

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND
BUSINESS LICENSING

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May 12, 2021
Start: 10:05 a.m.
Recess: 10:14 a.m.

HELD AT: Remote Hearing (Virtual Room 1)

B E F O R E: Diana Ayala
CHAIRPERSON

COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Justin Brannan
Margaret Chin
Eric Dinowitz
Ben Kallos
Peter Koo
Karen Koslowitz
Brad Lander
Carlos Menchaca
Kalman Yeger

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

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Pc recording all set.

3 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Cloud rolling.

4 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Back up is rolling.

5 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning and welcome
6 to today's remote New York City Council hearing for
7 the Committee on Consumer Affairs. At this time,
8 would all panelists please turn on their video for
9 verification purposes? To minimize disruption, we
10 ask that you please place all electronic devices to
11 vibrate or silent mode. Thank you so much for your
12 cooperation. Chair Ayala, we are ready to begin.

13 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Good morning.

14 Thank you. Good morning, everyone. My name is Diana
15 Ayala and I am the Chair of the Committee on Consumer
16 Affairs and Business Licensing. Welcome to our
17 remote vote on proposed introduction number 936 A. I
18 would like to recognize my fellow Council members,
19 Council members Rose, Levin, Rosenthal, Menchaca,
20 Diaz, Koo, Koslowitz, Chin, Dinowitz, Lander,
21 Brannan, and [inaudible 00:00:51]. Intro 936 A,
22 sponsored by Council member Helen Rosenthal, aims to
23 restrict single use plastic beverage draws, beverage
24 stirrers, and beverage [00:01:00] sticks. For most
25 people, these items are completely unnecessary and

1 simply a relic of our disposable products culture.
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3 With climate change now well upon us, we have new
4 behaviors and attitudes, especially when it comes to
5 our reliance on plastics. More than 320 million tons
6 of plastic are consumed each year and our use of
7 plastic is still expected to double over the next two
8 decades. Even though we tend to use these items only
9 once before disposing of them, plastics in the
10 environment can take hundreds of years to break down.
11 We need to break down, they leach chemicals back into
12 the environment in smaller shots and up in the
13 waterways and eventually in the ocean. Each year, at
14 least 8 million tons of plastic leaks into the ocean,
15 figure that is the equivalent of dumping a garbage
16 truck of trash into the ocean every minute. If we
17 don't change our behavior, the world economic forum
18 predicts that there will be more plastic in the ocean
19 then finished by 2050. Plastic straws our common
20 contributor to this debris. Due to their size and
21 their weight, they often end up in the ocean. Even
22 when recycled, they are too small to be picked up by
23 the machines and they don't make it through the
24 process. It's no wonder that they are one of the
25 most common types of garbage found in coastal

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2 cleanups. This seemingly banal item has
3 disproportionately negative impacts on the
4 environment and, clearly, it is an issue that needs
5 to be addressed. Policies that operate to support
6 the environment should not, however, become the
7 burden of only certain groups of people. That is why
8 I am happy to support the A version of this bill
9 which includes important provisions to serve the
10 needs of people with disabilities. Since our
11 original hearing on this bill in 2018, we have worked
12 closely with advocates for the disability community,
13 as well as environmental advocates and experts and
14 members of the restaurant and hospitality industry to
15 present a bill today which delicately balances the
16 needs of all. We will join jurisdictions across the
17 world that have recognized the need to reduce the use
18 of single use plastic and restrict items like plastic
19 straws while accommodating those who need plastic
20 straws for medical reasons. Small businesses in the
21 city are also struggling and any new legislation that
22 creates new requirements subjecting them to fines
23 must be balanced to ensure that businesses will not
24 face burdensome costs and penalties. I am proud of
25 this piece of legislation that we are voting on

