

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS,
LIBRARIES AND INTERNATIONAL
INERGROUP RELATIONS

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July 28, 2020
Start: 11:06 a.m.
Recess: 11:14 a.m.

HELD AT: REMOTE HEARING

B E F O R E: James G. Van Bramer, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Joseph C. Borelli
Laurie A. Cumbo
Mark Gjonaj
Francisco P. Moya

1 COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND
2 BUSINESS LICENSING

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2 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: The recording is started.

3 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Good morning everyone.

4 SERGEANT BIONDO: Sir, hold on one moment.

5 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Okay.

6 SERGEANT BIONDO: Sergeant Sadowsky if you could
7 do your opening statement please.

8 SERGEANT SADOWSKY: Good morning and welcome to
9 today's Remote New York City Council vote on the
10 Committee of Cultural Affairs.

11 At this time, would all panelists please turn on
12 their video. To minimize disruption, please place
13 electronic devices on vibrate or silent mode. We are
14 ready to begin.

15 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Good morning everyone
16 and welcome to today's hearing. I am Council Member
17 Jimmy Van Bramer, Chair of the Committee on Cultural
18 Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup
19 Relations. I am joined at this hearing by all of
20 the members of the Committee. I see Council Member
21 Francisco Moya, Council Member Mark Gjonaj, Majority
22 Leader Laurie Cumbo, and I know Council Member Joe
23 Borelli, he is also on the call and in the hearing.

24 Today, our Committee will be voting on Proposed
25 Intro. 1967-A Co-Sponsored by Majority Leader Cumbo

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3 and myself in relation to requiring the Department of
4 Cultural Affairs to publish information on COVID-19
5 reopening plans and resources for art and cultural
6 institutions in New York City.

7 Before I defer to Majority Leader Cumbo for a
8 statement on her bill, I just want to say that I'm
9 proud to Co-Sponsor the bill with her and thank her
10 for her efforts and leadership on this and on all
11 things culture and art in the city.

12 While in some ways our cultural institutions never closed, as
13 many of you know, the hard truth of the matter is
14 that the city's art and cultural institutions were
15 and have been and continue to be very effected among
16 the first to close their doors through COVID-19 and
17 some have reopened thankfully, but some will be among
18 the last to reopen as museums recently excluded from
19 Phase 4 reopening plans.

20 The past several months have left many of our
21 cultural institutions in dire financial circumstances
22 by risk of closing and in need of support.

23 This bill responds to the crisis directly by
24 bringing access information and resources to the
25 virtual doorsteps of many of them. But we are on a
journey and must continue to remain vigil in

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2 supporting and defending the heart of our great city,
3 the arts and culture of our town.

4 Before I ask Billy to call the roll for a vote, I
5 will turn to the Majority Leader Laurie Cumbo to ask
6 if she has a statement on the bill today.

7 JOHANNA CASTRO: Majority Leader Cumbo has logged
8 off. She seemed to have audio issues. We can go
9 into the vote and then circle back as soon as she
10 logs on.

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Okay, I can also take
12 this moment to thank my Legislative Director Jack
13 Bernatovicz, my Chief of Staff Matt Wallace, the
14 Committee's Principal Financial Analyst Aliya Ali,
15 our Policy Analyst Cristy Dwyer, and our Committee
16 Counsel Brenda McKinney for all of their work on this
17 legislation. And did that buy us any time to get
18 Majority Leader Cumbo back on the call?

19 JOHANNA CASTRO: She is back.

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Great. Majority Leader
21 Cumbo, would you like to speak on your legislation?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Yes, I would, thank you so
23 much Council Member Van Bramer. I am very excited to
24 be here today and thank you so much for your
25 patience. Today is a big day for young people and

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2 going back to daycare today. So, it's a little bit
3 stressful.

4 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: You got this. You got
5 this.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I got this. So, thank you
7 to Chair Van Bramer for holding this hearing today
8 and to Brenda McKinney from our legislative division,
9 who is not only a talented hard working attorney with
10 the Council but an inspiration to all working
11 mothers, yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Amen.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: We have had to adjust to
14 their new working environment and co-workers amidst a
15 global pandemic. The cultural sector in New York
16 City is one of the largest industries in the city
17 which employs approximately 400,000 workers, pays
18 over \$30 billion in wages per year and generates more
19 than \$110 billion in economic activity. It does not
20 stop there.

21 This industry is the driving force for our city's
22 cultural tourism, restaurants, and hotel industries.
23 Our cultural institutions are not merely local
24 attractions, they bring millions of patrons from
25 continents across the globe. It is critical that we

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3 recognize their importance as we plan for the future.

4 When they suffer, our entire economy suffers as a
5 result.

6 When cultural institutions closed their doors in
7 March of 2020, the city's artists, actors, musicians,
8 and freelancers suddenly found themselves unemployed
9 and severed from their communities and livelihood.

10 They have lost billions of dollars in revenue and it
11 is possible that some may never recover but we are
12 here to help.

13 It is up to us to guide them down the road to
14 recovery in order to restore their livelihoods.

15 However, as we begin to reopen our cultural
16 institutions to visitors, we must approach the new
17 normal with both cautious optimism and a commitment
18 to proper planning, preparedness, and affective
19 safety measures to prevent the resurgence of COVID-19
20 in our city.

21 As a cultural leader, prior to coming into the
22 New York City Council, it is so important to me that
23 we protect this sector and I know Council Member Van
24 Bramer and many of my colleagues share this
25 understanding of the importance of the cultural
sector to New York City and doing all that we can to

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2 protect it and our patrons who come to New York City
3 for the love of art, culture, music, dance,
4 photography, the history and everything that makes
5 New York City what it is today.

6 Thank you so much to my colleagues for your
7 patience. Thank you to my Legislative Director Jason
8 Hur, as well as my [INAUDIBLE 6:45]. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much
10 Majority Leader Cumbo for your statement and your
11 passion and love for all things culture and the arts
12 and we have deep appreciation for all that you are
13 doing, including on your way to daycare apparently
14 right now.

15 So, we thank you. With that, seeing everyone
16 present on the Committee, I would like to ask Billy
17 to please call the roll.

18 COUNCIL CLERK: Good morning. This is the
19 Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and
20 International Intergroup Relations conducting its
21 vote on Intro. Number 1967-A. We will start with
22 Chair Van Bramer.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I vote aye.

24 COUNCIL CLERK: Majority Leader Cumbo?
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2 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I proudly vote aye and
3 thank you all so much for your support and I dedicate
4 this vote to [INAUDIBLE 7:44].

5 COUNCIL CLERK: Council Member Gjonaj?

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: I vote aye and I vote a
7 strong aye because of the power of the Majority
8 Leader.

9 COUNCIL CLERK: Council Member Moya?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER MOYA: I vote aye.

11 COUNCIL CLERK: Council Member Borelli?

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: I proudly vote aye,
13 thank you.

14 COUNCIL CLERK: Thank you. Chair Van Bramer, by
15 a vote of five in the affirmative, zero in the
16 negative and zero abstentions, the item is adopted.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Great, thank you very
18 much. Congratulations to Majority Leader Cumbo and
19 with that, this hearing and vote is adjourned.

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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 August 7, 2020