



DISTRICT OFFICE  
1377 JEROME AVENUE  
BRONX, NY 10452  
PHONE: 718 -588-7500

THE COUNCIL OF  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
**ALTHEA V. STEVENS**  
COUNCIL MEMBER  
16<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT, BRONX

CITY HALL OFFICE  
250 BROADWAY, SUITE 1872  
NEW YORK, NY 10007  
PHONE: (212) 788-6856

## **New York City Council Member Althea V. Stevens' Testimony to the Charter Revision Commission**

*July 11, 2024*

Thank you Chair Scissura and members of the Charter Revision Commission for the opportunity to provide testimony.

The City Charter, a legal document which serves as a framework and responsibilities for government and its processes, is the foundation of the City of New York. Adaptation to this document is vital as it allows for the city government to adapt to the evolving needs of its various communities through an adaptation of governance practices and legal compliances.

### **The Commission Should Ensure Public Engagement**

The Mayor's Charter Revision Commission is necessary, but should not be rushed. Doing so is not a democratic process, and as elected officials it is our job to raise the alert when there are implementations underway that could threaten democracy. The Mayor's Charter Revision Commission has rushed to alter the City Charter in less than two months. Such illustrates the calculations made to undermine the role of elected officials and voters. Charter revisions are crucial in improving the constitution of a City. However, how effective can it be for our city if residents are not afforded the opportunity to participate, which is guaranteed with ample notice and engagement? Rushing this procedure should not be allowed as community input is crucial.

### **The Commission Should Preserve the Process of Accountability in Policing**

Additionally, the New York City Council's Committee on Public Safety oversees the New York Police Department and holds monthly hearings. At the hearings, the Police Department is held accountable for its actions and decisions while ensuring the needs and expectations of communities throughout the city are met. During the hearing, members of the public can tune in online or in person as well as share testimonies to the elected officials which serve on the committee. It seems that The Mayor's Charter Revision Commission would like to add extra loops in this system, therefore, leading to bureaucracy. However, allowing the Mayor to have executive authority to implement law without checks and balances undermines public trust and engagement. It is necessary for New Yorkers to have a voice on critical affairs that govern the lives of residents. Bureaucracies often prioritize rules and procedures over individual needs, which can lead to a lack of personalized service and attention. New Yorker's should continue to be granted the opportunity to meet with their elected officials and testify because it leads to adequate and real time alterations to the city. This is essential as the complexity of bureaucratic systems tend to create barriers to understanding and accessing city services which in turn reduces public engagement and trust in city government.

In conclusion, as The Mayor's Charter Revision Commission updates the New York City Charter it is pivotal to ensure public engagement and preserve police accountability.

Accelerating this operation interferes with democratic principles as well as community trust, thus, highlighting the critical need for thoughtful deliberation and participation from residents. We must uphold transparency and responsiveness to competently address the changing needs and outlook of our diverse city.