

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS

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November 4, 2019
Start: 10:14 a.m.
Recess: 11:39 a.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway, Committee Room,
14th Floor

B E F O R E: Mark Gjonaj
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Mark Gjonaj
Stephen T. Levin
Bill Perkins
Ydanis Rodriguez
Helen K. Rosenthal

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

Deputy Inspector Jessica Corey
Commanding Officer
Crime Prevention Division
Community Affairs Bureau
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Fernando Matteo
Spokesman
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Sabrina Offman
Advocacy Director
Yemeni American Merchant Association

Edward Kasheki
Retired
NYPD

Allen Glasser
Executive Director
Metropolitan Burglar and Fire Alarm
Association

1
2 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: Good morning. NAJ I'm
3 Council Member Mark Gjonaj, chair of the Committee on
4 Small Business, and I'd like to welcome you to our
5 hearing. Our hearing today focuses on safety issues
6 facing small businesses and how we can best protect
7 our mom and pop shops. Small businesses are an
8 integral part of the economy and culture of New York
9 City. According to SBS, approximately 90% of the
10 220,000 businesses in New York City employ fewer than
11 20 individuals. Micro businesses, which I'm proud to
12 have sponsored that bill that recognizes micro
13 businesses, mom and pop shops, with nine employees or
14 fewer capture the more common conception of the mom
15 and pop shop, evoking images of locally owned retail
16 operations, like barber shops, pizzerias, and local
17 bodegas. Bodegas are part of our lifeblood of New
18 York City. These corner stores are not just
19 businesses, but are part of the character and family
20 of every New York City neighborhood. It is common
21 knowledge that your local bodega will give you more
22 than just a morning cup of coffee or a late night
23 snack. Bodegas commonly sign off on city residence
24 packages, loan out items until they can pay for it
25 later, and serve as a waiting area for kids after

1 school until their parents get off from work.

2 Immigrant New Yorkers have historically owned these

3 institutions. According to a survey released by the

4 Bodega Association of the United States, in 2016 over

5 90% of bodegas are owned by first- and second-

6 generation immigrants. Nearly 90% of these immigrant

7 New Yorkers saw the bodega industry as a way they

8 could work hard and achieve the American dream, and

9 yet the city has failed to protect these bodegas.

10 Unlike major box stores, small businesses are at an

11 increased risk for crime, as they have fewer

12 financial resources to fund a strong security system.

13 Bodegas, often open 24/7, often attended by a single

14 employee, are typical cash businesses and therefore

15 extremely vulnerable to crimes. According to Jose

16 Fernandez, a bodega owner and former president of the

17 Bodega Association of the United States, the number

18 one problem for bodega owners is still safety. On

19 June 20, 2018, 15-year-old Lesandro 'Junior' Guzman-

20 Feliz was walking alone in the Belmont section of the

21 Bronx when members of the Trinitarios gang mistook

22 him for a rival gang member. After hunting Junior

23 down to a bodega where he was hiding, actually

24 seeking shelter, these gang members dragged him out

1
2 and murdered him. In response to this vicious gang
3 murders, bodegas fought for the city to provide them
4 with resources to defend themselves against future
5 crimes. I'm proud of my bill, Intro 1623, which will
6 reimburse certain small businesses, like bodegas, if
7 they purchase a panic button. A majority of the
8 council members have signed on to this bill; more
9 than 30 co-signed or sponsored this bill, which will
10 be vital in providing bodegas with a free security
11 service. After the councils receives a detailed
12 assessment of the program we will look no further to
13 legislate to protect our bodegas. While nearly 90%
14 of the bodega owners bought their store as a way to
15 achieve prosperity, over 80% of the bodega owners no
16 longer believe New York City is the best city in
17 America for an immigrant to start a small business
18 and achieve the American dream. As chair of the
19 Small Business Committee, I find that unacceptable
20 and so should you. The city must do more to serve as
21 a resource to our small businesses and bodegas. No
22 owner of a small business or bodega in the city
23 should fear for their life going to work. My bill is
24 a strong step towards making these businesses safer
25 so they can continue to be the bedrock of our

1 communities. I'd like to take a moment to thank my
2 entire legislative team - Irene Bohosky, former Small
3 Business Council, crafted this bill, Stephanie Jones,
4 my current Small Business Council, Noah Megsler, the
5 legislative policy analyst, my chief of staff, Reggie
6 Johnson, and legislative budget coordinator,
7 Stephanie Olise. Finally, I'd like to recognize, or
8 as they appear, my colleagues who have joined us
9 today. I want to thank you all for being here on
10 this very important hearing.

12 DEPUTY INSPECTOR COREY: Good morning,
13 Chair Gjonaj and members, I'm sorry?

14 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: Can we swear you in?
15 Raise your hand. Do you affirm to tell the truth,
16 the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in your
17 testimony before this committee and respond honestly
18 and fully to the council members' questions?

19 DEPUTY INSPECTOR COREY: Yes. Good
20 morning, Chair Gjonaj and members of the council. I
21 am Deputy Inspector Jessica Corey, the commanding
22 officer of the New York City Police Department's
23 Community Affairs Bureau, Crime Prevention Division.
24 In addition to my colleagues from the Department of
25 Small Business Services, I am joined here today by

1 Michael Clark, the managing attorney of the NYPD's
2 Legislative Affairs Unit. On behalf of Police
3 Commissioner James P. O'Neill, I would like to thank
4 the council for the opportunity to speak about the
5 department's efforts to help small businesses and
6 bodegas provide a safe environment for their workers
7 and patrons, and to comment on the bill being heard
8 today. Our business community is the lifeblood of
9 the city's economy. These small, frequently family-
10 owned businesses, are an integral part of every
11 neighborhood in the city and throughout the city's
12 history they have represented a path to upward
13 mobility for many of the immigrant communities that
14 make up the fabric of New York. Bodegas are more
15 than a place where you grab a sandwich. They are
16 coffee shops, quasi community centers, places to hear
17 the latest neighborhood goings-on, and, most
18 importantly, places to buy day-to-day products
19 everybody needs when the nearest grocery store is
20 often many blocks or subway stops away. Operating
21 one of the businesses presents a unique set of
22 security challenges. Many are open 24 hours a day,
23 seven days a week, and may have only one or two
24 employees working a time, and may be the only
25

1 business around for blocks. Because of the ubiquity
2 of these stores and the uniformity of their security
3 concerns throughout the city, much of the focus of
4 the Crime Prevention Division has been outreach,
5 coordination, and information sharing with these
6 businesses. The innovation of neighborhood policing
7 has allowed the department to more effectively
8 collaborate with small business owners and workers by
9 building trust and developing relationships. We see
10 every day that the relationships our neighborhood
11 coordination officers, sector cops, and crime
12 prevention officers develop are integral to solving
13 and preventing crimes, both at these businesses and
14 neighborhoods throughout the city. The NYPD offers
15 the small business community to help better secure
16 their establishments against robberies, burglaries,
17 fraud, and vandalism. To start, the Crime Prevention
18 Division and precinct crime prevention officers offer
19 these businesses information and assistance so they
20 can better protect their establishments. Crime
21 prevention officers will conduct a free security
22 survey of any location when requested in order to
23 harden their physical security. They inspect and
24 analyze a location for security deficiencies, such as
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1 missing or insufficient lighting, lack of height
2 markers on the doors, and unsecured high-priced items
3 as well as many others, and I skipped over video
4 surveillance equipment and obstructed sight lines.
5 They will then take the store owner through the step-
6 by-step breakdown of these deficiencies and offer
7 recommendations on best practices to correct the
8 problems and the types of equipment that offer the
9 best protection. The department has consistently to
10 inform small business owners of resources available
11 to them. But the senseless and tragic murder of
12 Junior Guzman-Feliz has rightly brought the risk
13 faced by these valuable community institutions to the
14 forefront. The department routinely holds meetings
15 and information-sharing sessions with businesses of
16 all kinds. Last year I participated in a conference
17 in the Bronx with leaders and members of the United
18 Bodegas of America, where I spoke with dozens of
19 bodega owners about common security issues we see in
20 bodegas. The steps they can take to prevent crime in
21 their stores, and the resources the department
22 provides them to do so. Meetings like this are
23 invaluable in to getting the word out about the
24 options available to these business owners and I look
25