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2 today. The climate is real and disproportionately
3 impacts-- The climate crisis is real and
4 disproportionately impacts lower income communities
5 and communities of color. The bill ensures that New
6 Yorkers in our many tourists will no longer be
7 offered a plastic straws at a food service
8 establishment. This will drastically cut down on our
9 use of plastic straws in the city and hopefully
10 inspires city residents to be more conscious of the
11 plastic that we use. At the same time, individuals
12 with disabilities who need a plastic straw will be
13 able to request a plastic straw that food service
14 establishments where staff will be required to supply
15 straws upon request, and no questions asked. Self-
16 service stations where customers obtain items like
17 utensils, napkins, and straws will contain signs
18 alerting consumers that if they need a plastic straw,
19 they may request one. This bill will make our city
20 greener without minimizing accessibility for those
21 with disabilities at our food service establishments.
22 And so I urge my colleagues to vote yes. before I
23 hand it over to Council member Rosenthal, I want to
24 make a statement. I would like to thank former
25 Council member Rafael Espinal and his team for all of

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2 their work on this bill. I would also like to thank
3 committee staff and legislative counsel, Stephanie
4 Jones, policy analyst, Noah Metzler, and Leah--
5 Leah, I'm going to get it. Scriptech-- Sorry. No,
6 Leah. I'm not going to get it. I'm sorry. I love
7 you anyway. And finance analyst, Florentine Caboori.
8 I would also like to turn it over to Council member
9 Rosenthal to deliver her statement on the bill.
10 Council member Rosenthal?

11 COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Thank you so
12 much, Council member Ayala. I got nothing. You
13 cover the entirety of the excitement around this
14 bill. What is so wonderful is that the staff at the
15 Council was able to juggle the needs of three
16 different an important communities. Those
17 environmentalists who push us so hard and correctly
18 to get plastics out of our lives, the restaurant
19 industry which is struggling to come back, especially
20 now, we all want to support, and, of course, the
21 disabilities community. Those with disabilities who
22 cannot drink something out of a glass and must have a
23 plastic straw now can just ask and they will get a
24 straw, no questions asked. That is such a critical
25 part of this compromise. So, I am really here just

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2 for the assist. Council member Rafael Espinal
3 brought it all the way this far and I'm very proud to
4 have been able to inherit this bill and get it over
5 the finish line. Thank you so much, Chair Ayala, and
6 I appreciate my colleagues voting yes on the bill.

7 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Thank you so much.

8 We will now call on the clerk to call the roll.

9 COMMITTEE CLERK: Good morning. William
10 Martin, committee clerk. Roll call vote Committee on
11 Consumer Affairs and Business Licensing. Proposed
12 introduction 936 A. Chair Ayala?

13 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: I vote aye.

14 COMMITTEE CLERK: Thank you. Chin?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: I proudly vote aye.

16 It took a long time, but we got here. Thank you,
17 Helen.

18 COMMITTEE CLERK: Kallos?

19 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: I am proud to vote
20 aye and I believe we will be leading the nation on
21 this. Good job, Helen, and thank you for Espinal
22 introducing it to begin with.

23 COMMITTEE CLERK: Koo?

24 COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Aye.

25 COMMITTEE CLERK: Koslowitz?

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER KOSLOWITZ: Proud to vote
3 aye.

4 COMMITTEE CLERK: Lander?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Aye.

6 COMMITTEE CLERK: Menchaca?

7 COUNCIL MEMBER MENCHACA: I vote aye.

8 COMMITTEE CLERK: Brannan?

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: I can't use a
10 straw without feeling the guilt of Raphael Espinal
11 and I am proud to vote aye.

12 COMMITTEE CLERK: Yeger?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER YEGER: No.

14 COMMITTEE CLERK: Dinowitz? Council
15 member Dinowitz?

16 CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Are you muted?
17 You're muted.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Yes.

19 COMMITTEE CLERK: Thank you, sir.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Sorry about
21 that. Thank you.

22 COMMITTEE CLERK: By a vote of nine in the
23 affirmative, one in the negative, and no abstentions,
24 the proposed introduction 936 A has been adopted by
25 the committee and that is a full committee.

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CHAIRPERSON AYALA: Yay. Thank you,
guys. Thank you all. With that, this hearing is
closed. Thank you all for coming.

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 June 13, 2021