



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 328

Resolution calling on the New York City Police Department to accept electronic benefit transfer cards that have the cardholder's photograph as a valid form of identification.

By Council Members Lopez, Barron, Brewer, Martinez, Palma, Perkins and Stewart

Whereas, In New York City, public assistance benefits and food stamps are provided electronically through an electronic benefit transfer (EBT) system administered by the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA); and

Whereas, EBT cards enable public assistance recipients to access essential benefits such as food stamps or cash assistance at venues including grocery stores and ATM machines; and

Whereas, In order to obtain an EBT card, an individual must be fingerprinted and submit proof of identity such as a birth certificate, Social Security card or passport; and

Whereas, EBT cards do not include an address but often have the cardholder's photograph; and

Whereas, Pursuant to the New York City Police Department Patrol Guide, Police Officers who encounter persons committing offenses or crimes are required to ask for a valid form of identification and a verifiable address; and

Whereas, Producing a verifiable address is impossible for many of New York City's 38,000 homeless persons; and

Whereas, Those who have committed infractions or minor crimes and cannot produce government issued identification and a verifiable address may be subject to arrest or held in police custody until arraigned in court, while persons who have committed equivalent offenses but who have a verifiable address and valid

identification may receive a summons or a desk appearance ticket allowing them to attend court at a later date;  
and

Whereas, Penalizing homeless persons who lack a verifiable address or government issued identification other than an EBT card by arresting them causes great harm to the persons who are arrested and places additional financial and bureaucratic burdens on the city; and

Whereas, Accepting EBT cards that have the cardholder's photograph as a valid form of identification without requiring a verifiable address could reduce unnecessary arrests of homeless persons; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the New York City Council calls on the NYPD to accept Electronic Benefit Transfer cards that have the cardholder's photograph as a valid form of identification.

SJS  
4/13/04