1 forward to participating in more of these events in
2 the future. I also encourage business owners that
3 have not yet taken advantage of our free security
4 survey service to do so by contact their local
5 precinct. I would now like to speak about the bill
6 under consideration today. Intro 1623 would require
7 SBS to create a panic button pilot program. While we
8 support store owners installing comprehensive
9 security systems, the department is not able to
10 receive a direct notification from a panic button.
11 Even if the technology could accommodate such an
12 alert, it is not advisable. Panic buttons of any
13 kind are not the ideal method to alert the police and
14 have become far less necessary with the prevalence of
15 mobile phones. But they can be useful as part of a
16 comprehensive security system. Unfortunately, at
17 times a panic button may be the only option, but
18 calling 911 allows the call taker to gather
19 information so that the officers know what they are
20 walking into, which is safer for everyone involved.
21 Any panic button should be part of an integrated
22 security system which is installed, maintained, and
23 monitored by a third-party central station alarm
24 monitoring company. That is what we recommend to
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2 store owners when we meet with them and when we
3 conduct the security surveys I mentioned. The
4 systems typically comply with the current industry
5 standards and certification requirements under the
6 relevant industry regulatory bodies and are regularly
7 checked for hardware and software lapses, as well as
8 battery functionality. Additionally, under no
9 circumstances should a panic button create an audible
10 sound. If a person with a weapon is alerted that a
11 panic button has been pressed that will heighten the
12 danger for anyone who is present before trained
13 police officers can arrive and address the situation.
14 Thank you for the opportunity to speak about this
15 critical issue, and we look forward to answering any
16 questions you may have.

17 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: Thank you, Deputy
18 Inspector. You're familiar with the tragedy of
19 Junior?

20 DEPUTY INSPECTOR COREY: Yes, sir.

21 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: The employee at that
22 moment was trying to protect Junior, as later on
23 revealed through the footages that we've seen. He
24 had no free hand or an opportunity to dial 911. He
25 was actually trying to protect Junior from that gang

1 that was hunting him down. If a panic button did
2 exist while the struggle was going on and law
3 enforcement was notified, just possibly law
4 enforcement could have arrived and prevented that
5 tragedy. So when the comment you made about not
6 knowing what, and I have the utmost respect and the
7 confidence, and I often say it's hard to find the
8 words to thank any man and woman that puts on that
9 uniform that risk their own lives, that runs towards
10 danger when everyone else runs away, you're the
11 highest-trained law enforcement agency in the
12 country, in the world perhaps. And I understand
13 walking into a scene and not knowing what you're
14 walking into, but that's what you're trained for.
15 And if that panic button existed Junior may still be
16 with us today. So hearing you say that you're
17 concerned about this type of a system that would
18 notify law enforcement of an incident, an audio, an
19 audible sound that would have let those gang members
20 know that there was an alert that was being sent,
21 that the neighborhood was aware that something was
22 going on, I'm not sure I'm understanding why you
23 wouldn't agree that this may not be the only tool in
24 the kit that we should be using, but certainly one
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2 that we should be considering and giving strong
3 considerations to based on just that horrible
4 incident.

5 DEPUTY INSPECTOR COREY: So of course
6 we're not saying that panic alarms should not be
7 used, and we are saying that they should be part of a
8 comprehensive security program, and that would
9 include many things, not just the panic alarm itself
10 but also having the ability to maybe press a button
11 and secure the door, having cameras, having an alarm
12 system where if you do press the panic button and it
13 does go to a central station that perhaps you have
14 cameras for video verification that now when they get
15 that alarm they can see what's going on in the store,
16 call the police and say exactly what's going on and
17 how important it is that somebody gets there right
18 away, that there's a person with a gun or a knife or
19 something of that nature. So I do think it's
20 important, but as part of a very comprehensive plan.

21 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: I agree. I'd love
22 to expand this program to include video cameras and
23 self-locking doors and other mechanisms that could
24 help prevent tragedies and theft or the risk of
25 someone's life. I agree with you. But this is a

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2 pilot program and the reason we do pilots is to see
3 how useful it is, how embraced it is, and then try to
4 shape it and strive to make things bigger and better.
5 But speaking against this, knowing how valuable of a
6 resource it could be is I don't think in the best
7 interest of anyone.

8 UNIDENTIFIED: I'm not saying that we
9 don't, that we oppose the bill, that was not the
10 intent of that paragraph. It was just to lay out the
11 sort of the universe of things that should be
12 considered when doing any security for any business,
13 any place of worship or home. So it's not that we
14 oppose the bill. We understand the intent of the
15 bill and we support your intent. We understand that
16 at the core you're trying to protect small
17 businesses, which is what we're trying to do, too.

18 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: And their customers,
19 and the public, right.

20 UNIDENTIFIED: And their customers and the
21 neighborhood and everyone involved. So, you know, I
22 think we're on the same page on the goals of the
23 bill. We're just trying to point out what we
24 recommend to businesses is not just a panic button.
25 It's more comprehensive than that and in terms of

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2 panic buttons it's not that, you know, we go there
3 and Inspector Corey's people go and they say you
4 should install this as part of this holistic security
5 package. But it doesn't go directly to us is another
6 point we're making. The way it works today when
7 people install panic buttons it goes to a third
8 party, who then calls the NYPD, and this is all just
9 factors, considerations we're pointing out, rather
10 than saying we don't support the bill. It's more
11 sort of a holistic look at it.

12 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: I want to thank you
13 for that explanation. And just out of curiosity, and
14 I'm sure there are countless alarms that go off after
15 hours for businesses or on homes that have such a
16 service where a third party will notify NYPD that an
17 alarm has gone off, whether it be for a window, a
18 door opening, smoke, or what, how do you respond to
19 those calls, whether it be a store that has a gate
20 closed or a home that the lights are off on, how do
21 you respond? How does the NYPD?

22 DEPUTY INSPECTOR COREY: So if that
23 central station alarm company calls the department,
24 notifies the department of that alarm, the
25 responsible officers will respond. So the alarm will

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2 come over the central, our central will notify us
3 that there's an alarm and officers will respond to
4 investigate that alarm.

5 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: And obviously
6 proceed with caution, not knowing if it's a false
7 alarm or if there is actually something going on
8 behind the closed doors.

9 DEPUTY INSPECTOR COREY: Correct, and the
10 majority of the alarms are false alarms, the marked
11 majority.

12 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: Majority, but then
13 there's that few where there is actually some
14 criminal activity or something that warranted that
15 alarm to be triggered and you're involved in.

16 DEPUTY INSPECTOR COREY: Absolutely.

17 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: So why should this
18 be any different? I mean, when we look at the
19 positive effect that this could have, notifying you
20 until someone is able to make that phone call, or the
21 audible part of it where a resident or a neighbor
22 walking by and hearing the alarm realizes there's
23 something going on and picks up the phone and says,
24 hey, I'm peeking through a window here. I see an
25 altercation going on. Isn't that what we want?

