

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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HELD AT: REMOTE HEARING VIRTUAL ROOM 2

B E F O R E: CHAIR DIANA AYALA

COUNCIL MEMBERS: DIANA AYALA
HELEN ROSENTHAL
BEN KALLOS
PETER KOO
MARGARET CHIN
KALMAN YEGER
CARLOS MENCHACA
JUSTIN BRANNAN
SELVANA BROOKS-POWERS

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

COLIN AHERN
STEVEN ETTANNANI
REBECCA BLACK

(PUBLIC)
BLAIR HENDRICKS

1
2 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Thank you. Recording
3 started.

4 SGT. HOPE: Thank you. Sergeant
5 Martinez, will you begin with your opening statement,
6 sir?

7 SGT. MARTINEZ: Thank you, sir. Good
8 morning and welcome to today's remote New York City
9 Council hearing of the Committee on Consumer Affairs
10 and Business Licensing. At this time, would all
11 panelists please turn on your video. To minimize
12 disruptions, please silence your electronic devices,
13 and if you wish to submit testimony, you may do so
14 via email at the following address,
15 testimony@council.nyc.gov. Once again, that address
16 is testimony@council.nyc.gov. Thank you for your
17 cooperation. We are ready to begin.

18 CHAIR DIANA AYALA: Good morning,
19 everyone. My name is Diana Ayala, and I am the Chair
20 of the Committee of Consumer Affairs and Business
21 Licensing. I would like to welcome you to our remote
22 hearing. Before we get started, I would like to
23 acknowledge that we have been joined by Council
24 Members Kallos, Chin, Koo, Yeger, Brannan, Menchaca,
25 and Rosenthal. Today, we will be hearing testimony

1 on two Bills. The first is Intro 2130 from Council
2 Member Rosenthal in relation to providing notice
3 regarding student loan forgiveness programs to
4 certain employees and applicants for employment.
5 Student loan debt in this country is out of control.
6 Earlier this year, it totaled over 1.7 trillion, and
7 it is the second highest type of consumer debt after
8 housing. Student debt has continued to increase
9 annually, even after the President put loan
10 repayments on hold due to COVID-19. In New York
11 City, student debt also does not affect all graduates
12 equally. Joint research from the Department of
13 Consumer and Worker Protections and the Federal
14 Reserve of New York found that borrowers in low-
15 income neighborhoods experienced the highest loan
16 distress. According to their report, borrowers in my
17 borough, the Bronx and also in Brooklyn experienced
18 the highest rates of loan defaults. Some student
19 loan borrowers will pursue loan forgiveness programs
20 to offset their huge financial burden, but these
21 programs can be complicated. For example, data has
22 shown that for the public service loan forgiveness
23 program where federal student loans can be forgiven
24 after 120 payments, which is usually around 10 years
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2 of public service, 98 percent of applicants had their
3 forgiveness applications denied. Intro 2130 would
4 help alleviate some of this confusion by requiring
5 DCWP's office of labor policy and standards to
6 develop a notice of employees and job applicants
7 regarding the availability of federal and state
8 student loan forgiveness programs. This notice will
9 then be required to be provided to job applicants
10 rather they are applying for a job with a city agency
11 or with a private sector employee. The second Bill
12 we will be hearing feedback on it Intro 2410 from
13 Council Member Brooks-Powers on behalf of the mayor
14 and relates to agency actions in case of breach of
15 security. As more activity shifts online, data
16 breaches are becoming more common. As we know, the
17 city's law department was hacked earlier this year.
18 Aside from the load of confidential information that
19 was exposed, it also meant that the agency network
20 was taken offline, creating delays in cases even a
21 month later. In 2019, the state enacted laws to help
22 protect against data breaches. Known as the Shield
23 Act, it requires the city adopt a data breach
24 notification policy or Local Law that is consistent
25 with the state law. Intro 2410 updates current city

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2 law and would require a city agency that has suffered
3 a breach of security involving private information to
4 promptly disclose the facts to the City Chief Privacy
5 Officer, the Office of Cyber Command, and the
6 Department of Information, Technology, and
7 Telecommunications. This Bill also expands the
8 understanding of breaches. For example, obligations
9 would be required in situations when it is reasonably
10 believed to have an access disclosed or used, not
11 simply acquired by an unauthorized person. The Bill
12 would also require the Office of Cyber Commands in
13 consultation with the Chief Privacy Officer and the
14 Department of Information, Technology, and
15 Telecommunications to create protocols for agency
16 coordination and record keeping for any breach of
17 security. The committee looks forward to hearing
18 from the Administration on these Bills, and we thank
19 them for their attendance today. Before they begin
20 though, I would like to offer the Bill sponsors a
21 moment to make a statement. Council Member
22 Rosenthal. Could someone please unmute Council
23 Member Rosenthal?

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Thank
25 you so much. Good morning. I'm Council Member Helen

1 Rosenthal. My pronouns are she and her. I want to
2 start by thanking Chair Ayala for holding this
3 hearing and including my legislation. A few years
4 ago, a staff member in my office who owed over
5 \$40,000 in student loan figured out that she was
6 qualified for public service loan forgiveness but had
7 never been made aware of this fact. This staffer
8 worked in government for some time before she began
9 the application process to enter the Federal Loan
10 Forgiveness Program. Introduction 2130 is a simple
11 Bill that will ensure all city employees are
12 automatically informed if they're eligible for public
13 service loan forgiveness under either a Federal or
14 State program. The timing of this Bill is critical.
15 Today, successfully obtaining public service loan
16 forgiveness has not been an entirely straightforward
17 process, and the opportunity to obtain forgiveness
18 has not been widely published. The Biden
19 Administration plans to make the Federal Public
20 Service Loan Forgiveness Program more accessible, so
21 a much larger number of public sector workers can
22 apply and qualify for debt relief. The plan changes
23 could assist roughly 550,000 borrowers. We all know
24 student loan debt is essentially crushing millions of
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2 Americans. The debt that so many Americans, New
3 Yorkers included, are carrying prohibits them from
4 building long term careers in public service because
5 their salaries simply cannot sustain the loan
6 payments. We need our best and brightest working in
7 the service of our city. In order to recruit and
8 keep them, ensuring that they are aware of what they
9 already are eligible for, is the least that we can
10 do. This is a simple step forward to close an
11 information gap. Nonetheless, ensuring that every
12 city employee knows that they may be able to
13 eventually cancel their student debt will encourage
14 more of them to pursue this option, and I want to be
15 clear that I support the growing movement across our
16 county to cancel a large portion of student loan debt
17 entirely. I'm optimistic that agency leadership will
18 be supportive of this common-sense legislation to
19 help city workers remain in public service and have a
20 brighter financial future, and I look forward to the
21 testimony. I do just want to thank Jackie Basulas
22 (SP?) for drafting this Bill, and I'd also like to
23 thank my Chief of Staff, Cindy Cardinal (SP?); My
24 Legislative Director, Madrey Schula (SP?); and my
25 Communications Director, Sara Crean (SP?) as well as

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2 the committee staff for their work in preparing for
3 this hearing. Thank you again, Chair Ayala.

