

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

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May 21, 2009  
Start: 1:37 pm  
Recess: 3:07 pm

HELD AT: Council Chambers  
City Hall

B E F O R E:  
JOHN C. LIU  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:  
Diana Reyna  
Gale A. Brewer  
G. Oliver Koppell  
Miguel Martinez  
Daniel R. Garodnick  
Jessica S. Lappin  
Darlene Mealy  
Vincent Ignizio  
Eric Ulrich  
David Yassky

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

David Woloch  
Deputy Commissioner for External Affairs  
New York City Department of Transportation

Victor Rosen  
Assistant Commissioner  
DOT Traffic Operations Bureau

Elizabeth Loris Ritter  
Hebrew Tabernacle

Sylvia Dummett  
Pastor  
Cathedral of Hope Seventh Day Worship Center

Shon T. Adkins  
Reverend  
Antioch Baptist Church

Michael Grattan  
Pastor  
Manhattan Pentecostal Church

Reverend Hector Crespo  
President  
City of New York Clergy Association for Justice

Dwight Sibblies  
Pastor  
Ebenezer United Pentecostal Church

Reverend Dr. Cheryl Anthony  
Pastor  
Judah International Christian Center

Reverend Charles Curtis  
Senior Pastor  
Mt. Olivet Baptist Church

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

Reverend Dr. Demetrius Carolina  
Pastor  
First Central Baptist Church, Staten Island

Reverend Princess Thorbes  
Jerusalem Baptist Church

Reverend Melvin Wilson  
Pastor  
St. Luke A.M.E Church

Pastor Vernon Williams  
Pastor  
Perfect Peace Ministries

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2 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Good afternoon,  
3 welcome to today's hearing of the City Council's  
4 Committee on Transportation. My name's John Liu  
5 and I have the privilege of Chairing this  
6 Committee and today's hearing.

7 Today we have convened for the  
8 purpose of hearing testimony on Proposed Intro  
9 number 662-A, which would fix inequities with  
10 clergy parking permits in the city of New York.

11 In 1996, the city enacted the law  
12 that created clergy parking permits. These  
13 permits allow clergy members, while performing  
14 clerical duties, to park in no parking zones near  
15 their houses of worship and hospitals, subject to  
16 some limitations.

17 The Department of Transportation  
18 has issued approximately 400 clergy parking  
19 permits and, although many clergy members believe  
20 that these permits are very important for them to  
21 be able to perform their duties, many clergy  
22 members have also expressed concerns about  
23 inequities in the clergy parking permit program.  
24 For instance, although a clergy member may  
25 officiate at his or her house of worship, this

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2 clergy member would not be able to get a permit if  
3 he or she obtains his or her principal income from  
4 an outside source. This clearly is unfair to many  
5 of the smaller houses of worship mainly located in  
6 communities of color who cannot afford a full-time  
7 clergy member. This bill would attempt to address  
8 this fairness issue, as well as others.

9           The prime sponsor of this bill is  
10 Council Member Robert Jackson and we will hear  
11 from him shortly. I do want to alert everybody  
12 that there are multiple and numerous hearings and  
13 meetings going on today. For some reason, this  
14 day, May 21st, 2009, seems to be by far the  
15 busiest day in all of 2009 so far, so I want to  
16 announce the members of the committee who have  
17 joined us. Council Member Oliver Koppell of the  
18 Bronx; Council Member Diana Reyna of Brooklyn and  
19 Queens; Council Member Darlene Mealy of Brooklyn;  
20 Council Member Vincent Ignizio of Staten Island;  
21 Council Member David Yassky of Brooklyn; and also  
22 Council Member Jessica Lappin of Manhattan.

23           And, with that, I want to invite  
24 our esteemed officials from my personal favorite  
25 agency, well actually the title with the MTA, the

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Department of Transportation.

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Please proceed when you're ready.

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DAVID WOLOCH:

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Thank you for those kind words. Good afternoon,

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I'm David Woloch, Deputy Commissioner for External

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Affairs at the New York City Department of

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Transportation and with me here today is Victor

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Rosen, Assistant Commissioner in DOT's Traffic

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Operations Bureau. Thank you for inviting us here

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today to testify on Intro 662-A.

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This bill expands eligibility and

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parking privileges afforded to members of the

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clergy in order to better accommodate them in

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fulfilling their official duties. Current

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requirements mandate that clergy members who

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derive their principal income from any other

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occupation or profession are ineligible to receive

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permits, that permitted vehicles be owned by the

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clergy members themselves and they be registered

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in New York State. Permit holders have the

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privilege of parking for up to four hours in no

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parking zones adjacent to their house of worship

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and for up to three hours at no parking zones

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adjacent to hospitals. Intro 662-A also extends

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2 eligibility for permits to part-time clergy  
3 members, to include vehicles used by clergy while  
4 acting in their official capacity, but owned by  
5 the religious institution and to vehicles  
6 registered outside New York. Additionally, the  
7 legislation allows permits to be used for up to  
8 three hours when the vehicle is parked on the  
9 roadway adjacent to a funeral home.

10           As many of you know, DOT recently  
11 met with a number of Council Members and Council  
12 staff, along with representatives from local  
13 houses of worship on issues related to clergy  
14 parking permits. Generally, the Department has  
15 been hesitant to take steps that would expand the  
16 number of any of our parking permits, and in fact,  
17 as you know, the Administration has been taking  
18 significant steps to reduce the number of placards  
19 issued and placard abuse.

20           Curbside space is a commodity in  
21 this city, and to ensure it is used as efficiently  
22 as possible, we need to facilitate a reasonable  
23 rate of turnover to accommodate all the competing  
24 uses of the space. As the amount of permit  
25 holders and locations where they can park

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2 increases, curbside availability decreases. This  
3 not only puts non-permit holders at a  
4 disadvantage, but it reduces available space  
5 sought by permit holders as well.

6           However, our meeting did alert us  
7 to certain concerns that we believe were  
8 significant, and, upon further consultation within  
9 the Department, we're amenable to many of the  
10 group's suggestions. Accordingly, we support  
11 moving forward with legislation to amend the  
12 Administrative Code and improve the clergy parking  
13 provisions.

14           Most significant of all the issues  
15 brought to our attention, is that the ability of  
16 certain religious institutions to compensate their  
17 clergy members varies widely. As written, the  
18 Administrative Code requires that members of the  
19 clergy, in order to be eligible for permits, must  
20 derive their principal income from presiding over  
21 services on behalf of a religious corporation or  
22 association of any denomination.

23           We agree that houses of worship  
24 should not be penalized based on their financial  
25 capacity and this law should not shut out those

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2 smaller congregations. We thus suggest that as an  
3 alternative to the principal income requirement,  
4 clergy have the opportunity to show they are  
5 employees of the institution. In furtherance of  
6 this, we would require an affidavit by the clergy  
7 member attesting to certain hours worked or a  
8 percentage of the clergy member's time devoted to  
9 the institution. We think this is a sensible  
10 process to ensure applicants are indeed eligible  
11 for the permit, irrespective of the size or budget  
12 of the organization.

13           Similar to the issue of principal  
14 income addressed in Intro 662-A, we're also in  
15 agreement that houses of worship that provide  
16 vehicles to their clergy members should be  
17 eligible for permits. Clergy permits are  
18 currently only granted to the house of worship on  
19 behalf of up to three clergy members, to ensure  
20 that clergy members are the actual ones using the  
21 permit. However, as we discussed, there are  
22 houses of worship that own the vehicles used by  
23 their clergy members and that, in certain cases,  
24 compensation includes the use of the vehicle. In  
25 these instances clergy members are utilizing these

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2 vehicles to perform their ministerial duties at  
3 their house of worship or at a hospital.

4 Therefore, issuing permits to the house of worship  
5 for its own vehicles is consistent with the  
6 purpose of this law and, as suggested, the  
7 Administrative Code should be amended to provide  
8 for these situations.

9                   Finally, with respect to the  
10 component of the bill that would require DOT to  
11 grant permits for vehicles registered outside of  
12 New York State, we're also willing to consider  
13 this change, one that does not in fact require a  
14 change to the Administrative Code. Given the  
15 relatively small universe of clergy we believe to  
16 own vehicles registered outside of New York State,  
17 we don't think this will compromise our program to  
18 any significant degree. We do suggest that this  
19 change be made by rule as it does not require  
20 amending the Administrative Code, and will more  
21 easily allow for future adjustments, should they  
22 be necessary.

23                   In addition to expanding  
24 eligibility for clergy permits, Intro 662-A also  
25 increases the locations where permit holders may

1  
2 park. At present, clergy may use their permits at  
3 their house of worship and at hospitals where  
4 they're performing official duties. This  
5 legislation allows clergy to also use permits at  
6 funeral homes where they are officiating. Parking  
7 restrictions at funeral homes are designated to  
8 provide space to carry caskets and transport  
9 family to and from the facility. Allowing parking  
10 at these locations may interfere with businesses  
11 carrying out their function. Should we extend no  
12 parking zones to provide additional space, we'd be  
13 removing spaces used by local residents.  
14 Accordingly, we have concerns about this proposed  
15 change.

16 We're happy to work with the  
17 Council to address the majority of issues  
18 addressed in this bill and, while we remain  
19 committed to protecting the integrity of our  
20 permit program and don't support expanding the  
21 number of locations where permits may be used, we  
22 do recognize the need to modify the system as it  
23 exists today. By amending our requirements to  
24 include all clergy members regardless of the  
25 financial capacity of their house of worship,

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2 vehicles owned by houses of worship, and vehicles  
3 registered outside of New York State, we'll be  
4 able to provide a more equitable system to assist  
5 the many clergy members citywide.

