Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and

International Intergroup Relations

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The Council of the City of New York

COMMITTEE REPORT OF THE HUMAN SERVICES DIVISION

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COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES

AND INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

Hon. Jimmy Van Bramer, *Chair*

October 26, 2021

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| **Int. No. 2203** | By Council Members Van Bramer, Menchaca and Kallos |
| **Title:** | A Local Law in relation to the establishment of a drag laureate program. |
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| **Res. No. 1487** | By The Public Advocate (Mr. Williams) and Council Members Kallos, Rosenthal, D. Diaz, Gibson and Van Bramer |
| **Title:** | Resolution recognizing November 20th annually as Transgender Day of Remembrance and March 31st annually as Transgender Day of Visibility in the City of New York. |
| **Res. No. 1543** | By Council Members Ayala, Rivera, Kallos and Van Bramer |
| **Title:** | Resolution calling on Congress to pass, and the President to sign, the Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act of 2020, H.R. 8113. |
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1. **INTRODUCTION**

On Tuesday, October 26, 2021, the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International Intergroup Relations, chaired by Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer, will hold a hearing to consider three pieces of legislation: (1) Introduction (Int.) Number (No.) 2203, sponsored by Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer, in relation to the establishment of a drag laureate program; (2) Resolution (Res.) No. 1487, sponsored by Public Advocate Jumaane Williams, in relation to recognizing November 20th annually as Transgender Day of Remembrance and March 31st annually as Transgender Day of Visibility in the City of New York; and (3) Res. No. 1543, sponsored by Council Member Diana Ayala, in relation to calling on Congress to pass, and the President to sign, the Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act of 2020, H.R. 8113. Witnesses invited to testify include representatives of the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA), advocacy groups, various art and cultural organizations and foundations, and other interested stakeholders.

1. **BILL ANALYSES**

**Int. No. 2203:** A Local Law in relation to the establishment of a drag laureate program.

The proposed legislation would require the DCLA Commissioner, in consultation with the Director of the Office of Nightlife, to establish a drag laureate program. The bill would require the annual appointment of an individual to serve as drag laureate, including serving as an ambassador to local businesses and spaces that serve LGBTQ+ spaces and promoting arts and culture in the city. The bill would also require DCLA to, subject to appropriation, provide a fee and in-kind resources to the appointee to facilitate the performance of their duties.

1. **CONCLUSION**

During the hearing, the Committee will receive input from DCLA and other members of the community on these three pieces of legislation, including any suggestions for improvement.

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Int. No. 2203

By Council Members Van Bramer, Menchaca and Kallos

..Title

A Local Law in relation to the establishment of a drag laureate program

..Body

Be it enacted by the Council as follows:

Section 1. Definitions. For purposes of this local law, the following terms have the following meanings:

City. The term “city” means the city of New York.

LGBTQ plus. The term “LGBTQ plus” means lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning, and other non-heterosexual sexual orientations or non-cisgender gender identities.

§ 2. The commissioner of cultural affairs, in collaboration with the director of the office of nightlife, shall establish a drag laureate program. Pursuant to such program, the commissioner of cultural affairs, in collaboration with the director of the office of nightlife, shall appoint, no later than January 30 of each year, an individual to serve as a drag laureate. Such drag laureate shall:

a. Serve as an ambassador to local businesses and LGBTQ plus spaces; and

b. Promote arts and culture in the city.

§ 3. Subject to appropriation, the commissioner of cultural affairs shall provide the drag laureate with a fee and in-kind resources to facilitate the performance of the duties of the drag laureate.

§ 4. This local law takes effect immediately.

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Res. No. 1487

..Title

Resolution recognizing November 20th annually as Transgender Day of Remembrance and March 31st annually as Transgender Day of Visibility in the City of New York.

..Body

By the Public Advocate (Mr. Williams) and Council Members Kallos, Rosenthal, D. Diaz, Gibson and Van Bramer

Whereas, Transgender (“trans”) and gender nonconforming people face stigma, often rooted in ignorance and politically-motivated attacks on gender identity and expression, on a daily basis; and

Whereas, This stigma erects barriers in nearly every facet of life, denying trans and gender nonconforming people the equal opportunity to succeed and be accepted as their true selves; and

Whereas, Not only does anti-trans stigma have a long-term impact on mental health and economic and housing stability of trans and gender nonconforming people—especially if they experience familial rejection and isolation from social support systems—but it has also fueled an epidemic of anti-trans fatal violence that disproportionately impacts trans women of color, who comprise approximately four in five of all anti-trans homicide victims; and

Whereas, In 1999, trans advocate Gwendolyn Ann Smith held a vigil to honor the memory of Rita Hester, a well-known Black trans woman in Boston’s trans and Black LGBTQ+ communities, who was brutally murdered on November 28, 1998, two days before her 35th birthday, and whose murder remains unsolved; and

Whereas, Now, the Transgender Day of Remembrance is observed annually on November 20th, to honor the memory of trans and gender nonconforming people whose lives were lost in acts of anti-trans violence; and