4 CHAIR DIANA AYALA: Thank you, Council
5 Member Rosenthal. I will now turn it over to our
6 moderator, Committee Counsel Stephanie Jones to go
7 over some procedural items.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL STEPHANIE JONES: Thank
9 you, Chair Ayala. Good morning, everybody. I'm
10 Stephanie Jones, Counsel to the Committee on Consumer
11 Affairs and Business Licensing, and I will be
12 moderating this hearing today. Before we begin, I'd
13 like to remind everyone that you will be on mute
14 until you're called on to testify. At which point,
15 you will be unmuted by the host. During the hearing,
16 I will be calling on panelist to testify. Please
17 listen for your name to be called as I will
18 periodically be announcing who the next panelist will
19 be. At this hearing, we will first be inviting
20 testimony from the New York City Cyber Command
21 followed by testimony from members of the public.
22 During the hearing, if council members would like to
23 ask a question of the Administration or a specific
24 panelist, please use the Zoom raise hand function,
25 and I will call on you in order. We will be limiting

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2 council member questions to five minutes which
3 includes the time it takes to answer your questions.
4 For all panelists, when called to testify, please
5 state your name and the organization you represent,
6 if any. We will now call representatives of the
7 Administration to testify. We will be hearing
8 testimony from Colin Ahern, Deputy Chief Information
9 Security Officer of the New York City Cyber Command.
10 We will also be joined for questions by Steven
11 Ettannani, Executive Director of External Affairs of
12 Department of Consumer and Worker Protection, and
13 Rebecca Black, Senior Counsel of the Mayor's Office
14 for Information Privacy. At this time, I will
15 administer the affirmation to administration
16 panelists. Administration panelists, please raise
17 your right hands, and I will call on each of you
18 individually to respond. Do you affirm to tell the
19 truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth
20 before this committee and to respond honestly to
21 council member questions? Deputy Chief Ahern.

22 DEPUTY CHIEF COLIN AHERN: I do.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL STEPHANIE JONES: Thank
24 you. Executive Director Ettannani.

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2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI: I
3 do.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL STEPHANIE JONES: And
5 Ms. Black.

6 REBECCA BLACK: Yes, I do.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL STEPHANIE JONES: Thank
8 you. At this time, I'd like to invite Deputy Chief
9 Ahern to present his testimony.

10 DEPUTY CHIEF COLIN AHERN: Good morning,
11 Chair Ayala and members of the Committee on Consumer
12 Affairs and Business Licensing. My name is Colin
13 Ahern, and I am Deputy Chief Information Security
14 Officer for the City of New York, and I oversee
15 security sciences at New York City Cyber Command. I
16 am joined today as noted by Rebecca Black, Senior
17 Counsel for Legislative Affairs and Special Projects
18 at the Mayor's Office of Information Privacy and
19 Steven Ettannani, Director of External Affairs for
20 the Department of Consumer and Workforce Protection.
21 I am pleased to be here today to testify in support
22 of Introduction 2410, legislation that will modernize
23 the city's data breach notification law. In 2004,
24 this city council was gravely concerned about the
25 rise of identity theft, a relatively new criminal

1 offense affecting New York City residents in a higher
2 number than anywhere else in the United States. In
3 response to this crisis, this council passed Local
4 Laws 45 and 46 of 2005, requiring prompt notification
5 from city agencies and then, Department of Consumer
6 Affairs, Licensed Businesses to individuals following
7 security breeches involving their personal
8 identifying information. Though Local Laws 45 and
9 46, the council sought to inform would-be victims
10 that their sensitive personal information had been
11 violated, finding it to be one of the most effective
12 ways to curtail identify thieves. Those laws are the
13 foundation of the city's current data breech
14 notification law. While protection against identity
15 theft is still an important issue, technology, global
16 connectivity through the internet of (inaudible)
17 cyber security risks for all involved beyond what
18 might have been foreseeable or conceivable to the
19 council and the stakeholders testifying before it in
20 2004 and 2005. Today, adversaries which includes a
21 diverse set of actors such as (inaudible) threats,
22 espionage actors, malicious groups and individuals
23 are increasing turning to cyber strategies to address
24 their desired outcomes, the pursuit of which is
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1 causing increased data theft and manipulation,
2 disruption to critical services and untold societal
3 and economic (inaudible) often to our most vulnerable
4 populations. The council's passage of legislation
5 establishing New York City Cyber Command and the
6 Chief Privacy Officer in the city's charter reflects
7 its ongoing to commitment to addressing the city's
8 information security and privacy protection missions
9 in the face of modern threats. Introduction 2410
10 builds on this legislative foundation to make a local
11 data breach notification law more protective and to
12 make sure there's a roadmap enabling Cyber Command,
13 the Chief Privacy Officer, the Department of
14 Information Technology and Telecommunications and
15 partner agencies to continue our zealous
16 collaborative efforts to protect from and respond to
17 data security incidents and breaches for years to
18 come. Also being heard today, 2130 would require the
19 Department of Citywide Administrative Service to
20 prepare a written notice for city employees and job
21 applicants regarding the availability of Federal and
22 State Student Forgiveness Programs. The Department
23 of Consumer and Workforce Protection would also be
24 required to make the notice available to employers in
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2 New York City to employers and job applications. The
3 Administration supports the intent of the legislation
4 and my colleagues from DCWP can speak to this
5 legislation. Thank you again, Chair Ayala and the
6 members of the Committee on Consumer Affairs and
7 Business Licensing for the opportunity to speak
8 today. We look forward to working with council on
9 the legislation being heard and welcome any
10 questions.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL STEPHANIE JONES: Thank
12 you. I will now turn it over to questions from Chair
13 Ayala. Panelists, please stay unmuted if possible,
14 during this question-and-answer period. Thank you.
15 Chair Ayala, you may begin your questions.