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Thank you for the opportunity to  
testify before you today and we'd be happy to  
answer any questions you may have at this time.

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CHAIRPERSON LIU: Thank you very  
much. I am flabbergasted--in a good way. I'm  
still trying to make sure that I heard what I  
heard that actually was said, and I think it's all  
good because it's a rare occurrence when the  
Department of Transportation and the  
Administration appears before this Committee and  
is largely in agreement. Clearly, they understand  
that they answer to a higher authority on this  
issue.

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I will have lots of questions and  
more to say, but I do want to give--we're going to  
hear from--well we've been joined by Council  
Member Dan Garodnick of Manhattan, Gale Brewer of  
Manhattan, and also Robert Jackson of Manhattan.

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We're going to hear opening remarks  
from Council Member Jackson, this is his bill, but

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2 Council Member Yassky has another hearing next  
3 door, he just wants to give a few brief remarks.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER YASSKY: Thank you,  
5 Mr. Chairman. The Zoning Subcommittee next door  
6 is hearing a project in my district, so I  
7 appreciate your indulgence.

8 I just wanted to commend you for  
9 holding this hearing and to voice my support for  
10 this legislation. I look forward to the committee  
11 speedily looking at it.

12 Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Thank you,  
14 Council Member Yassky. Opening comments from the  
15 prime sponsor of this bill, Council Member Robert  
16 Jackson.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Well thank  
18 you, Chairman Liu.

19 Let me just that to me, this is a  
20 no-brainer with respects to the needs of our  
21 clergy in New York City and I think that it  
22 started up in Washington Heights when a rabbi who  
23 lives right across the bridge in New Jersey, maybe  
24 10-15 minutes away, was getting tickets around the  
25 synagogue, which is one block from my home. And

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2 so Liz Rida [phonetic] who is a trustee or a  
3 leader in the synagogue brought it to our  
4 attention and that's what got the ball rolling.  
5 And what we found is that other clergy around the  
6 city are in the same situation and so we talked  
7 about that and talked about other things and the  
8 bottom line is we felt the needed changes needed  
9 to take place.

10                   And let me just say I appreciate  
11 the meeting that we had with the Administration,  
12 with DOT about this particular matter, I thought  
13 that was a real good discussion that we had. But  
14 obviously, I agree that rules will give you more  
15 flexibility, as long as the rules are in a  
16 direction which we feel are appropriate and if  
17 not, then obviously we feel that if necessary, a  
18 law should be put into place. I don't mind rules  
19 as long as the rules are beneficial to the people  
20 that we represent and also to the people that are  
21 in need. And as clergy have said, besides going  
22 to their house of worship, besides going to the  
23 hospital, besides going to funerals, they have to  
24 visit people that are home sick and what have you  
25 and so forth and carry out other ministrative

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2 duties in which they're running around and just as  
3 busy as members of the City Council or just as  
4 busy as the Commissioner of DOT.

5 But I say loud and clear that I  
6 look forward to working with the Administration in  
7 order to meet the needs of the clergy that we  
8 represent. And the real, I guess, crux of the  
9 matter is, and this is one example that was given  
10 to me, you know, New York City is a metropolitan  
11 area and we have many people, city employees that  
12 live outside of New York City--Westchester, Long  
13 Island, Rochester, New Jersey--some even live on a  
14 boat on the Hudson River, because you do have the  
15 79th Street Pier where people live on a boat--  
16 that's Gale's district, I don't know if we have  
17 any city employees, but I just gave that as an  
18 example, Gale.

19 But clearly under the current  
20 rules, people that live right across the bridge in  
21 Fort Lee, New Jersey, and if they're a member of  
22 the clergy does not qualify for a permit. But a  
23 clergy in Buffalo, New York, or up near the  
24 Canadian border, if they applied, they would be  
25 entitled, that just doesn't make any sense to me,

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2 that's just not working sense. And so I'm just  
3 looking for a working solution in order for our  
4 clergy to be able to do their job in New York City  
5 and I look forward to working with the  
6 Administration in order to make that work.

7 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

8 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Thank you,  
9 Council Member Jackson, and thank you for putting  
10 forth this bill.

11 So the Department of Transportation  
12 and the Administration essentially agrees with all  
13 the tenets of the legislation we're putting forth,  
14 with the exception of the last item where we're  
15 extending that to funeral homes, is that correct  
16 or not quite correct?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: Yeah,  
18 I think pretty close, I mean--

19 CHAIRPERSON LIU: [Interposing]  
20 Does yeah mean yes?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH:  
22 Pretty, pretty close. Pretty close, let me--

23 CHAIRPERSON LIU: [Interposing]  
24 We're going to work on the details.

25 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: Yeah,

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2 we'll work on the details, but I think that's  
3 essentially right.

4 CHAIRPERSON LIU: All right, good.  
5 So then last point, I would say that I think in  
6 theory it's a valid argument or concern to  
7 express--and we've also been joined by Council  
8 Member Helen Foster of the Bronx, all right.

9 But I've been to a fair number of  
10 funeral services, memorial services, and,  
11 generally speaking, the clergy person, the member  
12 of the clergy who is officiating, they are not  
13 doing things in isolation of everybody else,  
14 there's a pretty clear and careful coordination.  
15 So I just don't see the scenario where a member of  
16 the clergy would simply just park their car that's  
17 reserved for the procession, so I think that  
18 that's in theory maybe a concern, but in reality,  
19 do you think that actually would happen? Couldn't  
20 we trust the judgment of the member of the clergy  
21 involved?

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: You  
23 know, I think at the end of the day, it's still a  
24 limited amount of space that when one person takes  
25 it, it's not going to be available for another

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2 use. So and I think there's clearly a good--  
3 there's a reasonable argument for why this  
4 expansion would be beneficial, but there's a cost  
5 to it and I guess we're suggesting there would be  
6 a cost.

7 CHAIRPERSON LIU: [Interposing] All  
8 right, but the DOT is not totally against that  
9 provision. I just think that, I understand the  
10 argument in theory, but in practice, I really  
11 would think that the member of the clergy  
12 officiating would have a great deal of sense about  
13 how to do things and that they would understand  
14 that there is a procession, there's a vehicle  
15 that's going to be involved carrying the coffin if  
16 it were and family members and so that's something  
17 that we could leave up to the clergy, the family,  
18 the funeral home to work out on their own and not  
19 have to object because the clergy member might  
20 actually be blocking the use from the funeral home  
21 itself.

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: It  
23 certainly is a reasonable argument, but, again,  
24 it's, I think--

25 CHAIRPERSON LIU: [Interposing] So

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you have to put forth that technical argument.

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: Well but I think there's a reasonable argument on both sides and at the end of the day, we're comfortable making the eligibility changes in some way, shape, or form and I think we need to discuss the details that have been put forward, but this expansion of where the permit can be used--

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CHAIRPERSON LIU: Okay.

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: -- concerns us.

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CHAIRPERSON LIU: Well I thank you for your testimony. I do want to thank the staff of the committee for their wonderful work: Phil Hom, Legislative Counsel; Chima Obichere, our Finance Analyst; and, of course, the esteemed Kari Nobly [phonetic], who--oh, I'm glad you're still in the room, Kari.

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If there are no questions from Council Members? Council Member Gale Brewer.

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COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: I'm not as familiar as some of my colleagues with clergy issues, so what's the law now and what would be the--what's the law now? In other words, if I'm a

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clergy person, what do I get with my permit now?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: You get to park outside your house of worship for--

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER:  
[Interposing] Or your funeral or just your house of worship?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: --your house of worship for up to four hours--

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: --and in spaces adjacent--no parking spaces adjacent to hospitals for up to three hours.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. So I don't get to the funeral home or I wouldn't be able to officiate at another person's funeral parlor or house of worship.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH:  
Correct.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: With my current permit. Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH:  
Correct.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: And does this permit cost money now or is it a free permit?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: Free.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Free

permit. And do you have some sense of how many there are allocated--

[Crosstalk]

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH:

[Interposing] Yeah, it's not that big a universe, I mean so far this year, there's been about 430.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay. And how many more would this bill allocate, do you have any sense of it? It's hard to know.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: It's hard to know, I mean there's still a pretty strict criteria that applicants will have to go through, so I think these are, you know, changes at the margins, but they're important ones.

COUNCIL MEMBER BREWER: Okay.

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LIU: Thank you, Council Member Brewer. Questions from Council Member Mealy.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Good afternoon. I was asking, have your permit application change since you got a lot of

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2 complaints in regards to the process is so long  
3 that a lot of our clergy thought it was kind of  
4 too long. Have you thought about changing the  
5 application?

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: Not  
7 really, I mean we did--it was interesting, we had  
8 our discussion couple months ago, there was some  
9 talk about the process, but the sense we got was  
10 that the greater concerns had to do with the  
11 criteria, and particularly some of the issues that  
12 are referenced in the legislation.

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COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: So do you  
14 all administrate that, the permits to all worship  
15 the same way?

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH:  
17 Absolutely.

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COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: All the  
19 time.

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: And  
21 the--

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COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY:  
23 [Interposing] And if we bring up something  
24 different that it's not administrated fairly to  
25 everyone and every religion the same, what would

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2 you do about it?

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: I mean please let us know, if there's any complaint that an applicant has for any reason, let us know as soon as possible.

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COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Okay. It seem like it's not that you don't know 'cause this room would not be full right now if a lot of the pastors have said they had been fairly--their permits taken away for no reason whatsoever. And I was wondering how many permits are in Manhattan to their clergy to this day?

