



THE COUNCIL
OF

THE CITY OF NEW YORK

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July 12, 2023

**Testimony before the Franchise & Concession Review Committee
Re: SBS Proposed Sole Source Concession Agreement with FirstFlight/Saker Aviation
Operation of the Downtown Manhattan Heliport**

My name is Gale A. Brewer and I am the City Council Member for District 6, representing most of the Upper West Side, part of Clinton and all of Central Park in Manhattan.

The Franchise & Concession Review Committee should not approve SBS's proposed Significant Sole Source Interim Concession Agreement with FirstFlight Heliports LLC d/b/a Saker Aviation to operate the Downtown Manhattan Heliport. While providing comparably little economic benefits, this agreement facilitates the continued terrible noise and pollution of non-essential and tourist flights not only around Downtown Manhattan, but across neighborhoods of New York City.

Heliports should be available for emergency services, news and uses that support critical components of the City's transportation infrastructure; yet there should be no non-essential and tourist helicopter flights in or over New York City.

Just last year, an estimated 30,000 non-essential and tourist helicopter flights originated from the Downtown Manhattan Heliport.

In 2022, the 311 system registered 17,247 helicopter-related noise complaints from Manhattan alone. These complaints increased over 3,600% in the past 5 years.

Since the beginning of 2023, the 311 system received 19,233 complaints, expected to surpass double the number of complaints for all of 2022.

These data points represent Manhattan-only complaints though unrelenting non-essential and tourist helicopter flights continue to disrupt communities across New York City neighborhoods. Residents call my office with complaints of deafening noise that shake their apartments and disturb refuge in our City's parks, causing them stress and anxiety. Many residents living in the proximity of helipads reported the declining air quality from the exhaust during constant takeoffs and landings.

I urge the Committee not to approve the proposed agreement with FirstFlight/Saker Aviation in order to significantly reduce non-essential helicopter traffic from the Downtown Manhattan Heliport and improve the quality of life across our communities.