16 CHAIR DIANA AYALA: Thank you and thank
17 you for your testimony today. So, the current law
18 requires a city agency that has suffered a security
19 breach involving personal identification information
20 to immediately disclose that fact to the police
21 department. This Bill instead requires the
22 disclosure to the city's Chief Privacy Officer, the
23 Office of Cyber Command. Why did you make this and
24 what impact will it have to exclude the NYPD
25 entirely?

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2 DEPUTY CHIEF COLIN AHERN: Chair Ayala,
3 thank you for your question. Not all data security
4 incidents contemplated under this law are breeches,
5 and not all breeches are violations requiring
6 notification to the police department. Cyber Command
7 and the Chief Privacy Officer, we have written
8 processes in place to access incidents and determine
9 when to notify the NYPD. When we draft our protocols
10 in collaboration with multiple stakeholders,
11 including the Chief Privacy Officer, with our
12 department, and NYD, we will ensure that notification
13 requirements and procedures are clearly articulated
14 and we're happy to keep you and your committee
15 updated on this process.

16 CHAIR DIANA AYALA: I just want to add
17 that we've been joined by Council Member Brooks-
18 Powers. I'm not sure if she has any questions. Can
19 somebody unmute Council Member Powers, please?

20 COUNCIL MEMBER SELVENA BROOKS-POWERS:
21 Thank you so much, Chair, and good morning, everyone.
22 I appreciate being invited to this morning's
23 Committee on Consumer Affairs and Business Licensing
24 hearing. Thank you so much, Chair Ayala and the
25 committee staff and the members who organized this

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2 hearing. I want to briefly speak in support of my
3 Bill, Intro 2410 which requires that the city's
4 agencies and private businesses are required to
5 promptly inform people that their information is at
6 risk in the event of a data breach. New Yorkers
7 deserve to know that their personal and private
8 information is being kept safe, and this Bill is an
9 important step in protecting the privacy and security
10 of our constituent's sensitive information. I look
11 forward to hearing the committee's thoughts on this
12 Bill, but in light, some of the data breaches that
13 have been experienced, even over the course of the
14 year, we want New Yorkers to know that we are taking
15 matters such as this seriously and that we are
16 working very hard to protect their personal
17 information, so thank you so much once again for the
18 opportunity to speak on this Bill.

19 CHAIR DIANA AYALA: Thank you, council
20 member. Did you have any follow up questions for Mr.
21 Ahern?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER SELVENA BROOKS-POWERS: At
23 this time, I do not, but I asked that I can reserve
24 the right to come back and ask a question.

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2 CHAIR DIANA AYALA: Absolutely. So, I
3 guess my follow up on this is in your opinion, does
4 the state go far enough, is there wiggle room to go
5 beyond state law?

6 DEPUTY CHIEF COLIN AHERN: Thank you,
7 council member for your question. I think as data
8 security breeches and incidents become more frequent,
9 it's important not only to identify individuals who
10 have been impacted by (inaudible) to ensure that city
11 agencies continue to learn and respond quickly. This
12 introduction makes important amendments to our Local
13 Law, codifies protections and the close collaboration
14 between several offices that are presenting here
15 today. I think it's important that, we together
16 remain flexible and continue our close collaborative
17 efforts to ensure that both the laws reflect the
18 landscape of the city's technology environment and
19 the threats that it faces including those to our most
20 vulnerable residents, and additionally if the
21 procedures are what we drafted as a result of this
22 legislation are in keeping with New Yorkers
23 expectations about these issues.

2 CHAIR DIANA AYALA: I'm sorry if I
3 missed this, but can explain what the agency changes
4 would be in implementing this Bill?

5 DEPUTY CHIEF COLIN AHERN: I think it's
6 important to note that the procedures that the
7 Administration has outlined including those with the
8 formation of Cyber Command and the Chief Privacy
9 Officer are largely in compliance with this
10 introduction. This reflects our existing protocols
11 for handling incidents of this manner. The
12 Administration has taken this issue very seriously as
13 has the council for many years, and in the future, as
14 we draft these procedures, we can further clarify the
15 mechanism by which multiple stakeholders will be
16 engaged as noted, but again, to reinforce our current
17 procedures are largely in keeping with the intent of
18 this Introduction.

19 CHAIR DIANA AYALA: Absolutely. All
20 right, I don't have any further questions. Do any of
21 the council members have questions? No?

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL STEPHANIE JONES:
23 Chair, I see Council Member Rosenthal has a question,
24 probably about her Bill.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Thank
3 you so much. I guess is there someone from the
4 Department of Consumer and Worker Protection here?

5 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI:
6 Yes, council member. I am here.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: All
8 right. Nice to see you. Thanks for coming by. You
9 didn't submit any testimony, or did I miss something?

10 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI: We
11 don't have testimony on this. I'm happy to obviously
12 engage with you for Q and A. My colleague, Colin,
13 did speak about the Administration support for your
14 legislation. I do want to just note though, like
15 right at the top, your remarks about your staffer and
16 her experience with the Public Student Loan
17 Forgiveness Program was particularly poignant, I
18 think and emblematic of countless folks, public
19 servants, those in non-profit sector that are
20 eligible or this program, but for a variety of
21 reasons including a lack of outreach from the United
22 States Department of Education and various
23 administrations, and an (inaudible) set of
24 requirements have not been able to engage in this
25 program in a thoughtful way and how it was actually

1 created. So, I want to thank you for your Bill.

2 We're excited to continue this work, and in a lot of
3 ways, we have been promoting and supporting where we
4 can the Public Student Loan Forgiveness Program, and
5 I think this Bill represents another great step in
6 that direction.

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8 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: If I
9 recall correctly, you have a pamphlet, right, that,
10 tell me what the agency does now.

