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**Testimony before the Landmarks Preservation Commission
Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument Reconstruction
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My name is Gale A. Brewer and I am the City Council Member for District 6, representing the Upper West Side from W. 54 to W. 96 Streets, parts of Riverside Park and all of Central Park. I am also Chair of the Committee on Oversight and Investigations. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the accessibility improvements proposed for Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial in Riverside Park.

West Siders have come to the Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial since 1902, built to honor Union Army soldiers who fought against slavery in the Civil War and serving as a gathering place for veterans and civilians to remember all those who have served this country and fell – buried at home and upon foreign shores. Designated a landmark in 1976, its last comprehensive restoration was in 1962. In 2008, along with then Mayor Bloomberg, I allocated almost \$1 million to restore the plaza. The monument has been closed to the public since 2017 when inspectors found leaks and water dripping into the retaining wall.

It is not a surprise to anyone that I feel very passionate about this monument and its preservation. With support from Peg Breen, President of the New York Landmarks Conservancy, and others, we initiated a petition to request the funds to restore the monument. The Mayor's Office of Veteran's Affairs supported our efforts, as did all the elected officials in the area, particularly Congress Member Nadler. Mayor Eric Adams and Parks Commissioner Sue Donoghue allocated \$62.3 million to restore and preserve the Memorial, including ADA accessibility.

The first renderings of the planned redesign of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Memorial here in Riverside Park were presented to Community Board 7 last month, and the Board approved the proposal. The monument is to be completely restored, providing ADA accessibility to all exterior levels, and adding lighting that elevates the appearance of the monument's facade at night. The ADA access is exciting and overdue; the architects have found a way to make all of the terraces accessible by building a garden walk on the east side of the monument. They are also going back to the 1902 design of the brickwork around the monument; and the surveying is being done mostly by drones instead of scaffolding.

I urge the Landmarks Preservation Commission to approve the proposed accessibility improvements for Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument. The future of this memorial is bright. Restored to its formal glory, it will again shine in a way that honors our memory of war and the pursuit of peace.