1 DEPUTY INSPECTOR COREY: So I think,
2
3 again, we're not saying that we don't think you
4 should have the alarm. We're saying it should just
5 be part of a comprehensive package. It should be
6 installed by a license alarm installer. Where the
7 alarm should go to, which would be the third-party
8 central station, that, ah, panic hold-up alarms are
9 designed that if you have a hold-up alarm it is
10 specifically not supposed to ring because we don't
11 want to alert somebody and have somebody get hurt or
12 killed because they are upset because somebody pushed
13 an alarm, and when we do talk to people about
14 actually utilizing alarms, if they're using a panic
15 or hold-up alarm we tell them to only do so when they
16 feel it's safe to do so, that pushing the button
17 isn't going to anger somebody or create a worse
18 incident. But audible alarms are OK for burglar
19 alarms, for instance, because that's not when
20 somebody is actually pushing an alarm.

21 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: I couldn't agree
22 with you more. But isn't it a deterrent also if
23 perhaps our criminals, or those that have ill intent
24 realize that bodegas or gas stations or these small
25 businesses are now armed with a panic button, that

1 they would think twice before going into a small
2 business with ill intentions or looking to cause harm
3 to someone that's in a small business.
4

5 DEPUTY INSPECTOR COREY: So there was a
6 lot of media coverage after the murder up in the
7 Bronx and we had done the presentation with the
8 United Bodegas of America at that time and the news
9 coverage was all over that we did recommend that
10 people have panic buttons installed. So I think that
11 a lot of people would go into a bodega or another
12 small business and think that they might have that
13 installed already.

14 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: You mentioned the
15 program where community officers are now reviewing
16 the security and offer suggestions to small business
17 owners. How many businesses have partook, or took
18 advantage of this walk-through?

19 DEPUTY INSPECTOR COREY: In anticipation
20 of this question I just pulled some numbers. We have
21 1699 security surveys completed year to day by
22 precinct crime prevention officers, but I just want
23 to make a distinct that that's not just businesses,
24 that could be residential apartments or private homes
25 as well. And last year we had a total of 2393.

2 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: Last year was?

3 DEPUTY INSPECTOR COREY: A total of 2393.

4 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: Which includes
5 residential, multi-dwelling, and small businesses.

6 DEPUTY INSPECTOR COREY: Yes, sir.

7 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: We have over 12,
8 over 10,000 bodegas alone in New York City.

9 DEPUTY INSPECTOR COREY: So I am hoping
10 that between the presentation that we did in
11 December, ongoing discussion with the United Bodegas
12 of America where we've offered this service, we're
13 willing to go anybody that's willing to have the
14 service and we're hoping you can get that word out
15 for us as well.

16 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: And I think perhaps
17 when this bill is enacted and this pilot is set forth
18 offering these services to the bodegas, which really
19 don't, can't afford another expense, and rather than
20 have no security system is, they just don't have the
21 means, the wherewithal, or a panic button, I would
22 imagine that we would suggest on courage the panic
23 button over no system, no camera, no security system
24 at all.

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2 DEPUTY INSPECTOR COREY: We suggest
3 everything that you can do that can safeguard your
4 store from training employees, from us going in and
5 speaking to your employees, from just taking simply
6 something like taking down all the signs in the
7 windows so that passing patrols, people on the
8 street, can actually see into the store and see if
9 there is an issue. Better lighting, better lighting
10 outside. When we did this presentation in December a
11 lot of the store owners had cameras already. I asked
12 how many can actually see their cameras on devices.
13 People were picking up their phones and showing me
14 their stores right, right in their hands, that they
15 were looking into their store. So, you know, there's
16 a lot of people that are using technology. But it's,
17 it's, it's not just technology. It's observation,
18 it's knowing your neighborhood coordination officers,
19 getting to know the steady sectors in your area. We
20 made sure that when we did this presentation, again
21 in December up in the Bronx, that we had the
22 neighborhood coordination officers, as many as we
23 could, from all the different neighborhoods come in.
24 We had the crime prevention officers there from all
25 of the different precincts to speak to people and

2 tell them what they could do and make arrangements to
3 come to their businesses as well.

4 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: And I would imagine
5 you also want to train them perhaps not to engage and
6 risk their lives...

7 DEPUTY INSPECTOR COREY: Absolutely.

8 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: When it comes to a
9 holdup or.

10 DEPUTY INSPECTOR COREY: And that was
11 very much part of the presentation that, you know,
12 that you should not do that, that your life is worth
13 so much more than anything possibly in the store.

14 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: But for those brave
15 owners or employees like we witnessed this, ah, for
16 Junior, for example, where we actually saw the
17 business owner trying to hold onto him and prevent
18 Junior from being dragged out, or more recently
19 during the summer on Allerton Avenue where a bodega
20 employee shielded and protected someone that ran in
21 from protection, for protection, was able to call
22 911. Are you familiar with that case?

23 DEPUTY INSPECTOR COREY: I'm not
24 personally familiar, sir.

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2 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: A similar incident,
3 a young man ran in, was being, after getting into a
4 fight ran in for safety and they pursued him into the
5 bodega. The bodega employee successfully fought them
6 off, protecting this individual. Now an instance
7 like that I would cameras are great, ah, it's a spur
8 of the moment, and again it's, the bravery of an
9 individual who [inaudible]. Not knowing what the
10 outcome can be and we, ah, we have so many brave New
11 Yorkers that have risked their lives to protect or
12 save someone else, not only the men and women in
13 blue, but New Yorkers as a whole. Point being, a
14 panic button, thank God that instance didn't elevate
15 to Junior's tragedy but certainly notifying you
16 immediately and having the response while fighting
17 them off or defending this young man could have, is
18 something that we should be striving for, and I'm
19 looking forward to working with you and the
20 department and SBS as we come up with a comprehensive
21 way to make sure all of our small businesses are
22 afforded these protections, especially cash
23 businesses. And I believe Jersey, ah, and maybe you
24 may know a little bit more about this, mandates gas

1 something that we can come up with as a
2 responsibility of our community officers?
3

4 UNIDENTIFIED: Um, you know, I mean,
5 obviously our community officers know their community
6 very well. It would be difficult to compare, for
7 community officers to compare other neighborhoods by
8 neighborhood, um, I think we'd need some more
9 comprehensive data than that in order to figure that
10 out. But, you know, our community officers are aware
11 of those businesses in their community, but to
12 compare it to other communities would be more of a
13 challenge. But we can figure out if this is, you
14 know, goes through, figure out ways to identify
15 areas.

16 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: Or businesses.

17 UNIDENTIFIED: Or businesses.

18 DEPUTY INSPECTOR COREY: I think you'd
19 also have to find out how many businesses have alarms
20 now already. You know, they may already have this in
21 place. They may have an alarm system with a panic
22 button or an alarm system without a panic button
23 that's already monitored by a central station where
24 they could add something like a panic alarm.

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2 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: I'm looking, I'm
3 hopeful this hearing as we make public the option and
4 this consideration will be received with enthusiasm
5 and embraced and perhaps help shape a safer city for
6 us all as we strive to protect our communities and
7 our business owners. Does SBS have a statement they
8 want to make?

9 UNIDENTIFIED: No, Chairman, not
10 currently.

11 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: I'm so disappointed.
12 I was so looking forward to SBS explaining why they
13 would embrace this program and how an important of a
14 fabric it would be to protecting businesses that
15 continue to thrive. But I'll ask you a question.
16 What can SBS do to better engage bodegas specifically
17 in relations to safety?