11 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI:
12 Yeah, absolutely. So, jus to Zoom out, just very
13 briefly, this student loan debt, as you know, and as
14 the Chair mentioned is a national crisis in this
15 country. We estimate that at least a million
16 residents of the city have student loan debt, and for
17 that reason, our then Commissioner, Lorelei Salas
18 made that a strategic priority for this agency, given
19 our work and housed in the Office of Finance
20 Empowerment to really tackle this issue head-on.
21 Because of that work, and kind of an outcome of the
22 public hearing that the Commissioner held back in
23 2018, we developed a series of pieces of collateral
24 that's on our landing page right now. It's
25 nyc.gov/student-loans. On that landing page, you'll

1 see tips for really, kind of, every step of the
2 process that, for example, a high school student in
3 New York City and their parents may need when their
4 engaging with student loan debt. The first are Tips,
5 it's called Tips Before Enrolling in School. So,
6 right there, you have a primer. A lot of the
7 information in that tip booklet kind of sets the
8 stage of what you can expect. It's a daunting
9 processing obviously. A lot of us here have been
10 through that, meeting with college counselors,
11 guidance counselors, grasping with student loan debt,
12 financial assistance scholarship grants, really
13 discerning the differences between those different,
14 what are really financial products at the end of the
15 day. So, there's that tip sheet. There's also a tip
16 sheet for before you take out a loan. What can you
17 expect when you take out a loan? Is interest going
18 to accrue immediately once you take out that loan?
19 Is it subsidized, unsubsidized, things like that?
20 There are also tips for what you should be doing once
21 you have a loan. Particularly, once you have a loan
22 is where we really highlight forgiveness programs
23 like the Public Student Loan Forgiveness Program. In
24 that tip sheet, we talk about what jobs qualify for
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2 Public Student Loan Forgiveness, how you can enroll,
3 and things of that nature, and I think a lot of that
4 work will be part of a notice that will come out of
5 your Bill, council member, so that we can work with
6 our partners and detest, disseminate that to city
7 employees, and to make sure that, you know, ideally
8 all New Yorkers that are qualified can do that work.
9 I will say this though, just last month, our Office
10 of Financial Empowerment, and our Commissioner, Peter
11 Hatch submitted comments to the United States
12 Department of Education asking them to make real
13 reforms to the Public Student Loan Forgiveness
14 Program. At the end of the day, this is a Federal
15 Program. We can't change things on our own as a city
16 agency. We can certainly amplify outreach as your
17 contemplating council member, but at the end of the
18 day, that program needs real reforms. We think it's
19 onerous to sign up. As you mentioned, there is
20 apparently a lack of outreach and advertisement for
21 that program which I'm sure contributed to your staff
22 member, for example, not really identifying and
23 understanding that she may have qualified or does
24 qualify for it. So, we have a couple of ideas and
25 we're encouraged that the Biden Administration is

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2 going to take us up on them. That may include things
3 like having the IRS auto enroll folks. They have all
4 the information. They have a sense of our income;
5 they know what jobs we have. So, why can't the IRS,
6 you know, take on that responsibility of sorts, and
7 have a, you know, have the burden be on them as
8 opposed on each individual to make a determination.
9 Of course, we are asking them to do more outreach to
10 help supplement what I hope will be our continued
11 work on this, certainly with hopefully your Bill's
12 prompt passage and we also think, for example, that
13 there should be increased eligibility for this
14 program. We know that there are so many parttime
15 workers that are city employees, for example, or
16 parttime at a non-profit that may be taking care of
17 their children or other family members and right now,
18 they're not eligible for student loan forgiveness.
19 Let's bring them into the tac. Let's have that as
20 part of the process. So, I'm looking forward to
21 hearing the Department of Education's response and
22 the Biden Administration's response and of course,
23 working with you in the future on this.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Thank
25 you. I appreciate that. You know, have you made that

2 letter from the Commissioner to the Biden
3 Administration public?

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI:

5 Yes, it is public. It's on our website. I'm happy
6 to share it with you, council member, and with the
7 committee staff here ...

8 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Yes ...

9 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI: ...
10 and your colleagues.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: That
12 could have been, that would have been terrific just
13 as your testimony.

14 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI:

15 Yes.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Or you
17 could have built up that but thank you so much. I
18 appreciate that, and I appreciate the complexity in
19 how, in many respects, it is the burden of those who
20 are given the loans to educate people about how to
21 pay off, but also achieve loan forgiveness. Do you
22 have suggestions and recommendations for how to
23 improve the introduction as written out?

24 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI:

25 Yeah, I think, well, I think it's a great Bill, and

1 that's why we support the intent of it. I think
2 there are some things on the margins that my
3 colleagues and experts in this work may have. I
4 think, first and foremost, our Office of Financial
5 Empowerment, this is really their belly width. It's
6 not necessary the Office of Labor Policy and
7 Standards ... (crosstalk).

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: I see.

10 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI:

11 That's the office that's named, that's really a
12 technical change, but certainly the right agency.
13 There is also, I think, something that we want to
14 work with you, council member, and with the committee
15 is on identifying the universe of folks that are
16 eligible for this program. Obviously, city
17 employees. We know who we are. Decast regularly,
18 you know communicates with them in a variety of ways
19 and methods. There's a broader universe as you know,
20 non-profits in New York City. We don't necessarily
21 have a comprehensive list of every non-profit in the
22 city. There may be folks that do. I think we want
23 to just engage with you on ascertaining how we can
24 best communicate that to the broader public that may
25 be eligible. One idea that we've been going back and

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2 forth on is that we certainly have a discreet list,
3 potentially folks that do work with the city.
4 There's plenty of non-profits that contract with the
5 city ... (crosstalk).

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: There's
7 750.

8 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI:
9 Right. Exactly, perfect, and we certainly have,
10 obviously, their information by way of our colleagues
11 in the mayor's office of Contracting Services, and
12 I'm sure other partners to contact them, but we want
13 to make sure; I think we have the same goals here.
14 We want to make sure that everyone has this
15 information. We want to put it on our landing page,
16 again, nyc.gov/studentloans, and like I said, just
17 make sure everyone has the accurate information so
18 that they can make this decision and hopefully, get
19 enrolled in the program if that's what they want.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Okay,
21 just want to make sure I heard you, and then I'll
22 wrap up. So, you're saying switch the name of the
23 office within the agency to which on? Did you just
24 say, say that again, I couldn't hear?

2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI:

3 Yeah, it's the Office of Financial Empowerment or
4 OFE.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Okay,
6 and the second thing is for the agency to collect
7 from a variety of source, the broader list of non-
8 profits that would be sending out the information,
9 and who would send the information to the non-profit?
10 Is that also Decast or would that be your agency?

11 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI: I
12 think as it's currently written, Decast is
13 responsible for communicating to city employees which
14 I think is absolutely appropriate. I think as it's
15 written, DCWP would be responsible for broader
16 outreach as it relates to other eligible folks, and I
17 think, you know, as I mentioned, we want to work with
18 you and your colleagues on how we can identify that
19 broader universe cause that's not something that
20 inherently we have. So, I think that will be
21 something that we can discuss in the coming days and
22 weeks.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: And so,
24 hopefully, they've ... (crosstalk).

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2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI: Yes

3 ...

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: ... but
5 DCWP would do the task of disseminating the
6 information via email, via your website ...

7 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI: ...
8 yeah ...

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: ... via
10 snail mail.