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: We'll have to get back to you with that breakdown.

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COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Do you know the breakdown of the permits that were rescinded from the Mayor's office when that big thing with the Post came through, the big article--

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: I don't think--

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COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: --and the Mayor started cutting back.

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: --I don't think we--that had to do with the government

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placards, not with clergy.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: The placards  
and--

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: Yeah,  
this is a separate...

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Totally  
separate.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: Yep.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Think that's  
true. So how many permits have been issued this  
year?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: As I  
said--

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Comparison  
with last year.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: So far  
about 430 and I think by the year's end, we'd--

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY:  
[Interposing] How many was last year?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: --  
expect about 500?

MALE VOICE: Yeah, it was--

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY:  
[Interposing] Excuse me, can I know how many was

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2 last year?

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MALE VOICE: About the same - -

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5 about the same? About the same.

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COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: About the

same?

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9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: The  
10 process hasn't, since 1996 when this was first put  
11 into law, the process hasn't changed. I mean  
12 there have been a lot of changes in terms of our  
13 other permitting programs, particularly in terms  
14 of the government placards, but not this one.

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16 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: I kind of  
17 remember, maybe the Chair could help me, it was a  
18 pastor who was in the hospital and he received a  
19 ticket. He had to pay that ticket. Have that  
20 changed as of yet?

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22 CHAIRPERSON LIU: That hasn't  
23 changed and that is not the subject of this  
24 particular legislation.

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COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: But it was a  
clergy permit.

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CHAIRPERSON LIU: The counsel to  
the committee--

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COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY:

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[Interposing] It was the same exact thing why all

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the churches are here.

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CHAIRPERSON LIU: --well the

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counsel to the committee advises us that it was in

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a no standing zone, as opposed to a no parking

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zone.

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COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Okay. So

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do--I have to ask, do they give leniency if it's

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emergency, a medical emergency, clergy is really

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important to our community, people live and die by

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our clergy we can say. They believe and if they

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want their last rites, you tell me no pastor,

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minister cannot just park in a no standing and

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have their placard there and go administer

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someone's last rite?

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: Yeah,

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I mean--

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COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Maybe get

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their car towed and their plaque removed?

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: That

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would be more of a question for the police

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department or the Department of Finance.

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COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: But it's

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2 about the permit--

3 [Crosstalk]

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH:

5 [Interposing] Right, there's no--we don't issue  
6 any permits that allow--

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY:

8 [Interposing] Well not permit, it's about the  
9 clergy--10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: --for  
11 parking in no standing.12 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: --parking.  
13 This was a clergy member of--14 CHAIRPERSON LIU: [Interposing] The  
15 legislation before this committee right now  
16 pertains to the program as enacted in 1996 that  
17 permits parking in a no parking zone, the no  
18 standing zones are currently not allowed. That  
19 would be the subject of new legislation, Council  
20 Member--

21 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Okay.

22 CHAIRPERSON LIU: --if you were to  
23 go down that path. That would also--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY:

25 [Interposing] Okay. Thank you, I think we need

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to.

CHAIRPERSON LIU: Well just keep in mind that around hospitals, many of the no standing zones are there for ambulance and other emergency vehicle access as well, so we need to keep that in mind.

We have--

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: That's duly noted.

CHAIRPERSON LIU: Okay.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LIU: Thank you, Council Member Mealy. Questions--

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY:

[Interposing] May I make a statement?

CHAIRPERSON LIU: Yes please.

COUNCIL MEMBER MEALY: I just hope all the clergy here realize that this is so important, next time we have a hearing it should be packed. I know Brooklyn is the borough of churches, I know I have about 500 or more in my district and before the next hearing, maybe we need to sit down and meet and let our voices be heard on this matter, 'cause it really is being

1  
2 unfairly done, but if no one speak up, it will  
3 continue to happen.

4 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

5 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Thank you,  
6 Council Member Mealy.

7 Questions from Council Member  
8 Foster.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER FOSTER: Thank you  
10 very much--

11 CHAIRPERSON LIU: [Interposing] Oh  
12 I'm sorry, Council Member Foster, let me note  
13 that--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER FOSTER: It's not my  
15 time?

16 CHAIRPERSON LIU: No, let me note  
17 that we've been joined by Council Member Miguel  
18 Martinez of Manhattan.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER FOSTER: Thank you.  
20 While I don't sit on Transportation, I had to be  
21 here, number one, because I'm the daughter of a  
22 minister and, number two, this initial 1996  
23 legislation came through my father who is a  
24 clergyman and I understand this, not better than  
25 the clergy sitting here, but much better I

1  
2 guarantee than you because I know when the phone  
3 rings in the middle of the night for a parishioner  
4 whose husband has died or whose family member is  
5 sick, that he's the one that has to get out of the  
6 bed and go to them. I know, having worked at a  
7 hospital where my hospital, through my efforts,  
8 provided all our clergy with free parking up to  
9 three hours while they visited their members.

10 I very much understand the  
11 significance of the black clergy and the black  
12 community and I almost think that it's too bad  
13 that we even have to have this hearing because the  
14 fact that we are asking the clergy to prove that  
15 their need or their presence is worthy is  
16 insulting on some levels--insulting on many  
17 levels.

18 Now my question, twofold, with the  
19 plaques that we're given and the police are given,  
20 which are different from theirs, is there a way  
21 for police officers--are they only allowed to use  
22 them when they're working?

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: I  
24 think the way the law is written as it was written  
25 in 1996, it--

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2

COUNCIL MEMBER FOSTER:

3

[Interposing] I'm not talking about the clergy,

4

I'm talking about the placards that police

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officers, fire fighters, council members are

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given, is it only when we're working?

7

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: Why

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don't we talk about the ones that we--we can only

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really speak to the ones we issue--

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[Off mic]

11

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: --for

12

the non-enforcement agencies.

13

COUNCIL MEMBER FOSTER:

14

[Interposing] The official ones that are given out

15

by DOT.

16

MALE VOICE: Right, to government

17

agencies and--

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COUNCIL MEMBER FOSTER: Right.

19

MALE VOICE: --to private, non-

20

profit organizations.

21

COUNCIL MEMBER FOSTER: Right, is

22

it only during work hours?

23

MALE VOICE: Yes.

24

COUNCIL MEMBER FOSTER: And if a

25

person is out of state, like they live in New

1

2

Jersey or upstate--well upstate is still in the city, but in New Jersey, do they not receive those official placards?

3

4

5

MALE VOICE: Those placards are only valid during the course of their official duties within the city, they're not valid outside the city.

6

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12

COUNCIL MEMBER FOSTER: Right, but if a person is on official business, but his car is registered in Jersey or Connecticut, does that placard--like our placards reflect our license plates.

13

14

15

MALE VOICE: Right, well the placards we're referring to are the ones issued to agency vehicles, official plates. They're not issued--

16

17

18

COUNCIL MEMBER FOSTER: Right, no--

MALE VOICE: --to private vehicles.

19

20

COUNCIL MEMBER FOSTER: Right, no I'm talking about the ones that go in car windows. Am I not--

21

22

23

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: The ones that we issue--

24

[Crosstalk]

25

1  
2 MALE VOICE: Right, but the ones  
3 that we issue to government vehicles--

4 [Crosstalk]

5 COUNCIL MEMBER FOSTER:  
6 [Interposing] I'm not asking about government  
7 vehicles--

8 MALE VOICE: --to--

9 COUNCIL MEMBER FOSTER: --I have a  
10 non-government vehicle, I have a car that I drive  
11 that has a placard that says official business  
12 that I put in it that has my license plate in New  
13 York state in, I put it in the window and I use it  
14 during work hours. My question is, is that the  
15 case with all the placards that are issued? Are  
16 they used only--do they have work hour like only  
17 three hour increments?

18 MALE VOICE: Yes, they do and  
19 there's an enforcement guide that details for  
20 police and traffic agents what those requirements  
21 are. Generally, it's three hours and, of course,  
22 no standing is--

23 [Crosstalk]

24 COUNCIL MEMBER FOSTER: No  
25 standing.

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MALE VOICE: --no-no.

COUNCIL MEMBER FOSTER: And if someone has an out of state license plate.

MALE VOICE: They normally would not 'cause I think, if I'm correct, Council Member, the vehicles you're referring to are the ones that would be issued to private, non-profit organizations.

COUNCIL MEMBER FOSTER: Well let me step back, are the--

[Off mic]

MALE VOICE: A little bit, but not much.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: Right, but do those go to--

[Pause]

MALE VOICE: Out of state.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: Out of state?

MALE VOICE: I don't think so, but I'm not sure.

COUNCIL MEMBER FOSTER: Are the ones that are issued to, say, police officers, that they can park in front of--

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MALE VOICE: A precinct?

2

COUNCIL MEMBER FOSTER: --a

3

precinct and a fire hydrant and on a sidewalk, who were those issued by?

4

5

MALE VOICE: Those are issued by

6

the local precinct, those are not issued by DOT.

7

COUNCIL MEMBER FOSTER: So that if-

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9

-

MALE VOICE: [Interposing] Excuse

10

me, we're talking, there are two categories of law enforcement--

11

12

COUNCIL MEMBER FOSTER: Okay.

13

MALE VOICE: --permits, one is

14

issued by a law enforcement council, of which DOT does not participate.

15

16

COUNCIL MEMBER FOSTER: Okay.

17

MALE VOICE: And those would be the

18

official permits for police undercover vehicles, fire marshal vehicles, vehicles of that nature.