18 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you for the question,
19 Chairman. So we work very closely with NYPD and our
20 city agency partners to learn from, um, not just
21 bodegas but also, you know, any small business
22 throughout the city about what concerns they have and
23 we work through either our suite of services to help,
24 um, alleviate those concerns or we work with our
25 agency partners. In this case we would work very

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2 closely, we'll continue to work very closely with
3 NYPD to figure out what's the most comprehensive way
4 to help, um, with security measures for small
5 businesses.

6 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: And I would imagine
7 you agree any financial assistance that we can give
8 so our small businesses don't have to make the
9 decision of whether they meet payroll or upgrade or
10 have a security system is in our best interest,
11 interest?

12 UNIDENTIFIED: Yeah, I mean, you know I
13 think we, we, like NYPD we support like the intent of
14 the legislation and, you know, we want to learn more
15 about what's happening and see how we can best be
16 helpful.

17 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: Like being helpful
18 with me in allocating, helping get the word out, and
19 given the resources, ah, that's needed to reach out
20 to all businesses. How would you envision a plan?
21 How would you get the word out that this is another
22 offering that you can do working in cooperation with
23 NYPD for a safety risk assessment and this pilot?

24 UNIDENTIFIED: Well, we have various tools
25 in our, in our, within our agency where we go, as you

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2 are, as you're aware, we've gone out with you as
3 well, door to door with small businesses, um, and
4 we've, um, we've done this with other agencies as
5 well. We've partnered with other agencies to speak
6 specifically about how those agencies can be helpful
7 to small businesses and we'd love to, you know,
8 continue doing that with the NYPD and work with them
9 to go along these corridors and speak to small
10 businesses about the services that NYPD has to offer
11 in this area.

12 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: I'm curious. Would
13 you believe it's more effective as a reimbursable
14 program or as a program that's stand-alone, doing the
15 installation where the businesses can just benefit
16 directly without having to dig into their own
17 pockets?

18 UNIDENTIFIED: I mean, I can't speak
19 specifically to the, you know, what would work best
20 for a business owner to...

21 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: [inaudible] in an
22 ideal scenario.

23 UNIDENTIFIED: I mean, ideally for us,
24 like, you know, however we can be helpful to small
25 businesses, um, is what we generally try to do. If,

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2 if they, if they have issues with, um, with costs,
3 you know, we work with them to figure out how to
4 best, um, you know alleviate those concerns, but we'd
5 have to really work specifically with the business
6 and with our agency partners to figure out what works
7 best for them.

8 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: Right, so
9 affordability, educating them, first of all, that
10 that this is in their best interest and something
11 that the city is willing to work on alongside of our
12 business owners in the best interest of their safety
13 and community.

14 UNIDENTIFIED: Absolutely.

15 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: I want to thank you
16 for your time and we look forward to contracting
17 this.

18 DEPUTY INSPECTOR COREY: Could I add
19 something?

20 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: Certainly.

21 DEPUTY INSPECTOR COREY: I think one of
22 the things that we overlooked was explaining that
23 part of the statement, what we're really talking
24 about is that when you have an alarm system like this
25 we're recommending you have the central station, the

1
2 cost is not normally the installation of the alarm,
3 it's the ongoing payment for the central station. So
4 I think that was part of what we just wanted to
5 identify here.

6 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: And that's why we're
7 looking to shape this bill into something that's
8 comprehensive. My understanding is some of these
9 major, ah, alarm installers will do the installation
10 for free and it's the monthly payment that they're
11 able to provide those, for the installation for free.
12 So you're absolutely right. The way it works, as we
13 all know, is if their alarm is triggered they make a
14 phone call. If there's no answer automatically they
15 notify the proper authorities and if there is a phone
16 that was mistakenly done in error there is a code
17 that's given and in some cases there is a code that's
18 given to identify that yes, there's a real problem
19 without letting the individuals know that they're
20 actually, they're informing this provider that there
21 is an emergency situation by doing a, ah, anything
22 but the actual code word.

23 DEPUTY INSPECTOR COREY: But in some
24 cases and some alarms, if it's a hold-up alarm they
25 won't call. They'll make the notification to the

1
2 police first because of the sensitive nature and
3 because they don't want somebody getting hurt in that
4 situation.

5 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: What would you
6 rather see here, a direct call done to once triggered
7 to law enforcement or to the store to confirm whether
8 or not it was a false alarm?

9 DEPUTY INSPECTOR COREY: I think that the
10 industry's standard is if it is a hold-up type alarm
11 that, that they don't call the store. But then
12 again, as I said before, if you have cameras, for
13 instance, where you have a central station that also
14 can see your cameras and they can actually see what's
15 going on, that, of course, is so much more helpful.

16 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: I'm not sure we're
17 ready for complete government oversight of looking
18 into our cameras when an alarm goes off.

19 DEPUTY INSPECTOR COREY: Not the
20 government. The central station, private, private
21 central station.

22 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: That would be
23 another step, right? You're looking to bypass all of
24 that and maybe the technology will exist some day
25 where you hit that button and all of a sudden it will

1
2 operate like your Argus camera, that there's a
3 central station within the NYPD that's monitoring and
4 can identify and let law enforcement know exactly
5 what's going on. I'm not sure where there yet and
6 for obvious concerns, but thank you.

7 DEPUTY INSPECTOR COREY: Thank you.

8 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you.

9 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you.

10 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: Can we call up
11 Sabrina Ulthman and Fernando Matteo. And in no
12 particular order, just please announce yourself and
13 if you're representing an organization.

14 FERNANDO MATTEO: Good morning. My name
15 is Fernando Matteo. I am the spokesman for the
16 United Bodegas of America. Council Member, how are
17 you?

18 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: Good to see you
19 again, Fernando.

20 FERNANDO MATTEO: Likewise.

21 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: You have a
22 statement?

23 FERNANDO MATTEO: Sure. First of all,
24 I'd like to thank you for focusing on this particular
25 issue. I think we all lived the tragedy of the young

1 man that we all feel and it's very easy to just let
2 time go by and forget about what happened. Doing
3 something takes a lot of courage and I commend you
4 for this. We have spoken and we have a very close
5 relationship with Leandra Feliz, Junior's mother. I
6 was with her last week and I've been with her for the
7 last few weeks maybe once or twice a month,
8 discussing what can we do better to prevent another
9 Junior tragedy in the city. And it's very, um, it's
10 very, what she feels is very different from what we
11 all feel because she lost a son. And she basically
12 has said to us what you guys are doing at the United
13 Bodegas of America could have saved my son's life.
14 She says my son could have been here if we would have
15 put in place all of the things that you're doing now.
16 But like everything else in government you wait to
17 get robbed before you buy the lock. OK. So once
18 again, Council Member, I really appreciate you
19 focusing on this particular issue. We all know that
20 bodega owners work a lot of hours. They work
21 sometimes 18 hours a day as a normal day for them.
22 And they are community centers, aside from being
23 bodegas, serving, you know, eggs, beer, ah, milk,
24 bread, whatever they sell. Save haven bodegas is a