11 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI:
12 Yeah, and we already do a tremendous amount of work
13 and outreach on a lot of student loan debt already,
14 so yeah.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Yes, and
16 would there then be some form of enforcement to make
17 sure the non-profits is disseminating the information
18 to their employees?

19 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI:
20 That's not contemplated in the Bill. I think we can
21 certainly talk about, kind of, the contours of that
22 if that's something you're interested in working
23 through. I know that, you know, for us, I know,
24 council member, we've had conversation offline on a
25 number of your other Bills, and kind of enforcement

1
2 mandates that we have. I think certainly, you know,
3 just top of the line, I think, when you're
4 contemplating administrative enforcement mechanism
5 ... (crosstalk).

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Yeah ...

7 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI: ... be
8 resources ...

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: No, no,
10 no, no, no no, no, no resources, no resources.

11 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI:
12 Okay.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: But I do
14 think that it would be possible to, for example,
15 include this information in the contract materials
16 that the city has with the non-profits we contract
17 with. So, it could be part of the mayor's office of
18 Contracts, a set of paperwork that goes to the non-
19 profits.

20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI:
21 Yeah.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: For
23 example.

24 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI:
25 Absolutely, and I think we're happy to look at that.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Okay.

3 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI: And
4 to work with you on that. I think that I was, that I
5 didn't mention at the top is you know, as we kind of
6 started looking at this work in a serious manner over
7 the last few years, we've already kind of worked with
8 a lot of our sister agencies including Decast, for
9 example, to put in a notification on job vacancies in
10 New York City about eligibility for the Public
11 Student Loan Forgiveness Program. That's on, you
12 know, job postings now. That wasn't the case until
13 we started looking into this work. So, that was like
14 a, I think for us, and what's largely true around a
15 lot of the work that falls under our jurisdiction is
16 that affirmative outreach is really the best way to
17 get ahead of this. We don't want folks to be
18 delinquent and in default of their loans. We want
19 those to be empowered with that information at the
20 jump, so one of the best interventions and something
21 that we thought we could do right away is work with
22 Decast so that we when you apply for a job in the
23 city, you know that in doing so, and if you're hired,
24 that you're going to be eligible for this program to

1
2 get potentially your loans forgiven. So, ...
3 (crosstalk).

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Yeah,
5 and that's been tested. I remember Commissioner
6 Lorelei, I saw as being adamant about this and very
7 determined to address these issues, so thank you for
8 mentioning this. Do you think we should add that to
9 the Law because that was something that that
10 Commissioner wanted to do, or should we codify that
11 as a requirement?

12 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI:
13 Yeah, I think, I don't want to be (inaudible) here, I
14 think the ... (crosstalk).

15 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Okay ...

16 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI: ...
17 You know, whenever we're talking about amendments ...

18 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: ... yeah ...

19 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI: ... to
20 the Bill, I know that the Law Department will need to
21 review that.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Yeah.

23 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI:
24 Admittedly, I'm not a lawyer, so ... (crosstalk).

25 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: ... yeah ...

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI: ...

so, I don't want to get ahead of myself there.

COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Yeah.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI: But

certainly, those are things like, in terms of policy, I can tell you discreetly that of course, our agency supports that.

COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Yeah,

and then would this also apply to CUNY, people who work at CUNY?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI: I'd

have to check. It's possible. I mean, I'd have to check. I don't want to say something that's inaccurate, but I'll follow up with you though.

COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Yeah,

great. That's all I can think of. Anything else you want to add?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI: I

would just want reiterate our thanks for you introducing this Bill for your, you know, I know, council member, like I said, we, we've had conversations, you know, on other Introductions you've had, so it's very thoughtful and we appreciate, you know, your work here in this space

1
2 and of course, like I said, that story about your
3 staffer or something, like we've heard anecdotally,
4 we've heard that at public hearings, and I know that,
5 you know, the Department of Education, the U.S.
6 Department of Education has heard those stories as
7 well. So, thank you again for raising that.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Yeah,
9 great. Actually, one of the quick ideas, the city
10 has job postings that loan forgiveness applications
11 are available. Should we require the non-profits to
12 do that as well?

13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI: I
14 think where ever there's an opportunity to awareness
15 about this program, it should be done, but again, I
16 want to take that back and make sure that, I don't
17 know what the legal contours are, and we can and
18 cannot require or compel folks too.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Okay.

20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI: So,
21 I want to make sure that our legal folks take a look
22 at that.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Sure,
24 sure. Lastly, and this is a little off topic, but
25 could talk about your awareness of scams?

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2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI: Mm-
3 hmm.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Where,
5 you know, there are sort of these scam loan
6 forgiveness programs out there, and should be add
7 anything? Could we talk adding anything depending on
8 what your legal team says, to this Bill that speaks
9 to that issue?

10 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI:
11 Yeah. So, there are no discreet scams that come to
12 mind in terms of the course of our work. I know that
13 they're out there and they exist, of course, but not
14 in terms of our, you know, complaints that we've
15 received, I guess, at DCWP. However, our general
16 counsel division, through their investigations and
17 work in this space have certainly identified, you
18 know, programs and institutions that may not be fully
19 forthright about what, how their conducting business
20 as a higher education institution. For example, as
21 you know, our founding law is the consumer protection
22 law. It was founded by our agency in 1969. It was
23 recently modernized, thank you, thanks in part to
24 members of this committee for their support, and that
25 law, you know, is a broad law that really speaks to

1
2 deceptive practices in the public, you know, market
3 place. So, there are anecdotal, and in some cases,
4 systemic issues of companies or institutions, you
5 know, wrongfully bringing perspective students in and
6 saying hey, you qualify for a scholarship, they, and
7 I'm being hypothetical here.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Yes.

9 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI: But
10 saying hey, you qualify for this scholarship, just
11 fill out this information, unbeknownst to the
12 student, they're filling out a loan application.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Yeah,
14 yeah.

15 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI:
16 Next thing you know, they have a loan. So, in cases
17 like that ...

18 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Okay ...

19 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI: ...
20 where we have enough evidence to pursue further
21 facts, that's kind of the space what our legal team
22 does, and really the (inaudible) for that work is our
23 consumer protection law.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Yeah. I
25 guess I would ask that in terms of your list of

1 things, you're bringing that to your legal team.
2
3 Could you add to that, should we, you know, given the
4 facts that, you know, we're having Decast or anyone
5 with this information, you know, sending the
6 information out, is it worth adding a sentence or two
7 about scams, about what to keep an eye out form?