19

20

[Crosstalk]

21

COUNCIL MEMBER FOSTER: Right,

22

official vehicles that are owned by the city.

23

MALE VOICE: Right, or--

24

COUNCIL MEMBER FOSTER: Okay.

25

1  
2 MALE VOICE: --owned by the federal  
3 government.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER FOSTER: Right,  
5 right.

6 MALE VOICE: The local precinct  
7 provides permits to its members of service at  
8 local precincts that are valid only parking in the  
9 vicinity of that local precinct. So, in other  
10 words, if someone is an officer assigned to, let's  
11 say, the third precinct, that permit would not be  
12 valid in the 112.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER FOSTER: Okay. My--

14 MALE VOICE: But we don't have any  
15 jurisdiction over either of those categories.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER FOSTER: Right, so  
17 the permits that you have jurisdiction over are  
18 the ones given to us and to agencies and non-  
19 profits.

20 MALE VOICE: Yes, so that would be  
21 design and construction, DEP, our own agency--

22 [Crosstalk]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER FOSTER: Okay. What  
24 I'm trying to get at, and my understanding, 'cause  
25 I have seen police placards, fire placards that,

1  
2 you know, are parked in areas that aren't near the  
3 precinct, double parked, you know, I saw one in  
4 front of Sushi of Gari and he literally finished  
5 eating and then after he finished eating on 76 or  
6 78th, left. My point is, or my question is, where  
7 in DOT's thought process does the role of the  
8 clergy, especially at a funeral and at a funeral  
9 home where they're usually the first to arrive and  
10 the last to leave, where's their presence there  
11 diminished that the needs of the community would  
12 be affected for most three or four hours as  
13 opposed to inconveniencing the clergy in total?  
14 Not understanding.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: I  
16 mean, you know, as I said earlier, there's a good  
17 argument that the Council has made for the value  
18 of extending the use of the permit at funeral  
19 homes, but there is a cost to it. Outside many  
20 funeral homes now, there's no parking space that's  
21 used by the funeral home and--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER FOSTER:  
23 [Interposing] Have funeral homes said to you this  
24 clergyman or clergy woman is taking up my space?

25 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: No.

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MALE VOICE: No.

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: And

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that would--

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COUNCIL MEMBER FOSTER: Okay.

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: --I

7

mean that's not something that could happen right

8

now. It's certainly I think would be worthwhile

9

for us to hear some feedback from funeral homes.

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COUNCIL MEMBER FOSTER:

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[Interposing] Where do you think funeral homes get

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their business? I mean, I really wish you--I want

13

to, if I had control I would make you take Black

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Clergy 101 because the arguments here are

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insulting. Where do you think these funeral homes

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get their business? Have you never seen a fan at

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a black church? I mean, and I'm not--like my

18

frustration is because I've had to sit in the car

19

and drive around as my father has had to do his

20

role because he doesn't have the option. So do

21

you think that the hospital says hey, someone

22

died? It's the clergy, that's the first call,

23

like someone dies at home, even before the police

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are called, they call their pastor.

25

So I'm just saying I think there

1  
2 needs to be some type of learning about what  
3 you're talking about in terms of the necessity of  
4 the parking. And I understand no parking and  
5 hospitals are difficult and I worked with  
6 hospitals in the Bronx, like I said, to provide  
7 free parking for a certain amount of hours. But  
8 like the funeral home, the need because, you know,  
9 my dad was one of the few pastors that stayed in  
10 the community that the church is, but many of them  
11 for whatever reason could move on, and to get a  
12 car registered in the name of the church if the  
13 church--I mean that opens up a whole another 50C,  
14 501(c)3 that will get them in trouble another way.

15 I just think we need to be--before  
16 DOT acts, and this is very much along the lines  
17 that I have I frustration--I'm sorry I'm a  
18 preacher's daughter, I know I will end now--that  
19 with this administration in general we're forever  
20 putting the cart before the horse, and I think  
21 that it would have been nice to extend this offer  
22 to the clergy and understand, if it's about 400,  
23 500 permits how abusive can it really be when we  
24 know there's a whole another end of potential  
25 abuse that's happening, you know, right here in

1  
2 terms of how many people can park in this lot when  
3 council members can't get in here.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: Yeah,  
5 there's no question there is lots of misuse of the  
6 government placards, I think we'd all agree on  
7 that and we've been taking steps towards curbing  
8 that, it's still a huge problem, still something  
9 that has to be dealt with.

10 As I said in the testimony, we have  
11 concerns about this part of the proposed  
12 legislation, but it's something we're, I think,  
13 interested in continuing to talk to the Council  
14 about. I mean, we got here, this started with the  
15 dialogue that we began to have, and we acknowledge  
16 that there is some changes that we need to make to  
17 the law that was put in place 13 years ago. And I  
18 think we're getting closer and we're happy to keep  
19 having that dialogue and your points are well.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER FOSTER: Thank you,  
21 Council Member Liu, and just to use your line from  
22 this morning in terms of it being important,  
23 again, I don't want to let them end with it being  
24 important, I want it to end with action being  
25 taken to make sure that clergy don't have to be

1  
2 down here to testify for something that should be  
3 in place. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Thank you, thank  
5 you, Council Member Foster. Wonderful. We have  
6 questions from Council Member Martinez.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ: Thank  
8 you, Mr. Chair. And I want to apologize for my  
9 tardiness, but I was at another hearing across the  
10 street, but I definitely wanted to be here because  
11 I have several members of the clergy community  
12 that are going through this situation and that is  
13 the unjust practice or, I would say, categorizing  
14 of clergy depending on whether their source of  
15 income, or if they actually live in the city or  
16 not. And I just want to get at where is the  
17 rationale that you don't get the permit if your  
18 main source of income it's not coming from the  
19 parishioner or from the institution of the church?  
20 You know what I'm asking, right?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: Yeah,  
22 look, I think that it's an excellent question and,  
23 in fact, I think we agree with the premise of the  
24 question and I think of all the changes we're  
25 talking about, this seems to be the most

1  
2 significant one. The current policy is not fair  
3 to smaller houses of worship around the city and I  
4 just want to refer back to Council Member Foster's  
5 comment, we shouldn't be here. We have to be here  
6 because the only way to make these changes are to  
7 go back and change the Administrative Code.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ: I'm glad  
9 you recognize that.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: So I  
11 think we're all in agreement that we need  
12 legislation. I was not here in 1996 at the  
13 agency--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ: But let  
15 me ask you a question--

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: --but  
17 I think the rationale was to ensure that the  
18 applicants were representing legitimate houses of  
19 worship--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ: Correct.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: --or  
22 something along those lines, and I think we'd all  
23 agree, or many of us would agree, that that was  
24 too narrow a definition, we need to find a way to  
25 be more inclusive and to include smaller houses of

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2

worship--

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COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ: Correct.

4

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: --

5

around the city, so...

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COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ: No, look,

7

I'm glad the discussion already took place on that

8

particular issue and I'm glad you recognize that.

9

You know, sometimes the membership of a house of

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worship sometimes shrink, sometimes it goes up,

11

depending on, you know, even though we're in a

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city, the city where population migrate. You

13

know, my district was at one time Greek, then it

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was Irish, then it was Cuban, now Dominican, and

15

I'm sure the Mexican community would next be--and

16

I'm sure the house of worship in my district will

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have a time period where it's going to go down,

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but you know what, it's going to go back up. And,

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you know what, clergy men and women have to pay

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rent, they have to have a shelter over their

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heads, and they have to get a job, so I'm glad

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that was recognized.

23

However, why all of a sudden was it

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enforced? That's what I'm--you know, it's like

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it's an old policy but all of a sudden out of the-

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2 -I guess when the Mayor started putting the  
3 restriction on the different placards, is that the  
4 result of that? And I'm not trying to put blame  
5 on the Mayor, I'm just trying to get as to where  
6 the enforcement aspect all of a sudden just  
7 started happening.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: Yeah,  
9 I mean I can't speak to the enforcement, I mean  
10 the enforcement is done by the police department.  
11 We lost--

12 [Crosstalk]

13 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ:  
14 [Interposing] No, no, when I say enforcement, the  
15 not issuing the placard. In other words, these  
16 clergymen and women were getting and--you know, if  
17 you have the answer, fine, if not, you could get  
18 back to me, I don't want to--I'm already glad that  
19 we recognize that we have to change that, I'm just  
20 trying to get an understanding.

21 For example, I'll talk to you about  
22 the Rocky Mount Baptist Church in my district,  
23 it's in Marble Hill, the gentleman worked for the  
24 Transit Authority. You know, his church is going  
25 through a period where the congregation is small,

1  
2 but it's growing slowly, but all of a sudden he  
3 lost the placard because he works for the Transit  
4 Authority, his main source of income was not  
5 coming from the church. But he used to get it  
6 regularly, all of a sudden a couple of years ago  
7 he stopped getting it and so I'm trying to  
8 understand why all of a sudden they decided not to  
9 issue him the placard.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: I  
11 mean, we've had the same process in place for--

12 MALE VOICE: Forever.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: --  
14 since 1996 so, where there's been an affidavit  
15 requirement attesting to the income questions, so  
16 I'm not--

17 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ: So over  
18 all, Mr. Chairman, or you could answer it, is the  
19 Administration in agreement with the legislation?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: On the  
21 whole, yes, so I think there's a few elements of  
22 the legislation, I think there's essentially four  
23 tenets of it and three of them were essentially in  
24 agreement with--

25 COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ: Okay.

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: --

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there's one that I think we could do by rule

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change, there's the income question, which I think

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is the biggest, which we have an alternative

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suggestion for, and I think gets a fairer system

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to address the problem.