1 smart bodega. We want to have smart bodegas, like
2 you have smart homes. We have the technology
3 available today. To do all of the things that you
4 have said can be done. It's always very easy to say
5 but, but, you know, it can, you can do it this way,
6 you can do it that way. You know what? If we have
7 the technology let's just get it done. A smart
8 bodega to us is not only a panic button. A panic
9 button is just one of the many companies. But it's a
10 very key component. And NYPD and Inspector Cory, by
11 the way I'm very grateful to her because she has
12 spent a lot of time with us, educating us, teaching
13 us, explaining to us what NYPD needs or would like
14 to, to see to better protect us. The City of New
15 York, when you own a small business like a club or a
16 place that has events, they always recommend that you
17 have one security for every 50 people in, in the
18 place. The City of New York has 8 million, um,
19 people that live here and we have, I think 40,000
20 police officers, 45,000 police officers. That's a
21 lot less. That's one-third of what the city requires
22 from us, the small business people, and that's not
23 counting the tourists that come to the city. So I
24 personally believe the public safety is not an NYPD,
25

1 is, is an NYPD responsibility, but it's not solely.
2 We can't solely hold them responsible. We have to do
3 more. And I think that engaging with small
4 businesses would elevate the number so that the city
5 can be a lot safer than what it is. Having a panic
6 button, as you said, is crucial, because a lot of the
7 times you're seeing something but you can't pick up a
8 phone to make a call and say this is happening, but
9 you can easily press a button and that can, that
10 message could reach the local precinct, either
11 through Wi-Fi or Bluetooth or whatever technology is
12 out there. We have a technology expert that has
13 worked with us and, um, he has installed a series of
14 things in bodegas and they have worked. In fact
15 after Junior's attack, as you said, on Allerton
16 Avenue, it's happened on many different avenues in
17 the Bronx where a bodega owner comes out with a bat
18 or a piece of steel or something to defend someone
19 that ran in there away from a gang. And they have
20 saved a few lives. But they have put their lives at
21 risk. How do you in a moment of panic pick up a
22 phone and try to explain to 911, because they ask you
23 a lot of questions, where are you, what time is it,
24 ah, what's the exact, what does the perp look like?
25

1
2 I mean, how do you answer all of this when you've got
3 a gun or bullets flying? It's very easy when you
4 press a button and you know that it's an emergency.
5 It can, they can dispatch a patrol car to the scene.
6 So you know what, stick to your guns. Insist on that
7 this is necessary. If we had every bodega in New
8 York with a panic button and other devices that will
9 help them, you know, this could be a huge tool for
10 NYPD because now you've increased their force from
11 45,000 to 65 or 75,000. And if other small
12 businesses had different technology that can also
13 help the cops it's like we would be working together,
14 dispatching the cops where they really need to be.
15 Sometimes they're in places that they don't need to
16 be. They need to be where the crimes are being
17 committed and it's very difficult to do that, um, if
18 they're counting on us, picking up a phone to call.
19 Yes, there are different ways of doing it. And yes,
20 bodegas owners have, ah, insurance companies that
21 could monitor and could in essence answer that, that
22 panic button and call the cops for them. But if it
23 went to the local precinct it would be that much
24 faster. You know, things happen quickly. Junior got
25 killed in minutes. You know, it doesn't take hours

1
2 or, you know, it takes seconds to kill somebody. It
3 take seconds for you to be able to react. You know,
4 so having a panic button is important. And it's what
5 I say. It's not just having it under the counter in
6 one spot, it's having it around your chest in a
7 button so that if you're in the back of the store and
8 you see that, you know, your boss has a gun to his
9 head you don't, you just press the button while
10 you're back there and nobody knows that you've
11 alerted the cops, see. So what you're, what you're
12 doing is just amazing.

13 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: Matteo, if you don't
14 mind.

15 FERNANDO MATTEO: Sure.

16 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: Because you're very
17 passionate on this and you've been involved from the
18 very beginning and not just since the tragedy and the
19 brutal murder of Junior, but for years you've been
20 advocating for the bodegas and the, ah, the positive
21 impact that they have. Not only for the community
22 but for our immigrant community that is looking to
23 elevate themselves to success and live that American
24 dream. I want to focus a little bit, because over a
25

1
2 year now I've been on working on this bill. It took
3 me a long time to get this bill to where it is today.

4 FERNANDO MATTEO: It took Junior's death
5 to get this bill even on the table.

6 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: Because you, you,
7 and I agree with you wholeheartedly that government
8 is often reactive and not proactive. We wait for
9 something to happen before we try to figure out how
10 to address it and prevent it from recurring. One of
11 the stigmas this, Junior's death, impacted the
12 country, the world, that this could happen on our
13 streets in such a brutal fashion, a group of young
14 men. One of the issues that came about was the quick
15 response to label the bodega owner as unresponsive
16 initially, if you remember, the outcry which
17 ultimately led to the closure of that business and
18 the family that owned that bodega feared for their
19 own life as they were receiving threats. The
20 children had to be removed from the school. The
21 family was, I'm not sure if they relocated from their
22 home that was nearby the bodega. All because someone
23 decided to show a clipping that wasn't a full picture
24 of what had occurred. Do you recall that?

25 FERNANDO MATTEO: Of course I do.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: That unfortunate
3 misrepresentation of what actually transpired, and it
4 took that bodega owner so much strength to stand up
5 and clarify when the media refused to actually show
6 that himself, he put himself in danger trying to
7 protect that young man as he tried to jump over the
8 counter. I know they kept repeating that footage of
9 him pushing the young man out, not knowing what had
10 happened. He just ran in and tried to jump behind
11 the counter. And I just felt that it was important
12 that we bring that up because I know those bodega
13 owners. I know what role they play and how vital
14 they are to our neighborhoods and our residents.
15 They're not only offer credit at a time when
16 residents can't perhaps purchase their supplies
17 there, but often when a child gets locked out of a
18 home it's go to the bodega, I'll be there. You lost
19 your keys? Go to the bodega. You need to call Mom
20 and Dad, where do you go? The bodega. When a senior
21 feels threatened, where does he go? The bodega. Or
22 if there's an attack on a woman where does she run in
23 to? The bodega. Looking for that safety. So they
24 are safe havens and they've been so for decades. And
25 it's tragic that their value only comes after a

1
2 tragedy. I apologize for the interruption, but I
3 wanted to know, wanted to bring on record the value
4 that our bodegas bring to our neighborhoods and the
5 role that they play in making sure that our
6 communities take advantage of the safe haven that
7 they really are, and to speak up a bit on that bodega
8 owner and his bravery as he actually tried to fight
9 off and protect that young man.

10 FERNANDO MATTEO: Very few people, as you
11 said, you know, of a short clip basically, um,
12 condemned this bodega owner and in essence, ah, he
13 was fearing for his life just as much as Junior was
14 fearing for his life. Um, I also want to mention
15 here, we have the president of the United Bodegas of
16 America, Radames Rodriguez, here as well as board
17 members of the organization and our technology
18 consultant here as well. Ah, they took this very
19 personally because they knew that bodega owner. That
20 bodega owner lost his bodega. Junior lost his life.
21 That bodega owner lost his bodega, which is his
22 entire life savings, and wound up in debt. I invited
23 any and every council member to be a bodega owner, a
24 bodega clerk for one day. You know how many
25 responses I got? None. Some said, well, I will, but

1 let me know. You know what? You can only know what
2 a bodega owner does if you stood behind that counter.
3 As you said, you are everything to that community.
4 You're basically not just selling them product. A
5 bodega, bodegas are known for giving credit all week
6 and waiting for that person to collect their paycheck
7 to then pay them at the end of the week. Bodegas
8 hold children when parents are running late to go to
9 school, I mean to, from work. They say wait for me
10 at the bodega, don't move from there, and the bodega
11 owner now becomes a daycare center. You know, a
12 bodega becomes a consultant. They deal with people
13 going in there trying to rob them, kill them, assault
14 them, steal their products, and there's very little
15 that they can do. But one thing that they do get a
16 lot is an unfriendly city. A city that doesn't
17 treasure the most valuable people that they have,
18 which are the risk-takers, which are the guys that
19 work 18 hours, which are the guys that, you know, go
20 in there and bust their ass, excusing the language,
21 18 hours a day. They're not appreciated in this
22 city. Small businesses have become the target of the
23 City of New York and it's the most unfriendly
24 business place that you could ever want to do
25

