

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND GENDER EQUITY

February 25, 2020

Start: 10:03 AM

Recess: 10:14 AM

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

B E F O R E: HELEN K. ROSENTHAL
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Diana Ayala
Laurie A. Cumbo
Ben Kallos
Brad S. Lander

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

1 COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND GENDER EQUITY

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2 (sound check) (pause)

3 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Great.

4 (background comments/pause)

5 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: --with the
6 opening statement. My name is Helen Rosenthal, Chair
7 of the Committee on Women and Gender Equity, and we
8 are going to start with a vote on 1536-A in order to
9 accommodate some of our Council Member colleagues,
10 and then we'll do an opening statement. I turn it
11 over to Billy to do the roll. Thank you. Billy
12 Martin to do the roll.

13 CLERK: Good morning. William Martin
14 Committee Clerk roll call vote Committee on Women and
15 Gender Equity, Introduction 1536-A. Chair Rosenthal.

16 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: I vote aye.

17 CLERK: KALLOS.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Aye

19 CLERK: Ayala.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER AYALA: Aye.

21 CLERK: By a vote of 3 in the
22 affirmative, zero in the negative and no abstentions,
23 the item has been adopted by the committee.

24 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Terrific and I'm
25 going to leave the vote open for a bit longer. So,

2 I'm just going to read my opening statement now.

3 Good morning. I'm Helen--Council Member Helen

4 Rosenthal. My pronouns are she and her. I chair the

5 Committee on Women and Gender Equity. The purpose of

6 today's hearing is to pass Intro 1636-A, which is an

7 attempt to bring transparency and support to the

8 Department of Education's Title IX Program. Title IX

9 in sum prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex

10 and education and athletics. Nearly one year ago in

11 our hearing jointly with the Committees on Education

12 and Higher Education, we heard several students

13 describe incidents of sexual harassment and assault

14 they experienced during school hours. We also

15 learned about lawsuits brought against DOE by parents

16 of these students. These students and many others

17 like them cannot be expected to learn in such a

18 hostile environment. It is the responsibility of the

19 Title IX Coordinator to address these issues

20 including providing accommodations or transfers if

21 necessary. However, as we learned in our April

22 hearing the NYC Department of Education had only one

23 Title IX coordinator for over 1.2 million students.

24 By comparison, Chicago has 20 Title IX Coordinators

25 for a third as many students. After our hearing the

de Blasio Administration agreed to add seven Title IX Coordinators. If we were to follow Chicago's lead New York City would have 60 Title IX Coordinators. The divide is wide and disappointing, disheartening. The bill we're voting on today does not address all of the challenges faced by students who experience gender-based discrimination, harassment and assault. We know that students are discouraged from reporting by school staff and are disbelieved and denied the careful caring response that they're experiences especially at their age warrant. Today, the Committee will vote on my bill Intro 1536-A. The legislation brings long buried report into one shared context in a clear and organized public website where the data and its findings cannot be hidden any more. The New York City Commission on Gender Equity and the Department of Education will have more tools to address gender discrimination, but like any reporting bill, the follow-through is ultimately their responsibility. Ensuring that New York City's sex and gender based discrimination and harassment protections are responsive, up to date and tangibly accessible is more important than ever. The Trump Administration has threatened Title IX protections

2 especially for LGBTQ and Gender Non-Conforming
3 students by a new regulation expected to be announced
4 any day. For so many reasons the Administration and
5 the City Council must remain committed and determined
6 to fight for equity for all of our students. You
7 know as Chair of the Committee on Women and Gender
8 Equity, some of the other work I do is with the NYPD
9 and Special Victims Division, and just last week we
10 read in the New York Times that the Special Victims
11 Division after being reconstituted by the new
12 Commissioner and, you know, refocused with attention
13 to detail, and training and detectives, we learned
14 that in fact they continue to fail those who come
15 forward, and not only did someone who was raped get
16 dissuaded by the SVD and embarrassed told to be
17 embarrassed and ashamed of what had happened to her,
18 the SVD did not pursue it, and then three of the
19 consequences of not pursuing that case were that
20 three more women were assaulted in short order, and
21 to be clear, despite what the Commission has said to
22 the press, all of this happened after—a year after,
23 actually a year and a half after he made what he had
24 claimed were consequential changes in the Special
25 Victims Division. Now wonder that women are and