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COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ: So I

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could go back and tell my clergies they're going

10

to get their placard?

11

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: In

12

this particular case?

13

COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ: Yeah.

14

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: Yeah.

15

COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ: Okay.

16

Thank you.

17

CHAIRPERSON LIU: Congratulations,

18

Council Member Martinez.

19

We've been joined by Council Member

20

Eric Ulrich of Queens and Larry Seabrook of the

21

Bronx. And now Council Member Inez Dickens of

22

Manhattan.

23

[Pause]

24

Okay. Well, just bear with us for

25

another couple of minutes, we have a question from

1  
2 Council Member Inez Dickens, who is a prime  
3 sponsor of this bill.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER DICKENS: Thank you,  
5 Mr. Chair, and it's not so much a question as I  
6 have a statement, and I apologize to all of the  
7 clergy in attendance and to the Chair of  
8 Transportation, Council Member John Liu, but  
9 there's briefings going on, there's budget going  
10 on, there's so much going on all simultaneously  
11 that I apologize that I am coming in late and I  
12 will have to leave early, but if you're not  
13 sitting at the table, you lose out.

14 So I thank you for the opportunity.

15 Intro 662-A is a change to New York  
16 City parking permit laws for the city's religious  
17 leaders. The legislation makes two an important  
18 amendments: First, a new language of this bill  
19 would extend parking permit privileges to any  
20 automobile owned by a religious or a corporation  
21 or association. Many churches have taken their  
22 mission of service beyond Sundays, forming  
23 nonprofit entities with assets like cars, which  
24 provide an avenue in which our religious community  
25 can go to social services, provide economic

1  
2 empowerment for our communities, and other  
3 important duties that attend to our communities.  
4 Many of our church's own car is beyond the head of  
5 the church's own personal automobile.

6           Second, this legislation would  
7 allow members of the clergy or church to use their  
8 parking permits to park adjacent to funeral  
9 establishments for up to three hours to perform  
10 their duties. It is not right to subject members  
11 of our clergy to parking tickets and fines when  
12 they are trying to provide solace and comfort to  
13 grieving families. Nor is it fair for them to get  
14 parking tickets when they are there to attend to  
15 those members and others that may be ill and in  
16 need of solace and support, as well as our clergy  
17 also goes out into the community and helps to stem  
18 the tide on the gang violence that has become  
19 prolific in our communities, and for that we owe  
20 you a debt of gratitude and we need to see to it  
21 that you get as much support as you possibly can.

22           Clergy members are often the first  
23 line of all defense, not only for consolation, but  
24 for support for families who have lost someone  
25 dear or who is ill or, indeed, to stop a gang

1  
2 fight. They should be able to park their cars  
3 without fear that they need to leave those that  
4 have been devastated so that they can continue to  
5 minister and not have to worry about feeding a  
6 meter or finding a parking space.

7 I strongly support this  
8 legislation, I ask my colleagues for their  
9 support, and I thank the Chairman for my time.

10 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Thank you,  
11 Council Member Dickens.

12 [Applause]

13 One day I hope to elicit the same  
14 kinds of responses that Council Member Dickens  
15 often seems to be able to.

16 Questions from Council Member  
17 Robert Jackson.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Thank you,  
19 Mr. Chair.

20 I want just ask a question as far  
21 as, currently, are there liaisons to different  
22 communities at DOT to deal with issues and  
23 concerns like, for example, City Council or other  
24 agencies, do you have liaisons that deal with  
25 specific communities?

1  
2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: Yeah,  
3 we actually have a system in place that was put in  
4 some time ago that revolves around our borough  
5 commissioners. So and there's actually six of  
6 them because after 9/11 there was one created in  
7 lower Manhattan, but there are five other borough  
8 commissioner offices.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay. And  
10 what about is there either borough-wide or  
11 citywide a liaison person within DOT that deals  
12 with issues and concerns of clergy concerning  
13 parking permits and/or tickets that they may have  
14 received?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH:  
16 Essentially, the way the department works is the  
17 borough offices are really the front lines in a  
18 myriad of issues. And, as often will happen when  
19 there are issues that clearly become more than  
20 just local issues, more than just borough issues,  
21 but are citywide systemic issues, often myself or  
22 our first deputy commissioner will get involved as  
23 well.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: And the  
25 reason why I ask that because you have so many

1  
2 clergy that are running around and if they're  
3 getting tickets I wanted to know if there is a  
4 liaison. What is the protocol or process they  
5 should do right now if they get a ticket?

6 Besides, for example, either pleading not guilty  
7 or guilty with an explanation and sending it in or  
8 trying to go and wait on line. So what is the  
9 protocol in dealing with the clergy concerning  
10 those type of issues?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: You  
12 know, I think that's a great question, rather than  
13 my making up something on the spot--

14 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Which I  
15 don't want you to--

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: --let  
17 us--'cause it's--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: --I don't  
19 want you to do.

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: --too  
21 important a question. Let me go back and let us  
22 think about the best way to handle that going  
23 forward.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay.  
25 Because I know that that has come up as an issue

1  
2 with clergy and I was just curious as to whether  
3 or not you had a protocol in place in order to  
4 deal with the issues and concerns that they have  
5 concerning the placards and/or parking tickets  
6 that they may receive in carrying out their duties  
7 and responsibilities.

8 Now in reading the testimony, what  
9 I basically gather is that DOT is willing to look  
10 at the issues and concerns that have been raised  
11 and feels that an amendment to the rules may be  
12 better and have more flexibility than establishing  
13 a law, am I right or wrong?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: Only  
15 on the residency issue. I think on the other--all  
16 the other issues we would have to go back to  
17 changing the Administrative Code--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay.

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: --like  
20 it or not. But on the residency, of these four  
21 issues, that's the one where we have that  
22 flexibility.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON:  
24 Flexibility. And the residency issue, you're  
25 talking about where one lives in Jersey or

1

2 Connecticut or something like that.

3

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH:

4

Correct.

5

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay.

6

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH:

7

Correct.

8

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: So my

9

question would be, because that's an issue right

10

now for clergy, approximately how long would it

11

take to amend the rules? Because that's an issue,

12

okay, how long is it going to take?

13

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: What

14

we would probably look to do, because I think

15

we're expecting and hopeful that we will actually

16

change the Ad Code on some of the other issues,

17

that we'll have a parallel process. So on the

18

income issue, for example, we would want to make

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changes in our rules that will match up with

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what's in the Ad Code. So I think the way we're

21

envisioning this is it will be one process, but I

22

think that particular issue we could address with

23

a change just in the rules.

24

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: I guess

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I'm still trying to understand. I appreciate

1

2 that, but how long is that going to take? Is it  
3 going to take a week; is it going to take a month;  
4 is it going to take five months; it's going to  
5 take a year? How long is it going to take?

6

7

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: I  
mean, you know, let's--

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9

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON:  
[Interposing] And I'm being realistic, because--

10

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: Right.

11

12

13

14

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: --because  
that's a question that they're going to ask me and  
I need to be able to--they're here now and then  
they're--

15

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: Sure.

16

17

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: --waiting  
for that answer also.

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DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: I  
think the first part of the answer will depend on  
how long we take with the legislation--getting it  
passed, getting it signed. And we need to check  
with our attorneys, but I think at that point,  
then we would promulgate rules to match up with  
the legislation on where we're changing--making  
changes in the Ad Code, I think it's probably

1

2 about 60-day process from that point for in terms  
3 of--

4

[Crosstalk]

5

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON:

6

[Interposing] A 60-day process?

7

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: --the

8

rules, yeah.

9

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: So in

10

essence, you want to--if you're going to amend

11

your rules based on changes in the Administrative

12

Code, you want to do it all together, that's what

13

I'm hearing and not separate?

14

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH:

15

Because there are--if we change the Ad Code, there

16

are parallel changes that we want to make in our

17

rules to--

18

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON:

19

[Interposing] But you want to do it all together.

20

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: --

21

match up. Yeah.

22

COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: So if in

23

fact, let's just say this bill is voted out by the

24

Council within 30 days and then the Mayor has, as

25

you know, 30 days to either sign it into law or to

1  
2 veto it, you know, so that could take anywhere  
3 from realistically 30 days to 60 days, and then  
4 administrative changes at your agency could take  
5 another 60 days or it could take anywhere from  
6 four to five months.

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: Yeah,  
8 I think that's probably about right. I'd like to  
9 go back and confirm the timetable for the  
10 rulemaking process, but I think that sounds about  
11 right. So probably about four months.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER JACKSON: Okay.  
13 Those are the questions I have for now. Thank  
14 you, Mr. Chair.

15 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Thank you. Thank  
16 you, Council Member Jackson. The bill says it  
17 will take--it will become effective 60 days after  
18 the enactment, so we are hoping to work closely  
19 with the Department of Transportation to iron out  
20 the legislation itself so that we can vote on this  
21 next month, no later than the end of June. At  
22 which point, we hope the Mayor would sign it  
23 promptly and then, upon that happening, we'd  
24 expect that the law would be effective 60 days  
25 from the day that it's signed. So hopefully the

1  
2 rulemaking can take place within that 60 day time  
3 period.

4 So that I think provides more  
5 clarity. Sixty days from the time that the Mayor  
6 signs the bill, and we hope to work with you to  
7 resolve any issues with the legislative wording by  
8 next month.