Whereas, On March 31, 2009, in response to the lack of positive recognition of trans people by the cisgender lesbian, gay and bisexual community, trans activist Rachel Crandall started the International Transgender Day of Visibility to bring trans and gender nonconforming people together and celebrate their contributions to society, as well as raise awareness of discrimination faced by trans and gender non-conforming people; and

Whereas, Now celebrated internationally, the International Transgender Day of Visibility is very meaningful to the trans and gender nonconforming community, acknowledging the courage it takes to live openly and authentically, and validating their experiences; and

 Whereas, Trans and gender nonconforming people face significant cultural, economic and legal challenges; according to the 2015 United States Transgender Survey (USTS), the largest survey examining the experiences of trans people in the U.S., 18 percent of respondents in New York State were unemployed and 37 percent were living in poverty; and

Whereas, The USTS also found rampant employment, workplace, education, housing, and health care-related discrimination, including harassment and violence, among respondents in New York State, as well as mistreatment, assault and harassment by police; inequitable treatment and harassment in places of public accommodation; homelessness and issues with obtaining identity documents, accessing shelters and using public restrooms; and

Whereas, According to the Human Rights Campaign, at least 34 trans or gender nonconforming people, the majority of whom were Black and Latinx, have been murdered in 2020, which is the highest number of deaths as of November 2020; and

Whereas, Black and Latinx drag queens and trans people played significant roles in many of the early milestones of the gay rights movement; and

Whereas, The Stonewall riots, a series of demonstrations against gay oppression following the June 27, 1969 police raid of the Stonewall Inn, a Greenwich Village gay bar and dance club, have become the defining origin story of the modern global LGBTQ+ rights movement; and

Whereas, While it is still disputed who first pushed back against the police, sparking the Stonewall riots, there is widespread consensus that trans rights activists, Marsha P. Johnson and Zazu Nova Queen of Sex, both Black trans women, along with Jackie Hormona, a gay youth experiencing homelessness, were among the first; and

Whereas, On June 14, 2020, an estimated 15,000 people, all dressed in white, gathered at the Brooklyn Museum and silently marched down Eastern Parkway to Fort Greene Park, to demand justice for Riah Milton and Dominique “Rem’mie” Fells, two recent victims of anti-Black, anti-trans violence, in the largest ever trans rights demonstration, now known as the Brooklyn Liberation March; and

Whereas, Inspired by the 1917 NAACP-organized Silent March, drag queens West Dakota and Merrie Cherry conceived the Brooklyn Liberation March as a safe space for Black trans people who felt that attending the police killing of George Floyd-sparked demonstrations against police brutality would put them in danger; and

Whereas, New York State is home to more than 50,000 trans people, per a June 2016 Williams Institute report, who deserve to no longer live in fear or feel invisible; now, therefore, be it

 Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York recognizes November 20th annually as Transgender Day of Remembrance and March 31st annually as Transgender Day of Visibility in the City of New York.

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Res. No. 1543

..Title

Resolution calling on Congress to pass, and the President to sign, the Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act of 2020, H.R. 8113.

..Body

By Council Members Ayala, Rivera and Kallos

Whereas, According to the United States Census Bureau’s 2017 American Community Survey, nearly one million New York City residents are of Puerto Rican descent; and

Whereas, Because Puerto Rico is an insular U.S. territory, and not a state, Puerto Ricans lack the right to have voting representation in Congress and to participate fully in federal elections; and

Whereas, The United Nations has recognized Puerto Rico as a self-governing political entity under General Assembly Resolution 748; and

Whereas, According to the Council on Foreign Relations, “Puerto Rico is a political paradox,” facing a multi-layered economic and social crisis that is rooted in its long-standing status as a U.S. territory and has been compounded by government mismanagement over the years; and

Whereas, According to the Harvard Political Review, recent economic and social issues stemming from repeated natural disasters, mishandled federal assistance, and rising debt have underscored the urgency of reevaluating Puerto Rico’s status as a territory, prompting discussion of a democratic referendum on the issue; and

Whereas, Article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which the United States is a signatory and which it is required to recognize, establishes that all peoples have the right to self-determination and “by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development”; and

Whereas, According to a press release by Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley on October 9, 2020, “Puerto Rico’s status as a U.S. territory has served as a roadblock to the Island’s progress, inflicting over a century of hurt and harm on the Island’s residents and depriving them of their fundamental right to determine their own future.”; and

Whereas, The bill known as the Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act of 2020, H.R. 8113, introduced in Congress by Representative Nydia M. Velázquez of New York, would recognize the right of the people of Puerto Rico to call a status convention through which they would exercise their right to self-determination; and

Whereas, In accordance with fundamental principles of human rights, Puerto Rico, rather than Congress, must determine its own future by having the authority provided under the Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act to support its enfranchisement and democratic self-governance; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls on Congress to pass, and the President to sign, the Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act of 2020, H.R. 8113.

LS #16820

01/22/2021

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