1 business. So you know what? When you take a stand
2 as a council member to try to help and bring funds in
3 to protect them, their community, their children, and
4 everyone that goes into a bodega, we have to salute
5 you. Because no one else has done it. We've done
6 it on our own. These guys, that tech guy there,
7 gives them credit so that they can install all of the
8 things that you're saying. You know what, let's get
9 back to these people. You have billions of dollars
10 in resources that the city has. It's never given
11 back to small businesses. It's offered to Amazon.
12 It's offered to Google. In the billions! Because
13 they're going to hire 25,000 people. Guess what?
14 The 20,000 bodegas in this city employ over, over,
15 they employ hundreds of thousands of people and for
16 those hundreds of thousands of people to lose their
17 job, you know what that's gonna take? It's gonna
18 take a lot of bodega closing down. Amazon picks up
19 and they leave with 25,000 jobs [clicks fingers],
20 jobs tomorrow. Like JP Morgan is planning on doing
21 and moving to Texas. Why? Because this city doesn't
22 appreciate the hard-working men and women. All they
23 do is have agencies that target these small
24
25

1 businesses, go after them to try to put them out of
2 business, which we don't understand.

3
4 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Mr. Matteo, I,
5 ah, welcome that fresh breath of air and I can
6 certainly use your passion on this council. Because
7 I couldn't agree with you more. The asset, and I
8 just want to talk a little bit about bodegas, what
9 you, the challenges that you have to overcome on a
10 daily basis. From consumer behavior changers, big
11 box store competition that you possibly can't compete
12 with pricing...

13 FERNANDO MATTEO: The new tech bodegas
14 that are coming out with no clerks, no employees
15 [laughs], you know what I mean?

16 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: And at the same time
17 in a city which benefits from your business, where
18 not only the valuable tax base that you are, because
19 you pay, you collect sales tax for the city. You
20 employ New Yorkers. You're paying a slew of taxes.
21 On top of that we overregulate you and we wait to
22 catch you. It's a gotcha scenario. And we bombard
23 you with oversight, fees and fines, instead of
24 rewarding you for...

2 FERNANDO MATTEO: [clapping hands] You
3 know, I gotta, I gotta, I gotta give you a round of
4 applause here, I mean [laughs], you know, you're
5 absolutely right. [voice speaks in background]

6 FERNANDO MATTEO: You should, you should,
7 you should have the SBA...

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: We're getting...

9 FERNANDO MATTEO: Go, go into a bodega
10 and become a bodega owner for one day so that they
11 know what it is, you know.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: The, ah, my
13 benefit is that I come out of the small business
14 world. Unfortunately, many of my colleagues and
15 people in government have never worked in the private
16 sector. They have no idea what it means.

17 FERNANDO MATTEO: They've never held a
18 job.

19 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: I won't say that.
20 But, ah, they've never worked in the private sector
21 to understand how difficult it is from, in
22 particular, our micro businesses to survive. If
23 there's snow there's no business that day. It's not
24 like wine where it gets better. A day lost in
25 business is a day that you can never remake. It's

1 not that you're going to recoup those losses. And
2 when you, and those are the things that are not in
3 your control. The things that are in your control
4 are when this city makes a decision without your
5 input or against your input to impose clear curbs, no
6 parking, no stopping, no standing, from the hours of
7 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. Or from 3 to 7. Making it
8 virtually impossible for you to keep your doors open.
9 Or when they enforce an outdated law such as signage
10 that began with fines as low as \$5000 and as high as
11 \$20,000. Or when we pass legislation that it's
12 impossible for you to know because there's 6000 rules
13 and regulations that our small businesses have to
14 comply with. Guess what? They're not in your
15 language. They're not easy to find transparent. Our
16 owners, our small business operators, want to comply.
17 The only way they find out that they're in violation
18 is when there's a pin ticket that says pay. They're
19 not afforded that opportunity and we need to strive
20 and do better to make sure that the City of New York
21 is not another burden on whether or not you survive.
22 So I thank you for the work that you're doing. I'm
23 not sure if want to close it up with anything else?
24
25

1
2 FERNANDO MATTEO: Yeah, I'd like to just
3 close it up by saying as chairman of the small
4 business for the city I would urge you to, ah, ask
5 the city to budget a billion dollars to give back and
6 help small businesses that pay billions in taxes and
7 stop offering it to these mega companies that don't
8 need it. I think that if you came out and you said
9 you know what, I want a billion dollars to give back
10 to the small businesses that have taken risks and
11 that have paid us billions of dollars in fine and
12 that we continue to castigate them for no good
13 reason, rather than rewarding them. We punish them
14 with fines and enforcement and all kinds of things
15 that just don't make sense, OK? I want a billion
16 dollars to be able to give back to these small
17 businesses. I think that, you know what, we would
18 all get on our hands, on our feet, and we would, and
19 we would applaud you because no one's ever done that.
20 We're, we're the forgotten few that run the city. We
21 are the backbone of this city. You know,
22 restaurants, bodega owners, cab drivers, um, small
23 businesses in general, we are the people that hire
24 people. You know, today you have so many empty store
25 fronts. You know why? Because this city has become

2 so unfriendly and so politically correct. You know,
3 you can't be politically correct and be honest. When
4 you're politically correct you're dishonest.

5 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: Are you running for
6 office?

7 FERNANDO MATTEO: No, I'm not running for
8 office [laughter] and I'll tell you one thing...

9 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: I think, I want to
10 respond to you.

11 FERNANDO MATTEO: Sure.

12 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: In my years of, in
13 the private sector and now as an elected official,
14 each time a government agency or an elected official
15 approached a business and asked how can we be helpful
16 they hurt that business. So along your lines I would
17 encourage changing just one part of your argument.

18 FERNANDO MATTEO: Sure.

19 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: Tell government stop
20 trying to help because each time you do it hurts
21 more.

22 FERNANDO MATTEO: We've never asked them
23 for help.

24 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: You don't [laughs].
25

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2 FERNANDO MATTEO: They always get
3 involved. You know, they think that they, they run
4 you, they own your business, and through their
5 agencies, you know what, they have so much power that
6 they can take away what you're, your whole life
7 savings with the snap of a finger [snaps fingers].
8 And all these agencies, like SBS and Healthy
9 Apartment and Consumer Affairs, you would think that
10 they're there to encourage people to come into the
11 city and do business. What they're doing is
12 destroying the fabric of the city and the small
13 businesses, the small investors that want to start a
14 business. So, listen, thank you very much. I've got
15 to run up to the Bronx now to the Department of
16 Buildings to deal with some other issues for some
17 bodega owners that are up there struggling to stay
18 open.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Before you leave,
20 Matteo.

21 FERNANDO MATTEO: Sure.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Maybe you want to
23 hear this young lady's...

24 FERNANDO MATTEO: Sure.
25

1 COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS 49
2 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Ah, testimony,
3 because she also represents a major stakeholder in
4 our small businesses...

5 FERNANDO MATTEO: Absolutely.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: And perhaps
7 there's more in common there that you can work on.
8 Sabrina, will you?