9 Okay. Well hey, this is a great  
10 hearing. Thank you very much, Mr. Rosen. Thank  
11 you very much, Commissioner Woloch, and I want to  
12 thank the entire Department of Transportation team  
13 because they have been diligent on this issue.  
14 Thank you.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WOLOCH: Thank  
16 you.

17 CHAIRPERSON LIU: We have a large  
18 number of people who wish to testify, which is  
19 great. The bad thing, if anything, is that we  
20 have a limited amount of time, a very limited  
21 amount of time, so I need to ask our distinguished  
22 clergy members to please be as succinct as  
23 possible.

24 Let me call the first panel. We  
25 have Elizabeth Loris Ritter, Pastor Sylvia

1  
2 Dummett, Reverend Shon Adkins, and Michael  
3 Grattan.

4 They will be followed by a panel  
5 consisting of Reverend Hector Crespo, Dwight  
6 Sibblies, Reverend Dr. Cheryl Anthony, and  
7 Reverend Dr. Charles Curtis.

8 [Pause]

9 Please proceed when you're ready.

10 MS. ELIZABETH LORIS RITTER: Good  
11 afternoon. My name is Elizabeth Loris Ritter, I  
12 am a member of the Hebrew Tabernacle congregation  
13 of Washington Heights, I am the constituent that  
14 Council Member Jackson mentioned earlier at whose  
15 behest part of this legislation was introduced.  
16 Thank you so much, Robert.

17 I actually have prepared testimony,  
18 but as you've got copies of it in front of you and  
19 you all can read it, I'm going to jettison it in  
20 the interest of time and just say a couple of  
21 things.

22 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Thank you.

23 MS. LORIS RITTER: First, I am  
24 blown away that DOT has agreed essentially to most  
25 of the changes--that just never happens. I do

1

2 this a lot, I've never seen it; you do it more,  
3 you've never seen it, it's an amazing. But I want  
4 to speak specifically--

5 CHAIRPERSON LIU: [Interposing] As  
6 I said before, they answer to a higher authority.

7 MS. LORIS RITTER: I was waiting  
8 for the celestial choir, you know.

9 But I want to speak specifically to  
10 the issue of the residency requirement because  
11 that was my issue. We live in Washington Heights,  
12 our rabbi lived in Forest Hills, he moved to New  
13 Jersey, and when he went to do the right thing and  
14 change his permit to reflect the new registration,  
15 they took his permit away. And we wrote a lot of  
16 letters, we looked at the legislation. There's  
17 nothing actually in the current legislation that  
18 prohibits an out-of-state vehicle from being  
19 granted a permit.

20 The extant legislation does not  
21 stipulate New York State residency or New York  
22 State registration; it does not stipulate that the  
23 preacher or pastor, rabbi, imam, be affiliated  
24 with a New York City congregation. So, you know,  
25 that's how you have the possibility that somebody

1  
2 from Plattsburgh can park in New York City, but a  
3 guy who works spitting distance from his own  
4 congregation, but lives in New Jersey cannot.

5           The reason I'm making such a point  
6 of this is, while it's true, that they could  
7 correct that administratively, Commissioner Rosen  
8 could grant Rabbi Wiener his new permit tomorrow  
9 if he wished it--we heard him basically say that--  
10 because it's not prohibited by the extant  
11 legislation, I would like to see it written into  
12 the law. It's four words, I care a lot about  
13 those four words.

14           With respect to the whole funeral  
15 home issue, you know, I wasn't really prepared to  
16 testify about it, but it seems not only like a no-  
17 brainer, but the folks with these permits, they're  
18 in the morality business. There's something  
19 profoundly wrong with not being able to trust a  
20 bunch of imams, rabbis, preachers, and ministers  
21 and, you know, other canters, other clergy with a  
22 parking permit. If we can't trust that group of  
23 men and women with that, there is just--we have so  
24 many other problems. So I would encourage you  
25 really to also enact the wording with respect to

1

2 funeral homes irrespective of DOT's objection.

3 Thank you.

4

CHAIRPERSON LIU: Thank you, Ms.

5

Ritter. Pastor Dummett.

6

PASTOR SYLVIA DUMMETT: Okay. How

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are you, Councilman Liu?

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CHAIRPERSON LIU: Thank you.

9

PASTOR DUMMETT: I am representing

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the Cathedral of Hope Seventh Day Worship Center

11

in the Bronx, I'm in Ms. Helen Foster's area.

12

And one of the things that I'm 100%

13

in support of the bill, but I do want them to give

14

more support to the issue of the hospitals because

15

when we have to come to visit our members, we're

16

taxed with the issue of always having to pay for

17

parking because there's so little parking for us.

18

And have to be there for a short length of time

19

and if you have two or three other people that are

20

in that hospital that you actually have to provide

21

some type of service for them in terms of prayer

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and consolation, it can be a challenge for us.

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Thank you.

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CHAIRPERSON LIU: Well that's a

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good point, thank you very much for bringing that

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up.

REVEREND SHON T. ADKINS: Good afternoon, Chair, Council Member Jackson, and all the clergy here. My name is Reverend Shon T. Adkins, I am the Pastor of the Antioch Baptist Church in Harlem, New York and I am a resident of New Jersey.

I am in support of this bill because, number one, as a resident of New Jersey, it is oftentimes difficult to find parking in Harlem, we're not able to bring my vehicle.

Also, currently the way the law is stated--the bill is stated, those clergy who do have a plaque are not able to park in front of other house of worships. Thus, they're able to park in front of their house of worship, however, they're unable to park in another house of worship and oftentimes, clergy members have to officiate funerals at other house of worship.

So I'm asking that you really continue to stay on DOT to make sure this bill is passed. Thank you so very much for your support.

CHAIRPERSON LIU: Thank you, and be assured we are going to stay on DOT.

1

Thank you, Pastor Adkins.

2

Mr. Grattan.

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MR. MICHAEL GRATTAN: My name is Michael Grattan, I'm the Pastor of Manhattan Pentecostal Church, 541 West 125th Street, and of course I'm in favor of this legislation.

5

6

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8

I come under the issue of pastoring here in the city, have since 2005, but I also have an out-of-state registration--Massachusetts, as a matter of fact--and I've had the particular issue of being a clergy member, being in front of my church and begging police not to give me a ticket. I'm telling them, look, I'm a pastor right here, looking at me, shaking my head and saying it doesn't matter, we don't care, and it's a very nasty situation.

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And so, again, of course I'm in favor of this legislation, especially that as pertains to the out-of-state residency. Thank you very much.

19

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CHAIRPERSON LIU: Well thank you, very, very much, Pastor Grattan.

23

24

I want to thank our panel for testifying today. Thank you.

25

1  
2 It's always great when someone has  
3 a slightly different perspective on it because it  
4 allows us to consider all the possibilities that  
5 exist. Thank you.

6 Our next panel is Reverend Hector  
7 Crespo, Dwight Sibblies, Reverend Dr. Cheryl  
8 Anthony, and Reverend Dr. Charles Curtis.

9 And they will be followed by  
10 Reverend Dr. Mark Taylor, Reverend John Scott,  
11 Reverend Dr. Demetrius Carolina, and Reverend  
12 Princess Hooks.

13 [Long pause]

14 REVEREND CHARLES CURTIS: ...off,  
15 oh, now it's on.

16 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Please proceed.  
17 Thank you, thank you for joining us.

18 FEMALE VOICE: Okay. I don't think  
19 that was--

20 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Reverend Crespo.

21 REVEREND CRESPO: Good afternoon  
22 everyone, distinguished members of the  
23 Transportation Committee. My name is Reverend  
24 Hector Crespo, I am the President of the City of  
25 New York Clergy Association for Justice.

1  
2           It is [off mic] to me to be here  
3 today to speak in favor of the clergy parking  
4 permit due to the fact that the minister for the  
5 New York City clergy confront a lot of problems  
6 when they have to visit their parishioners in  
7 different hospitals. Not only at the regular  
8 visit, but in a lot of cases emergency occurred in  
9 random moments of the day where you are least  
10 expected.

11           I also want to bring to your  
12 attention the situation due to our religious  
13 services, which we have senior citizens that are  
14 not able to walk well and for that reason we use  
15 our transportation to facilitate--give them a  
16 better, a [off mic] to the house of worship.

17           Also includes funerals and also  
18 when we go to different place where they have all  
19 the commercial vehicles and they don't allow other  
20 vehicles beside them, and then sometime we have to  
21 find parking in that spot, that we can't do it  
22 because our permits don't allow to it. And this  
23 is why one of my issue also to include that in the  
24 agenda.

25           And it's very important also there,

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I want to bring to your attention also that I don't know why and for what reason they issue a parking permit and then they allow to put at least three different license plates in that permit, but in the meantime, you cannot afford a copy of them. So we have pastor, senior pastor, we have co-pastor, when the senior pastor is doing one duty, we have the co-pastor doing another duty in the area. So we have a problem because we have the permit, but we can not photocopy them, because it's forbidden by the DOT.

So is a possibility that if they allow four of them, they could make three copies or they could issue four permits? That's my question today.

So I'm glad that I'm here and I thank God for this moment and my colleague here and what I heard. I think it's going to work out perfect, but a few things that we have to be at because that was my concern also, you know, concerning that we put the co-pastor, his license plate, and the deacon his license plate, well we can't afford a copy of the permit. So if a possibility that we could do photocopy according

1

2 to what we had in the permit. Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Would you only  
4 make three copies?

5 REVEREND CRESPO: Well, the one  
6 original one plus three extra copy, if it's  
7 possible because they are already in the permit,  
8 for every permit.