8 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI:

9 Yeah, absolutely, and I think we ...

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: ... okay ...

11 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI: ...

12 yes.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Although
14 in some ways, it's too late, right, because what this
15 Bill would require is, this would apply to people who
16 already have the loan, not necessarily for people who
17 are applying to schools, but so, it's just something
18 to think about if it makes sense to include this.

19 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI: For
20 sure, and I think the more information that we can
21 get out, certainly by way of tips and things like
22 that as folks are getting involved in this process, I
23 know financial literacy and we have an incredible
24 team of folks at our Office of Financial Empowerment
25 that are steeped in this work, financial literacy

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2 remains a massive issue in this country. Our
3 Financial Empowerment Centers that we run citywide
4 offer free financial counseling. We can't do enough
5 to get that program more promotion. That's really
6 the first step to kind of affirmative work to get
7 folks to feel confident about their money and ...

8 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: ... yeah,
9 yeah, absolutely.

10 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI:
11 Yeah.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Thank
13 you for that, and are you in the Family Justice
14 Centers, all of them? There are five.

15 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI: In
16 terms of our Financial Empowerment Centers?

17 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Yeah.

18 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI:
19 Yeah. So, there's a whole list of them that, and
20 where they are, and I'll get you that list. I don't
21 have them off hand. There's not ... (crosstalk).

22 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL:
23 Actually, what I meant to say is you have an
24 opportunity to do this in the Family Justice Centers.

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI: Mm-

hmm.

COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: They

don't do enough with Financial Empowerment, and they
always depend on non-profits ...

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI: ...

yeah ...

COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: ... to come

in and provide that service for free, so I'm just
sort of trying to make a public connection there ...

(crosstalk).

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI:

Yeah, absolutely ...

COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: ... for you

to be mindful of remember to go into the Family
Justice Centers as well.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI: And

it's quite possible we do some work with them ...

(crosstalk).

COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Yeah,

you do, yeah.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI:

Yeah, yeah.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: In one
3 of the boroughs.

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI:
5 Yes, but there's room for expansion.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Okay.

7 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI: As
8 you know, yep.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Yeah.
10 No resources, but yes. All right, thank you so much.
11 Thank you, Chair for the extra time. I appreciate
12 it.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL STEPHANIE JONES: Thank
14 you, council member. I will now call on other
15 council members to ask their questions in the order
16 that they've used the Zoom raise hand function. If
17 you'd like to ask a question, and you have not yet
18 raised your hand, please raise it now. Council
19 members, please keep your questions to five minutes.
20 Sergeant of Arms will keep a timer and will let you
21 know when you're time is up. You should begin once
22 I've called on you and the Sergeant has announced
23 that you may begin. I see that Council Member Chin
24 has a question. Council member.

25 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Time starts now.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MARGARET CHIN: Thank you.
3 Thank you, Chair. Thank you to Council Member
4 Rosenthal for the Bill. I'm happy to be a co-
5 sponsor. I just want to follow up with DCWP, the
6 representative. You know, the biggest thing that I
7 remember just for the longest time, you know, this
8 predatory institution that targets immigrant
9 communities with, you know, you can get a college,
10 you now, education, you can be able to get a better
11 job, and then all of the sudden people signed up, and
12 they didn't know that they signed up for a loan, and
13 this goes way back, even way before I was in the city
14 council when I was working a CUNY. So, I think with
15 the loan forgiveness program, my question to you is
16 that how do we, you know, get this, like information
17 out to communities that are most vulnerable, like all
18 the targeting immigrant communities, and I know that
19 they mayor, you know, with his executive order has
20 set aside, you know, (inaudible) in terms of outreach
21 and media to immigrant communities. So, I wanted to
22 see like, is DCWP sort of utilizing that resource to
23 do outreach to these communities, I mean, a lot of
24 them, and I said many times in hearings, we got
25 ethnic newspapers, radios stations, TV stations; are

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2 we utilizing those channels to let people know that
3 there are these programs that are available that they
4 can access cause some of them saddle with huge loans
5 and they might not even know that, hey, there's an
6 opportunity available if they'll working for a non-
7 profit or if they're working for a city agency or a
8 council member's office that they could take
9 advantage of and hopefully get some help.

10 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI:

11 Yeah, that's a great question, thank you, council
12 member. It's good to see you again. For us,
13 there's, you know, outreach has to be multifaceted.
14 It's particularly difficult when you're talking about
15 student loan debt, and particularly difficult in
16 general when you talk about financial, anything
17 related to the finances of individuals cause it's a
18 private matter in a lot of causes and culturally, it
19 varies in terms of how open folks want to be and how,
20 about their finances and how much they want to talk
21 about it, is an intimate issue and one that, it's an
22 inherent challenge, but something we're up to the
23 task to help bridge the gap on. I think ...
24 (crosstalk).
25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MARGARET CHIN: Yeah, I
3 mean, when we're talking about, I mean, the focus on
4 the ethnic media, I think often times is free
5 publicity. You can do an (inaudible) piece, you can
6 do a piece about a successful story that you were
7 able to help somebody, you know, get this loan
8 forgiveness program, and often time, it's the parents
9 or relative that reads the articles, and they can
10 bring the news back to their kids. So, I think
11 that's really an important tools that we can use. I
12 mean, that's why (inaudible) city resource, you know,
13 once in a while, you should buy an ad and pay for
14 some paid advertisements to support these local, you
15 know, media, but they definitely welcome articles and
16 information from city agencies, especially about
17 programs that can help members of their community.

18 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI:

19 Yeah.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER MARGARET CHIN: So, I
21 really want to urge you to kind of like help us, you
22 know, publicize this program, is to talk about some
23 of the program that your agency offers, and reach
24 out, you know, and really kind of brag about it, that

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1
2 you have this resource and people can apply and how
3 they can help, you know, with their student loans.

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI:

5 Yeah, absolutely. We are looking forward to doing
6 more in this space. We did run student loan debt ads
7 a little bit ago, all over the city, we leveraged
8 ethnic media and you might have seen the ads out in
9 the public, they were on, you know, bus shelters and
10 subways ads as well as other public furniture with
11 kind of quick phrases that we hoped would get
12 people's attention in the sense of saying things like
13 student loan debt doesn't necessarily equate student
14 loan distress. Other kinds of, kind of, one sentence
15 is to really get folks to go to our landing page and
16 get a little bit of information that way, but there's
17 obviously a lot more that needs to be done in this
18 space, and I'm ... (crosstalk).

19 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Time expired.