9 SABRINE OFFMAN: Hello. I'm Sabrina
10 Offman. I'm the advocacy director for the Yemeni
11 American Merchant Association. The Yemeni American
12 Merchant Association is a nonprofit that was
13 established after the very successful bodega strike
14 in 2017 against the Muslim ban. We had, oh, sorry,
15 sorry. We at the, we at the, we at YAMA are pleased
16 to provide testimony on behalf of our 3000 merchants
17 on Intro 1623. We would like to thank Council Member
18 Gjonaj and all the, and the rest of the committee
19 involved. YAMA as an organization is dedicated to
20 elevating, educating, and advocating for Yemeni
21 American merchants to protect bodega owners and
22 workers. We would like to ask that City Council to
23 examine if this panic button in business, in small
24 businesses is an effective route in fighting, ah, in
25 fighting violence and crime, especially in vulnerable

1 communities of color. Merchants and customers, and
2 customers, have been equally impacted by violence for
3 decades. On December 12, 2017, Abdullah Yaffe, a
4 Yemeni American deli clerk, was shot in the chest and
5 killed after having a dispute with a customer. We
6 have also seen some cases where customers are targets
7 of violence. On June 20, 2018, Lesandro Guzman-
8 Feliz, Junior, was attacked by gang members inside a
9 bodega. After the store owner was pressured into
10 giving Junior away to the gang the innocent teen was
11 dragged outside and murdered. This incident happened
12 close to St. Barnabas Hospital and in the presence of
13 two police officers, who stood there confused as
14 Junior was bleeding out. This past week we polled a
15 number of our bodega owners and found that many are
16 interested in the panic button to support the bill,
17 we would like, to support the bill. We would like
18 the council to take the following conditions into
19 consideration. Thoroughly assess this plan in the
20 backdrop of police brutality and violence. We are
21 concerned with how this will play out in New York
22 City communities of color. We want the City Council
23 to research if, if other cities have used a panic
24 button to determine if this is an effective route to
25

1
2 even consider in New York City. We want the NYPD to
3 calls made by YAMA members immediately in incidents
4 of threat. Our members have reported that NYPD
5 shows, shows up two, shows up an hour or two after
6 the call. We would like the City Council to support
7 the Bronx Peace Builders program, bringing bodega
8 owners, community faith leaders, um, former gang
9 members, and the general, ah, community for monthly
10 gatherings, to break bread and build trust to diffuse
11 disputes and reduce crimes in neighborhood, ah, in
12 neighborhood bodegas.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: I want to thank
14 you. We've been joined by Council Member Rosenthal,
15 and I'm not sure if you have any questions?

16 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Ah, I mean,
17 thank you, Chair. Um, I just really want to thank
18 you for your testimony. Um, you're raising such
19 important points that, um, if, if bodega owners are,
20 if the people you surveyed are calling 911 now and it
21 takes two hours for the NYPD to respond, um, it's
22 worth investigating why is that happening, and would
23 a panic button change that outcome. So thank you for
24 that. What is, from your experience and talking with
25 your members, what are their concerns?

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2 SABRINE OFFMAN: Um, well, many concerns
3 are, well, obviously they are concerned for their
4 safety, safety, but they're also concerned for other
5 members of the community, especially, ah, members of
6 the community that are also of color and their, ah,
7 um, their vulnerability to, ah, police brutality and
8 in things that happened in the past.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Yes. I share
10 those concerns. But I'm trying to play out in my
11 mind a specific example. So the notion that somebody
12 comes into a bodega, does something untoward,
13 somebody presses a button. I understand the concern
14 of are you going to get there fast enough, because we
15 want to protect the bodega owner in that situation.
16 Um, and if the NYPD is not coming that's no
17 protection for them. So what assurance do we have?
18 But is the concern that in another, a different
19 situation, that the police might overreact...

20 SABRINE OFFMAN: Yes. That is something
21 we, we are...

22 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: I'm interested
23 in that and how do we juggle that and address that
24 because that's a valid concern in my book.

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SABRINE OFFMAN: Yes. We want, we want the City Council to consider, um, vulnerable communities of color and their, their reaction and their, ah, experiences with the, with the police. We want them to take that in consideration and study, um, like whether a place, let's say, you know, ah, something were to happen, police show up and overreact in a situation where, you know, someone innocent is killed or, you know, attacked unjustly. That's something we also want to keep in consideration.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: So some sort of training component...

SABRINE OFFMAN: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: ...perhaps.

SABRINE OFFMAN: Yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: On many ways the things we're always calling for. De-escalation, um, respect.

SABRINE OFFMAN: Right.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: You know, how to sort out a situation so that the overreaction doesn't occur.

SABRINE OFFMAN: Yes.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Thank you,
3 appreciate that.

4 SABRINE OFFMAN: Thank you, Council
5 Member.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Thank you,
7 Council Member.

8 SABRINE OFFMAN: Thank you.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: I want to thank
10 you for your testimony and your time.

11 SABRINE OFFMAN: Thank you.

12 FERNANDO MATTEO: Thank you.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: We have Ed
14 Kasheki and Allen Glasser for the next panel. In no
15 particular order.

16 UNIDENTIFIED: Good morning. This work?
17 That works?

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Yes. You want to
19 give that to the court officer? OK.

20 EDWARD KASHEKI: Good morning. My name
21 is Edward Kasheki. I am retired from the NYPD. I've
22 been in the alarm industry since 1981. I'm the past
23 president of the New York Fire Alarm Association,
24 currently on the executive board of the association.
25 As a former responding police officer, I have

1
2 extensive experience at response to alarms. I also
3 have extensive experience in the installation,
4 service, and monitoring of security systems as well
5 as all new technologies. I'm currently one of the
6 owners of Statewide Monitoring and Statewide Fire
7 Corps, an alarm monitoring facility based in New York
8 City. We currently monitor thousands of burglar
9 alarms, panic alarms, hold-up alarms on commercial
10 premises such as banks and stores and fire alarms
11 throughout the metropolitan area, both residential
12 and commercial. We are also the backup monitoring
13 facility for the New York City Department of
14 Education's burglar alarms. We also monitor fire
15 alarms for every New York City school. We also
16 monitor all types of systems for many of the city's
17 major facilities, hospitals, colleges, city and
18 federal buildings. I'd like to offer several
19 considerations, which may or may not have been
20 discussed prior to this meeting, but are not
21 addressed in the amendment as written. Regarding the
22 budget, would this be an allotment per store? Would
23 the budget include only the installation of a system?
24 Or would the first year of professional licensed
25 monitoring be included as well? If not, would the

1
2 budget only include installation? Would the business
3 owner be responsible for payment of the monitoring
4 service? Ah, licensed security company professionals
5 are usually the best for advising which type of panic
6 devices to install. There are many different
7 devices. One way to install them in line with
8 business practices of the store owner. Standard
9 methods of alarm transmission are phone line,
10 internet, and radio communications. Each premise
11 would be required to provide either a phone line,
12 internet line, or a radio communicator, which could
13 be used as, well, the alarm company obviously would
14 provide the radio communicator which could be used as
15 a method of transmission. Several UL monitoring
16 centers, such as ours, have the capability to view
17 and/or listen upon receiving an alarm. The
18 additional cost is not exorbitant and would prevent
19 the monitoring center to actually view the premise
20 and/or listen in upon receipt of an alarm. This
21 would aid in the police response. One panic device
22 on a site sends a panic signal. The NYPD will not
23 know if they're responding to an armed holdup in
24 progress, a verbal dispute with the store owner, or
25 an incident where a shoplifter ran out of the store

1
2 with an item minutes ago. Proper training of
3 business owners and employees as to when to use the
4 panic device is key to a successful program such as
5 this. Every individual incident which may lead to
6 use of a panic button by the owner or employees is
7 situational and unique, both to the store owner and
8 to the first responders. I would caution the council
9 regarding two items in the amendment. The first
10 would be the use of a panic button by a patron. I
11 noted that that's in the amendment. Patrons should
12 probably not even be aware of panic devices located
13 in the store. The second one would be the use of
14 audio visual devices. I know that the police
15 department inspector brought up audible, ah, audible
16 situations. In the past I've been involved in
17 enrolling store owners for the same type of program
18 several years ago. It was decided to use only a
19 visual device outside the store in the event a panic
20 button was pressed. This served two purposes. It
21 would alert a passing radio car and it would enhance
22 the response. It was decided not to use an audio
23 device since during a holdup it may induce a criminal
24 to take immediate injurious action to the store owner
25 or employee which he otherwise may not have taken.