9 CHAIRPERSON LIU: You sure you  
10 wouldn't make four copies?

11 REVEREND CRESPO: Oh, no, no. What  
12 I'm talking about, they allow the--oh either the  
13 DOT send four original permits to each one of  
14 them.

15 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Okay. We'll ask  
16 the DOT.

17 REVEREND CRESPO: Okay.

18 [Crosstalk]

19 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Thank you,  
20 Reverend Crespo.

21 REVEREND CRESPO: Okay.

22 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Mr. Sibblies?

23 PASTOR DWIGHT SIBBLIES: Mr.  
24 Council and Mr. Jackson, I thank you for bringing  
25 the bill to the table.

1  
2 I represent Ebenezer United  
3 Pentecostal Church in the Bronx. My dad is the  
4 bishop at that church, I'm the co-pastor at that  
5 church. When my dad is not in town, I assume all  
6 the responsibilities when he's not there, I am a  
7 minister also.

8 I throw another scenario in the mix  
9 and this is reality, and you could figure out how  
10 it can work in the bill. I do not take income  
11 from the church simply because it's a small  
12 congregation and, of course, my father is the  
13 pastor. I don't take an income, I receive income  
14 when I preach outside of my church. Now I'm a  
15 contractor by trade, so all day I'm in my  
16 commercial vehicle. My family car is registered  
17 in my wife's name actually. When my dad calls me  
18 and say, son, I need you to go to this hospital or  
19 wherever during my workday, I now have to bring my  
20 commercial vehicle home and then I get in my  
21 family car, but now it's registered in my wife's  
22 name, and I have to go to that hospital, that home  
23 or whatever it is. I'm not going to be allowed a  
24 permit in that case, from what I'm hearing with  
25 this legislation.

1  
2 I think that something needs to be  
3 considered if it's a family vehicle also because  
4 then I'm going to have to reregister all my  
5 vehicles. I had another vehicle in my name, I  
6 cannot afford to do that now having three  
7 different vehicles, so we decided to narrow it  
8 down to one car and that's the scenario.

9 So I ask that something along the  
10 line of family, you know, the registration of  
11 family is considered.

12 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Thank you, Mr.  
13 Sibblies. Reverend Dr. Anthony.

14 REVEREND DR. CHERYL ANTHONY: Good  
15 afternoon, my name is Reverend Dr. Cheryl Anthony  
16 and I'm pastor of Judah International Christian  
17 Center and I'm also a member of the African  
18 American clergy and elected officials in Brooklyn.

19 And I want to thank you, Chairman  
20 Liu and Council Member Jackson, for the  
21 opportunity to address you on this afternoon and  
22 submit input into the decision being made  
23 regarding the parameters and rectification of  
24 parking permits issued to religious leaders--the  
25 spiritual gatekeepers of the city.

1  
2           The stress and strains of these  
3 economic times have placed on the people of our  
4 congregation and communities--has been placed on  
5 them is staggering. Modifying these permits to  
6 just include funerals limits our ability to  
7 provide the needed and expected response in a  
8 crisis. It takes only one call from a frantic  
9 family needing immediate assistance in a domestic  
10 violence situation or a child being left on a  
11 school bus and delivered to the police department,  
12 to realize a moment's delay can mean a disaster.

13           The clergy is detained trying to  
14 provide a legitimate parking space or, better  
15 still, to find a meter, only to realize that they  
16 only have two quarters and to return to your  
17 vehicle to find it ticketed or even towed.  
18 Everyone doesn't have driver, some of us drive and  
19 park ourselves, some of us used public  
20 transportation to come here today for this  
21 hearing. The parking permits must be reflective  
22 of the services we provide and the institutions we  
23 serve.

24           I remember in 201 just after 9/11,  
25 faith leaders were recruited and then trained by

1  
2 the American Red Cross as clergy crisis  
3 responders. We served thousands of police,  
4 policemen, firefighters, and union members and  
5 their loved ones, we are the clergy crisis  
6 responders, because we have been called to do this  
7 work. In place of my responder card, which I  
8 still carry, okay, are all of the parking tickets  
9 that I've received and that I've had to pay this  
10 year.

11 We need some assistance from the  
12 City Council and the city with respect to the  
13 parking permits, that they might be flexible.

14 I think that the Department of  
15 Transportation has a lack of sensitivity and a  
16 level of disdain for clergy and clergies within  
17 the city and that they have to work with houses of  
18 worship in order to make the job that we do  
19 meaningful and sustainable within our community.

20 Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Thank you,  
22 Reverend Dr. Anthony.

23 Reverend Dr. Curtis.

24 REVEREND DR. CURTIS: I'm the  
25 Reverend Charles Curtis, senior pastor of the Mt.

1  
2 Olivet Baptist Church, a 130-year-old institution  
3 in Harlem, and I'm Chairman of the Board of Harlem  
4 Congregations for Community Improvement, an  
5 interfaith organization composed of 90 churches.

6 I've come today to thank the  
7 members of this body for recognizing the  
8 invaluable work carried out by the clergy of this  
9 city, and to urge you to pass the bill before you  
10 as soon as possible, and also to state my concern  
11 over the efforts of some who continually seek to  
12 erode the rights and privileges of the church and  
13 those who serve her.

14 The clergy in this city held forces  
15 of betterment of New York. They serve as liaisons  
16 between the New York City communities and the  
17 police department. During the Giuliani  
18 Administration, over 400 clergy worked to bring  
19 peace between the community and the police. They  
20 advise the police department when possible, they  
21 serve as recruiters and promoters of precinct  
22 programs, and others are hired full time to  
23 address the needs of police officers of different  
24 faiths. Moreover, clergy help to stabilize  
25 communities and promote calm in troubled times.

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Many are called upon by local politicians, as I have been recently, to endorse their efforts to be elected or reelected--they do see a need for us sometimes.

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We visit, of course, as you know, we visit the sick, be it in their homes, nursing homes, or in the hospitals and we continue to do that work and must do so without encumbrance. We must park in front of our institutions, which carry out vital functions. My church serves the homeless, which helps the city. They provide food every week, we have health fairs, housing workshops, and we must be able to continue to do those things.

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But today the church is challenged in a number of ways. We are challenged by bike-a-thons, marathons, walkathons, and even the movie industry, even on Sundays when we have church service. I can assure you today that I have no morbid desire to take a permit and go park in the cemetery and to eat lunch there or to take my beautiful wife there and say, dear, one day we'll have a place here of our own--I have no desire to do that. I think we are very responsible people,

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2

we are caring people, and I'm really appalled that we have to come here to justify the work of the clergy.

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5

And let me say I am unaware of any liaison between DOT and the clergy. And whether one has a small church of five people or a church of 20,000, the same God is just as big in a five-member church as he is in a 20,000-member church.

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Let me just conclude by saying that

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I've been a part of this program since its

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inception, when I believe it was introduced by C.

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Virginia Fields, I commented to her when this was

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being introduced.

14

15

I live in New Jersey and have lived

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in New Jersey all of my life, I pastor here now

17

for the past 20 years. For the first time, my

18

permit was denied, not because I lived out of the

19

city, but because I was told I responded too late.

20

Let me give you an example. The person who

21

handles this is both cold, callous, and heartless,

22

and I believe--and I wrote to the head of the

23

Commissioner of DOT and for six months I have not

24

received a response. When I say that I was told

25

at first you must send in--prove that you work for

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2 the church, I did that. Then they asked me to  
3 send in my ordination papers, I did that. Then  
4 they asked me to send my permit in, I didn't do  
5 that, 'cause then they would ask me next to prove  
6 that my car is registered. For the first time,  
7 what was a simple process was turned into a  
8 tortuous experience. It was very simple in past  
9 years and why it had to become a difficult process  
10 now, I do not know. So today, I do not have a  
11 permit, a valid permit for the first time. It was  
12 not because I lived out of state because I lived  
13 out of state in 1966. I've always lived in New  
14 Jersey and so I'm saying DOT has come up with more  
15 and more nonsense to hinder the work of the  
16 clergy.

17 I look to this body, and I see that  
18 you're logical people, that you're well-meaning  
19 people, and I ask you and I thank you, Councilman  
20 Jackson, for the work that you're doing and all of  
21 you who realize the valuable work of the clergy.  
22 Please correct this, this is nonsense. We're  
23 trying to help this city, allow us to do it. Help  
24 those who help to heighten the best in people and  
25 not to diminish them. Thank you very much.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Thank you very  
3 much, Reverend Dr. Curtis, those were very  
4 thoughtful words, and they certainly ring true to  
5 some extent that the bureaucracy does need to be a  
6 little bit more sensitive to the difficult  
7 situation. So thank you very much.

8 REVEREND DR. CURTIS: May I ask one  
9 other question? What will I have to do to get a  
10 valid permit now? Since I'm still riding around  
11 with one for, I think, from 2007 or eight?

12 [Off mic]

13 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Yeah. We'll talk  
14 to you right outside this hearing.

15 REVEREND DR. CURTIS: All right,  
16 all right.

17 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Thank you.

18 [Off mic]

19 CHAIRPERSON LIU: The next panel  
20 consists of Reverend Dr. Demetrius Carolina,  
21 Reverend John Scott--

22 [Off mic]

23 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Okay. Reverend  
24 Princess--I cannot read this last--

25 FEMALE VOICE: Thorpes.

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CHAIRPERSON LIU: Oh, okay.

Reverend Princess Thorpes, and Reverend Melvin Wilson.

Reverend Dr. Carolina, thank you for your patience, please proceed. We know you're on a tight schedule.