1 anyone is dissuaded from coming forward, and we
2 learned now that it starts in elementary school. It
3 starts when our kids are in the school system, and
4 the victims are told not to come forward. There are
5 no counselors for them to talk to, and we heard story
6 after back in April about kids who wanted to come
7 forward, but were embarrassed, were told to be
8 embarrassed, were told not to come forward. It
9 starts in our public schools in schools in general.
10 We fail them there, and then we fail them when they
11 become adults and—and try to come to the police to
12 report. It's time that stops, and the truth of the
13 matter is it's very disheartening that the NYPD
14 would, you know, that the Department of Education
15 would respond to our hearing by adding only seven
16 more Title IX coordinators when, in fact, what
17 Chicago did, which was by the way court ordered,
18 right, added—have 20 Title IX Coordinators for a
19 third as many students as we have. You would think
20 the Department of Education would want the best Title
21 IX coordinator situation. You would think that the
22 DOE would—would want a world class system to make
23 sure that our young girls and gender non-conforming
24 individuals were given equal access to education,
25

2 which is what Title IX affords them. They can't have
3 equal access if they're in a hostile environment, a
4 hostile learning environment where when they're
5 sexually harassed they're encouraged not to report,
6 and we know that sexual harassment in schools holds
7 our—holds our young people back. So, I'm proud to be
8 passing this bill. I'm glad we'll have a better
9 location on a website where advocates can and Council
10 members, anyone doing oversight can go to this one
11 location to—and get information, and I'm—I'm proud
12 that we're going to require the Commission on Gender
13 Equity to make recommendations, and to look at the
14 data, make recommendations, post that on their
15 website, but I think we could be doing so much more,
16 and the Administration is in a great position right
17 now to do just that. We're negotiating the budget.
18 They could add the 32 additional—no not 32, sorry,
19 the 52 additional Title IX Coordinators that they
20 should have. This is a great opportunity for them to
21 do that, and I hope they will heed our call. We've—
22 some people have voted. We're about to hear from
23 and—and get votes by other colleagues, but before we
24 do that, I'd like to thank Marisa Maack, my Chief of
25 Staff, Madhuri Schukla, my Legislative Director as

2 well as the Committee and central staff for their
3 work in preparing this hearing, the past April
4 hearing and working on this legislation. Thank you
5 to Brenda McKinney my counsel, Jasory Ganapathy (sp)
6 also my counsel, Chloe Rivera, Senior Legislative
7 Policy Analyst and of course, Monica Pebble Financial
8 Analyst, and I want to acknowledge the Committee
9 members who are present now and were present. So
10 Council Member Ben Kallos, Diana Ayala, Majority
11 Leader Laurie Cumbo, Council Member Lander. Thank
12 you and turn it again over to William Martin for the
13 vote. Thank you.

14 CLERK: Continuation roll all Committee
15 on Women and Gender Equity. Introduction 1536-A,
16 Council Member Cumbo.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Permission to
18 explain my vote?

19 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Yes, you may.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Chair Rosenthal,
21 as the former Chair of the Women's Issues Committee
22 I couldn't be more proud to see the work that you are
23 continuing to do, and how you are continuing to
24 expand equity and fairness and equality for women ,
25 and when you do that, you expand it for everyone

2 essentially, and so I think you so much for your
3 support. I proudly vote aye, and as we are about to
4 begin Women's Herstory Month, I couldn't be more
5 proud to set it off in such a power way. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: Thank you so
7 much, Majority Leader.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Thank you.

9 CLERK: Council Member Lander.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: I vote aye.

11 CLERK: The final vote on Introduction
12 1536-A has been adopted by the Council 5 in the
13 affirmative, zero in the negative and no abstentions.

14 CHAIRPERSON ROSENTHAL: This hearing has
15 come to a close. [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 March 8, 2020