1
2 In closing, I was also going back to my days in the
3 police department. I spent years in the Bedford
4 Stuyvesant [inaudible] area working plain clothes. I
5 spent many years doing undercover work, decoy work,
6 plain clothes anti-crime work for about seven years.
7 And obviously I have a lot of experience responding
8 to these names. Um, in closing I'd like to thank the
9 council members for their time and effort to put
10 forth this program. Additionally, feel free to
11 contact me personally any time with any questions or
12 the need for any further discussions. My cell number
13 is below. Further, I would like to take this
14 opportunity to invite any council members, any
15 members of the NYPD, and any members of the bodega
16 association who may be interested to visit our
17 monitoring facility where we can perform a
18 demonstration of the various panic devices, show how
19 the signals are received, processed, and handled.
20 All right, and that's the bulk of my statement.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: I want to thank
22 you, Mr. Kasheki, and the reason we have these
23 hearings is so we have a better understanding and the
24 committee will then work...

2 EDWARD KASHEKI: I've testified before
3 for hearings.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: ...[inaudible]
5 might be the best approach. So we're grateful to you
6 for your testimony and your expertise has added value
7 to this hearing.

8 EDWARD KASHEKI: Thank you.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: But there is no,
10 you made a mention here that the patrons are involved
11 in this panic button.

12 EDWARD KASHEKI: I believe in the
13 amendment it indicates employees or patrons.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: I don't think so.
15 The intent is for use of employee or patron in case
16 of emergency. You're right. We're looking into
17 that. Yeah, I think patrons should be [inaudible].
18 Sir.

19 ALLEN GLASSER: My name is Allen Glasser.
20 I'm the executive director of the Metropolitan
21 Burglar and Fire Alarm Association. I thank you for
22 inviting me to speak in front of the council. There
23 is a hand-out and I would like to direct you to page
24 3, as I read along. Um, I'm here representing our
25 members, ah, which are both small businesses and

1 large businesses here in the City of New York who are
2 probably, properly licensed as per the New York State
3 Department of State, um, in order to install burglar
4 alarms, fire alarms, access control, and CCTV. There
5 is a state license which the City of New York abides
6 by and recognizes. So, um, I'm here to, ah, in
7 paragraph number two, to make clear to the Committee
8 on Small Business Services that, but not limited to,
9 ah, A, panic alarms, hold-up buttons, and associated
10 audible and visual signaling, video imaging, burglar
11 alarms, are required by law to be sold, installed,
12 serviced, maintained, by properly licensed
13 businesses, and again that's a state license. So
14 paragraph B, all equipment used shall either be UL
15 listed or nationally, ah, or other nationally
16 recognized testing agency for its purpose. So
17 paragraph C, proper wiring and wiring protection
18 where required. So paragraph D, panic alarms shall
19 be monitored by a UL listed and FDNY New York City-
20 approved central station. There may be a question
21 why I put in FDNY. In the City of New York fire
22 alarms are required to be monitored by central
23 stations that are inspected and approved by the Fire
24 Department in the City of New York. I put that in
25

1
2 there since we are dealing with New York City, um,
3 businesses. Let's keep those businesses monitored by
4 city-approved companies that have been inspected by
5 the Fire Department, the only agency in the city of
6 the City of New York that does inspect our central
7 stations. So paragraph E, MB FAA-supported voluntary
8 technical expertise, um, and I had to throw in
9 limited and subject to the association attorney's
10 approval, and, um, paragraph 3, support the New York
11 City Police Department's view and issues concerning
12 this bill. And, um, paragraph 4, support the Bodega
13 Association of the United States. Which I support
14 monetarily going out 2 o'clock in the morning and
15 getting ice cream. So they're very dear to me
16 [laughs]. Um, this is, um, this is an opportunity
17 for our member companies to support the efforts of
18 the city, ah, New York City Council, the Committee on
19 Small Business Services, the New York City Police
20 Department, the bodega association, as well as many
21 other small businesses around New York City to help
22 stem the threat of crime, such as robberies and hold-
23 ups using proven and reliable electronic security
24 technology. And again I thank the committee for
25 having myself and Ed Kasheki and others as witnesses.

1 CHAIRPERSON GJONAJ: I want to thank you,
2
3 and Council Member Rosenthal has a question, or a
4 statement to make.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: I do. A
6 little bit of both. Um, so thank you for coming to
7 testimony here, coming to testify. Your testimony is
8 very compelling.

9 ALLEN GLASSER: Thank you.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: I think when
11 we think about how best to protect, um, the bodega
12 owners and, and small businesses, you know, there
13 was something I think is citywide and you probably
14 have it in your district, Council Member, um, where
15 small businesses can get these little stickers that
16 say safe haven and it's a message to the community
17 come in here and you'll be safe, and, um, I wonder if
18 it would be possible to add language to the bill to
19 require that when a panic button is installed that
20 there be some sort of required, ah, relationship
21 building with the NYPD so that when you get your
22 panic button installed you get some sort of sticker
23 on the door and a, ah, not requirement but some sort
24 of relationship with the local NCOs so they start
25 visiting the bodega on a regular basis, getting to

1 know those workers, and we were just talking about
2 with YAMA that perhaps that could reduce the
3 possibility of, um, inappropriate escalation of, um,
4 um, ah, violence at the bodega itself, that if the
5 NCOs really knew these bodega owners, the workers, by
6 dropping by on a regular basis that everyone sees
7 this as part of the community that perhaps that would
8 be a way of making sure that any bodega owner that's
9 worried about violence against them or, or something
10 more in the store, um, that, that having a, requiring
11 a better relationship with the NCOs might address
12 that. Friendly suggestion.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: I think that's a
15 great point, and just so you know prior to me running
16 for office, some 12 years ago, we began a pilot
17 program with the community council, the local
18 precinct, on such a poster. And it was a large
19 poster, and it was a safe haven advising children and
20 residents and passerbys that in the event of an
21 emergency that they should feel free to enter that
22 establishment and cheeks, seek shelter or aid, and
23 you're right, and it would help build that, foster a
24 relationship between an NCO officer and a local small

2 business owner, ethnicity, a group, ah, and better
3 understand one another and help shape the city.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: I really
5 appreciate your saying that and, um, I'm not signed
6 on yet but I would like very much to sign on. So
7 let's, you know, if you could stay in touch or if the
8 council could stay in touch with my office and keep
9 me apprised of how we can tweak it. Thank you very
10 much.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Thank you,
12 Council Member. I want to thank you for testimony.
13 This hearing is now ended. [gavel]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date November 11, 2019