20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI: I'm
21 encouraged to work with you and of course, the
22 sponsor and other members of this committee on ideas
23 going forward.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER MARGARET CHIN: Yeah, I
25 guess, the final question is rather we need to be

1
2 that specific in the Bill in terms of doing outreach,
3 you know, to local and ethnic media.

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI:

5 Yeah, it's already part of what we do, so, you know,
6 we welcome that, and yeah. We're often leveraging
7 our partners and of course, abiding by our Local Law
8 for language access provisions as well. It's
9 something that's critical, especially in our work, I
10 mean, when you're talking about worker protection,
11 you're talking about consumer rights, you have to
12 meet people at the language that they're most
13 comfortable speaking at, that's fundamental to our
14 work. It's something that our commissioner and our
15 student leadership team here really cherishes.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER MARGARET CHIN: Yeah, and
17 we appreciate that and really thank you for all the
18 great work, you know, the agency has been doing.
19 Thank you, Chair.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL STEPHANIE JONES: Thank
21 you, council member. I see Council Member Rosenthal
22 has a follow up question.

23 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Time starts now.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Thank
25 you so much. Council Member Chin, thank you for

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2 bringing that up, and putting that on the record. I
3 will definitely be adding that to my list of things
4 that perhaps we should include the legislation. So,
5 thank you for bringing that up. Just a quick
6 technical question about the private school loans.
7 Are those loans eligible for loan forgiveness?

8 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI: No.
9 They wouldn't be as far as I understand it. The loan
10 forgiveness program really speaks to public loans and
11 that's something, you know, you bring it up,
12 tangentially, you've brought up a great point in
13 terms of another kind of layer of confusion that
14 folks have. When they get a student loan, it doesn't
15 necessarily say, you know, in big bold letters, this
16 private, this is public, you know, folks don't
17 necessarily have that inherent information nor should
18 they have to try and figure that out, right. We need
19 to be out there explaining what make a loan
20 private and what doesn't, and where you should be
21 seeking, at least, first assistance from. So, to
22 answer your question, no, private loans are not
23 implicated in the forgiveness program, but ...
24 (crosstalk).

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: ... do you
3 happen to know, yeah, you got to do that before
4 people ...

5 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI: ...
6 yes ...

7 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: ... sign
8 up for those schools to know that those loans will
9 never be forgivable. Are, and now, we're going down
10 a different road, and I'll definitely end it in my
11 five minutes, but do you know if the private schools
12 are required to put on their websites and the
13 advertising material that they're loans are not
14 forgivable?

15 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI: I
16 don't believe there is a mandate for schools to give
17 that kind of disclosure ... (crosstalk).

18 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Would
19 that be a state or a city law that could change that?

20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI:
21 That's a, I don't believe ... (crosstalk).

22 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: ... yeah ...

23 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI: I
24 don't believe the city would have jurisdiction over
25

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2 that, but again, I don't want to get ahead of a legal
3 analysis there.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Yeah.

5 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI: But
6 I'll say this, I'm, I think, again ... (crosstalk).

7 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: ... let
8 me ask you, can I, yeah, can I just jump in, I'm so
9 sorry, I have two minutes left, really quickly, would
10 it be possible for the city's website to have a page
11 about all the private schools whether or not taking a
12 loan for them, from them is forgivable with the
13 public programs, number one Number identifying what
14 percentage of the students that graduate and get a
15 job in that field over a certain period of time and
16 how long do they last in it, whether or not the
17 students reap the rewards that are promised on the
18 private school's advertising material, because I know
19 that information is collected, but you have to really
20 search for it. It's online, you can do a search on
21 Google, but could the city's, your department post
22 that information on a page?

23 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI:

24 It's possible for us to put that on. We can compel,
25

1 obviously, like I said, like you know, there would
2 have to be ... (crosstalk).

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4 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: No, no,
5 I get that, but could you do it, is the point, and
6 then could you add to your information, material when
7 you do financial empowerment, a one-pager that says
8 here are the private schools, here's some information
9 about them? One, in big bold letters, you will never
10 have access to a government loan forgiveness program
11 if you sign up, if you take a loan at one of these
12 private schools, and oh, by the way, here are the
13 outcomes for these students.

14 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI:
15 Yeah, I mean, yes, in short, we can definitely
16 collect and amplify certain information about schools
17 and what, you know, what folks may be eligible or not
18 eligible for, that's like is a doable, probably yes,
19 but then there's obviously; and what I would want to
20 engage with you and have other folks in the rooms for
21 that conversation is like what is practical. I know
22 information overload is a big thing in this space ...
23 (crosstalk).

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Right, I
25 guess ... (crosstalk).

2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STEVEN ETTANNANI:

3 Yeah.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Yeah,
5 okay, I'll turn it back to the Chair, but I'd like
6 to, for the record, try to add to that piece to this
7 Bill if at all possible. Thank you.

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL STEPHANIE JONES: Thank
9 you, council member. Seeing no further hands raise
10 for questions, we will move to public testimony.
11 Council members who have questions for a panelist
12 should use the raise hand function in Zoom and I will
13 call on you after the panelist has completed their
14 testimony. I would now like to welcome Blair
15 Hendricks to testify. Blair.

16 SGT. KOTOWSKI: Time starts now.

17 BLAIR HENDRICKS: Good morning. My name
18 is Blair Hendricks, and I'm a third-year law student
19 at St. John's University and I'm here to speak about
20 Intro 2130 from the point of view of a borrower and
21 someone who might be eligible for the program in the
22 future. For many law students, student loan debt is
23 a huge burden, especially for public law interest
24 students like me. My interest is consumer advocacy
25 and I dream of having a career where I help my

2 community fight against unfair business practices to
3 keep their house and against housing discrimination.
4 Lawyers are forced to go through law school to become
5 lawyers. It's unlike other grad programs where you
6 can forgo other degrees to pursue a career, you have
7 to acquire more debt in most cases to be a lawyer.
8 Particularly for us in New York City, while there are
9 many other law students across the country like me
10 who have passion for public interest law, for those
11 of us in New York City the high cost of living
12 further compounds our student debts burden. Many of
13 us live in tiny apartments with multiple roommates
14 just to make ends meet, and unfortunately many very
15 passionate, very skilled and capable law students
16 will turn to careers in big law firms or corporate
17 law just to ensure that they will be able to make a
18 living, to continue living in the city and pay off
19 their debt. As a result, our community loses out as
20 a whole. Many people who desperate depend on legal
21 service organizations and non-profits to meet their
22 demand and their need for legal services and in some
23 cases such as in criminal defense work, they are
24 constitutionally guaranteed right to defend those
25 unfilled. At best, it will be filled by those who

