6 we're happy to continue to work with you. Thanks.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER PALMA: Thanks.

8 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: And with that--

9 [background comments] Oh, Council Member Kallos, do
10 you want to say a few words on your legislation.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: We've already
12 voted.

13 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: WE voted, but that's
14 okay. We haven't closed out the hearing.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: [off mic] Go
16 away. (sic) [pause] [background comments, pause] I
17 want to thank the General Welfare Committee Chair
18 Steve Levin for his assistance at every step with
19 this legislation as well as Committee Counsel Andrea
20 Vazquez who we've worked on so much with over the
21 past four years. I'm going to make a confession. I
22 hate paperwork. I hate it so much. It is a waste of
23 time. It is a waste of money. It is a waste of our
24 natural resources, and I'd like to live in a world
25 where we don't spend all of our time and money taking

2 pieces of paper, filling them out and then handing
3 them to a person who then hands to a person who then
4 hands it to person who then hands it to a person who
5 then hands it to a person.

6 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: [off mic] Who then
7 enters it into a computer who then prints it out, and
8 hands it to another person, and so the staggering
9 fact is that a lot of New Yorkers are hungry, and
10 when this is one of the wealthiest cities on the
11 planet, I don't know why anyone needs to go hungry,
12 why anyone needs to become homeless, why anyone needs
13 to when there is a government safety net there to
14 help people. And so, the first draft of this
15 legislation was to provide benefits to people using
16 the information government already knows from their
17 tax returns, and so seeing that we might not be able
18 to do that, we worked very closely with the Committee
19 Counsel on an A version of the bill that just says:
20 If you apply for one benefit in the city of New York,
21 we have to screen you for at least 40 others and give
22 you those benefits. Sorry, give you the applications
23 for the benefits, and if you filled out one
24 application, why do you have to fill out that
25 application over again. You can just have the same

1 information put onto all 40 applications. This is
2 especially important when benefits vary from \$25 a
3 year for HEAP to hundreds if not thousands of dollars
4 a year in the case of senior citizen rent increase
5 exemption or others. We had a great hearing. In the
6 past four years we have issued a memorandum outlining
7 the legal authority and federal regulations that
8 allow us to do automatic benefits in partnership with
9 NYU, Stewards for Change, the Robin Hood Foundation.
10 In 2016, we worked with Centers for Medicare and
11 Medicaid Services who released \$4.5 million
12 application to study this legislation, and its impact
13 on health outcomes, and despite the fact that the
14 city did not apply, we did manage to get New York
15 Presbyterian, which is in my district an award of
16 \$4.5 million to move forward on this. Knowing that
17 we needed the software built, we worked with a small
18 company called Intuit, which processes taxes for
19 nearly half of Americans to release their benefit
20 assist source code to the world at large and it's
21 available at the Department of Health and Human
22 Services' Get Help, and we've now moving forward, we
23 look forward to getting this done next year. We are
24 passing, and this committee has passed legislation

2 for a study that we expect will be done this time
3 next year that will hopefully be our Christmas and/or
4 Hanukkah or other holidays that you might celebrate
5 at present, and from then on we hope to just get this
6 done. Just by the numbers there's 2.3 million who
7 the city estimates are eligible for SNAP, and 550,000
8 people who don't get it, and our hope and the
9 hypothesis behind this legislation is that if people
10 knew about the benefits they could get, we could feed
11 every hungry person. Again, I want to thank all the
12 committee members for their positive votes, and the
13 Committee Chair and Counsel for their partnership on
14 this.

15 CHAIRPERSON LEVIN: Congratulations,
16 Council Member Kallos, and with that, at 12:33 p.m.
17 on December 18th, this hearing is adjourned. [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 January 10, 2018