REVEREND DR. CAROLINA: Yes, Chairman, understood. Chairman Liu and Councilman Jackson, thank you so much for your time.

My name is Reverend Dr. Demetrius Carolina, I am the pastor of the First Central Baptist Church, Staten Island, New York; Executive Director of the Central Family Life Center in Staten Island, New York. I'm also speaking on behalf of the Baptist Ministers Conference of Greater New York and Vicinity, which encompasses over 120 churches in all five boroughs and beyond, as well as the United Missionary Baptist Association, which is also an association in New York City which encompasses 113 churches.

In an effort not to reiterate what has already been stated, I just wanted to conquer with everything that I've heard from previous clergy persons. I want to also commend you for

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2 this bill, this piece of legislation, and also  
3 suggest that a vigilant eye be kept on DOT with  
4 regard to moving this forward.

5           The only thing I wanted to stress  
6 very quickly is that the process has, in fact,  
7 changed. The process of securing this--although I  
8 heard testimony that it had not changed, it seems  
9 to me and a number of other numerous clergy around  
10 the city that a tighter screening process,  
11 possibly, there may be reasons, I don't know, but  
12 persons who have secured this permit for a number  
13 of years, as you've heard already in testimony,  
14 have all of a sudden not been able to get it.

15           I want to also just simply add that  
16 the idea of restriction on clergy parking in New  
17 York City is ridiculous. I don't know of any  
18 clergy that would simply take a placard and park,  
19 you know, in front of a funeral home, for example,  
20 just to be parking there. Everyone who was in a  
21 process of a funeral knows every clergy person.  
22 There is a strict adherence to where we park,  
23 where we follow the body, things of that nature--  
24 that's all a part of almost every religious  
25 tradition in this city and beyond. So to suggest

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2 that clergy would in some way use this to park in  
3 front of wherever for unrealistic purposes is just  
4 really, really insulting. In fact, that we have  
5 to be here is insulting as well.

6 Thank you for your time and I  
7 certainly thank you for your vigilance.

8 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Well thank you  
9 very much for being here too. It is not the most  
10 comfortable position that we sit on this side of  
11 the table.

12 Thank you.

13 Reverend Thorpes.

14 REVEREND PRINCESS THORBES: Yes, I  
15 did. Good afternoon, Councilman Liu and  
16 Councilman Jackson. We want to thank you for  
17 inviting me here, and Ms. Carrie Mobley  
18 especially.

19 My name is Reverend Princess  
20 Thorbes and I am a member of new Jerusalem Baptist  
21 Church, but I am also speaking on behalf of my  
22 mother Reverend Carlene Why Thorbes, who is the  
23 past president of the Baptist Ministers  
24 Conference, she's here in the room, as well as two  
25 other ministers from the conference.

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As a past president, she had to attend, and still attends, many functions, many citywide and community functions, as well as church functions. Funerals is not all that we consist of, we don't just do funerals and just have services within our own churches. I, as well as my mother and Reverend Rogers back there, have many times been to Reverend Carolina's church in Staten Island, so we are all over the city.

Something was said about the police officers and the firemen, about their plaques not being valid while they're not working. Let me just shed some light on that situation, as a police officer you are told in the academy that you are on duty even when you are off duty. So that means your behavior is being monitored and you are supposed to carry yourself at all times-- not being drunk or belligerent or anything of that nature, because you're carrying a firearm. So what I'm also saying is that you can park with that plaque and they do, 24 hours, seven days a week.

What we do as clergy, we work for a higher power and we walk under the anointing of

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2 you do things in decency and in order and, with  
3 that, we have no choice but to be and do what we  
4 have to do. We have to respond to the call of  
5 persons in our congregations or outside of our  
6 congregations that need assistance and need prayer  
7 and there's no time limit we can put on that. We  
8 cannot tell them, "I have to be right back, I have  
9 to run down to put a quarter in the meter," that's  
10 just not reasonable. And a lot of times when we  
11 go into hospitals, it's life-and-death and I thank  
12 you for hearing me.

13 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Thank you very  
14 much, Reverend Thorbes.

15 Reverend Wilson.

16 REVEREND MELVIN WILSON: Good  
17 afternoon, Councilman Lou, Councilman Jackson. My  
18 name is Reverend Melvin Wilson, I'm the pastor of  
19 St. Luke A.M.E Church in Harlem and also the  
20 President of the A.M.E. Ministerial Alliance of  
21 New York and vicinity, which represents 59  
22 congregations, 250 ministers, and 46,000 members.

23 I come also as the pastor of  
24 Councilman Jackson's father, so I have a  
25 responsibility to be here to make sure that things

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2 go okay.

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I will quickly say that I am a victim of the DOT nightmarish process. I once had a DOT placard, which has not been returned based on a number of false allegations and information regarding the person who handles that process. I've decided to kind of let it go and hopefully at some point there will be a resolution.

I stand, or sit today, speak in support of this bill. I am quite frankly, like previous testimony, I am absolutely offended that we have to be here to even speak to this. I believe that this process of DOT is actually covertly racist, that it is tremendously discriminatory, and basically what the system is saying is that you do not value the presence and work of the clergy in this community--that's basically what you're saying.

I hope the system is not saying you do not value black clergy, because there are other clergy persons and other persons in ministry of different persuasions who are not having these problems, who are not having these difficulties, but I am quite frankly offended.

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2 I would recommend that this bill,  
3 that the language be made gender neutral, that we  
4 are sensitive to the fact that there are just not  
5 clergymen, that there are clergy person's, clergy  
6 women as well, who are pastors and apostles and  
7 bishops and overseers as well, that we make the  
8 language, gender neutral. And I would support  
9 this process and this bill being passed.

10 What I also think should be done  
11 and what I've started to do with our organization  
12 is to stop really dealing on this level, but  
13 starting to contact the hospitals. I've done a  
14 major mass mailing list of every president of  
15 every hospital in every borough, I want them to  
16 tell us where we're supposed to park when we come;  
17 I want them to designate. Because since they farm  
18 out a lot of their parking, there needs to be some  
19 awareness, 'cause even sometimes when we have the  
20 placard, there's still no place for us to park.

21 So I am in support of this bill and  
22 I would hope that the level of sensitivity that  
23 needs to happen from DOT can be encouraged from a  
24 legislative body such as yourselves. Thank you.

25 CHAIRPERSON LIU: Thank you very

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much, Reverend Wilson, thank you.

And we are going to make the legislation gender neutral. A part of the issue was that that was the original language, but we certainly will correct it going forward--the original language from 1996.

We have another panel Reverend Dr. Joseph Brag, Reverend Vernon Willison.

MALE VOICE: Williams.

FEMALE VOICE: Williams.

CHAIRPERSON LIU: I'm sorry, Williams. And Reverend Lorenzo Ato.

[Off mic]

CHAIRPERSON LIU: Okay. Please proceed, sir.

REVEREND VERNON WILLIAMS: Protocol already being established, I just want to thank you for allowing me this time. My name is, again, Pastor Vernon Williams, I pastor in Harlem, Perfect Peace Ministries, and I am the president of the Harlem Clergy and Community Leaders Coalition.

One thing that I believe that this piece of legislation needs to address is the

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2 expansion of time for pastors such as myself who  
3 engage themselves in street ministry.

4 Particularly, I involve myself in gang mediation  
5 and getting guns off of the street, which has me  
6 on the street from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. and then from  
7 4 p.m. to 8 a.m. on any given day. And then if I  
8 have to make a death notice or whatever it is to a  
9 parent, it could be 4 o'clock in the morning.

10 So what I've experienced is getting  
11 tickets for parking or for going to the hospital,  
12 and I need help, I need help in the area with--  
13 this legislation is marvelous, because my parking  
14 permit that was issued to me in 2001 when I was  
15 called to come down and serve with the Office of  
16 Emergency Management, Department of Transportation  
17 gave me a parking permit, was taken away from me  
18 because of my income not being derived from where  
19 I pastor, because I also have a job. So now I am  
20 without a permit, but yet I'm still doing extreme  
21 hours in the community, doing outreach in the  
22 community, pastoring for peace, as I've been  
23 dubbed, as to be doing in the community. And I  
24 just think that because I don't have a \$20,000  
25 membership--\$20,000 membership congregational

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2 members, does that mean that I'm not a pastor?

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I do do funerals, I do weddings, I have all of legitimate documentation to say that I am a past, but it would seem that, prior to this legislation and even with this legislation, that I am being not recognized as a legitimate pastor with the ministry that I do in the community.

Whereas, with all reports that I get, the work that I've been doing in Harlem has saved lives. The work I've been doing in Harlem has built good community.

So with all of that being said, yes, I appreciate this piece of legislation, but I think it needs to have some consideration--pastors do 24-hour work, and that's what I'm leveraging for--that these permits speak to at least a 24-hour permit and not a limited four hour or two hour permit.

CHAIRPERSON LIU: Thank you very, very much, Reverend Williams.

REVEREND WILLIAMS: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON LIU: Thank you.

We've been joined by Council Member Letitia James.

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FEMALE VOICE: Amen.

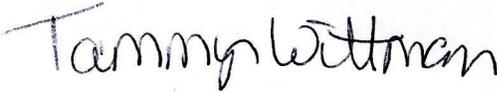
CHAIRPERSON LIU: Okay. There  
being no--would you like to make a statement?

[Off mic]

CHAIRPERSON LIU: Thank you. There  
being no other witnesses, today's hearing of the  
City Council's Committee on Transportation is  
adjourned.

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Tammy Wittman, certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.



Signature\_\_\_\_\_

Date June 15, 2009\_\_\_\_\_