1
2 can afford to take the positions regardless of their
3 passion or skill for the work, and at worst, they may
4 go unfilled at all. This Bill is really important
5 because it would allow public law students and future
6 public lawyers to know that there is a way out from
7 the debt burden and just to touch back on a point
8 that Council Member Rosenthal made about scams, I've
9 gotten many calls about student loan forgiveness
10 scams and to have a city agency or a non-profit come
11 to me about forgiveness programs seems to me much
12 safer and like a source that I would trust more and
13 I'm sure many others would be in the same boat. As
14 such, I want to endorse the passage of Intro 2130 as
15 a hope for public interest lawyers like me who might
16 depend on this program in order to provide the
17 services that our community needs.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL STEPHANIE JONES: Thank
19 you, Blair. I see that Council Member Rosenthal;
20 Chair, you don't have any questions for our panelist,
21 do you? Okay. We'll turn to Council Member Rosenthal
22 to ask some questions. Council member.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Thank
24 you very much, Ms. Hendricks. Thanks so much for
25 coming and testifying today. It's incredibly

1
2 valuable information. Can I ask a couple of specific
3 questions, nothing too personal, just don't
4 (inaudible).

5 BLAIR HENDRICKS: No, that's okay, please
6 go ahead.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: So, tell
8 me about the places that have reached out to you as a
9 law student. In other words, is it a private company
10 that reaches out to you and says hey, we can take
11 over your loan and you can pay it back at a lower
12 interest rate? I don't understand what you just
13 said. Sorry.

14 BLAIR HENDRICKS: Sure. So, there's, I
15 know that the calls that I have gotten, I'm almost
16 certain their scam calls. They're not from
17 legitimate companies at all. They sound very real.
18 The first time that I got one, I nearly called back.
19 They sound like real people on the phone, not like
20 the robo calls that you usually get, and it struck me
21 because while I sometimes get calls about car
22 warranties that I don't have, this one, I did have,
23 and most ... (crosstalk).

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Right.
25

1
2 BLAIR HENDRICK: Many, many young people
3 do have student loan debt, so it's usually something
4 like, hey, I just wanted to let you know that you
5 qualify for this student loan forgiveness program,
6 it's brand new, like please give us call back at
7 whatever number, but they don't mention the specific
8 company. Another thing that I've been warned about
9 regarding student loan forgiveness or refinancing is
10 refinancing plans or forgiveness plans that come from
11 banks or other companies, and I've been warned that
12 sometimes these refinancing programs don't work for
13 you the way that they sell them to you. I don't have
14 specific information off the top of my head
15 unfortunately. This information comes from a student
16 loan panel that my group, the Consumer Advocacy Group
17 on campus put on a few years ago where they warned us
18 that some banks or some other companies will help
19 consolidate loans or help refinance, but then they
20 will take money off the top ... (crosstalk).

21 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Sure.

22 BLAIR HENDRICKS: And that, even though
23 you think you are paying your full loan, you're
24 actually not paying the full amount that you owe and
25 will still be in more debt and possibly in default

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2 later on, and it's very scary to think about that
3 happening and to have an agency or an employer or
4 someone from the government put out a notice to say
5 this is how you get student loan forgiveness or where
6 this where you can check if you are eligible seems a
7 lot safer than these constant bombardments of
8 scammers or potentially banks that, you know, are
9 legitimate companies, but are not working for me they
10 way that I think they are or hope they are, and I
11 think that's really important for a lot of borrowers.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: And you
13 know, I really understand DCWP's point about
14 information overload. I do respect that, but perhaps
15 even on the information documents, we're talking
16 about, we have to hit on those on those points that
17 here, the types of scams that you might be offered
18 don't; they are scams, and then St. John's is a
19 private university, I think?

20 BLAIR HENDRICKS: Yes.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: So ...
22 (crosstalk).

23 BLAIR HENDRICKS: So, I do have public
24 debt from my other grad, as mentioned before, many of
25 us come from other public institutions ...

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Right ...

3 BLAIR HENDRICKS: With debt already, and
4 there are students who go to non-private law schools,
5 so it's a good law for all of us.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: That's
7 great, but would it be possible, and again, I'm
8 speaking from pure ignorance, to get a; I went to
9 private graduate school without a federal loan, was
10 that accessible to you?

11 BLAIR HENDRICKS: I think it, I think it
12 was because I have, as my public debt, it's a federal
13 loan, but I went to private undergrad, so I, again,
14 I'm not entirely sure on how the process works down
15 to the last detail ...

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Yeah ...

17 BLAIR HENDRICKS: I do believe that is
18 possible, and I think there are people who can
19 qualify for public loans for private institutions,
20 but I know there are people who also have private
21 loans on top of public loans, and it just gets
22 complicated, so it would be helpful to your point to
23 have a listing of, you know, where you can find
24 information about private loans or about public loans
25 for private schools. It's very complicated to

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2 navigate as a borrower, especially when you're 18,
3 just starting out.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Wow.
5 You, I think you just told the whole story right
6 there. Thank you so much for your time. Thank you
7 for taking the time to come and testify. It's
8 incredibly important to get this information on the
9 record, and we'll try to tweak the Bill accordingly.

10 BLAIR HENDRICKS: Thank you for having
11 me.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Yeah, if
13 you have specific suggestions, feel free to submit
14 that as an addendum to your testimony.

15 BLAIR HENDRICKS: Thank you.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HELEN ROSENTHAL: Thank
17 you.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL STEPHANIE JONES: Thank
19 you, Blair. If any other council members have a
20 question for our panelist, please raise your hand on
21 Zoom now. Thank you. If we've inadvertently missed
22 anyone else who is registered to testify today and
23 has yet to be called, please use the Zoom raise hand
24 function, and you will be called on in the order that
25 your hand was raised. Seeing no hands raised, I will

1
2 turn it over to Chair Ayala to offer closing remarks.
3 Chair.

4 CHAIR DIANA AYALA: Yeah, I just want to
5 say thank you to all of you who showed up today to
6 provide testimony, and I specifically want to thank,
7 you know, Council Member Rosenthal. I think that we
8 all learned a lot about, you know, the experiences of
9 student loan borrowers and the difficulties that, you
10 know, that they face. So, thank you so much for
11 really shining a light on this issue. Thank you,
12 Blair for your testimony and with that, I have
13 nothing further to add. This hearing 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 October 29, 2021