



July 12, 2024

Dear Chair Scissura & Members of the Charter Revision Commission:

I am writing to express my serious concerns about the 2024 Charter Revision Commission. Charter revision commissions are an essential part of our City governance. Past commissions have brought forward much needed reforms, and allowed for a thorough, organized review of issues in the Charter - with ample opportunity for input from the public and key stakeholders. Unfortunately, this commission has not met those standards and appears to be nothing more than another attempt by the Mayor to usurp the power of the City Council.

This Commission first met on May 29, 2024 - just over two months before final ballot language must be submitted. No other Charter Revision Commission in recent history has ever operated on such an accelerated timeline. Further, this Commission has conducted only twelve public hearings and forums - short of the 15 that were conducted in 2018 or the 30+ hearings conducted by the 1989 Commission. The initial round of hearings was also announced with little notice or publication, leading to sparsely attended sessions, and the last round of hearings is being held only two weeks before final ballot language is due. Public engagement is critical to the charter revision process, and it is clear that this hastily convened commission is not seeking real public feedback.

I am particularly concerned about the Commission's proposals regarding public safety legislation. The City Council legislative process allows for robust public input. Beyond scheduled hearings that are open to the public, Council offices hear from constituents every day regarding policy concerns and proposed bills. We are the frontlines for New Yorkers and we care deeply about feedback from our constituents. My office received hundreds of calls and emails from constituents on the How Many Stops Act and the ban on solitary confinement - our constituents know how to reach us and give input. Additionally, an analysis by Citizens Union confirmed that this Council has provided ample time for feedback on public safety proposals - even more time than other bills. This further demonstrates that there is no rational basis for changing the legislative process for certain bills.

In its preliminary report, this Commission stated that it is important to "promote careful deliberation and ensure that affected communities across the City are heard." This Charter review process has not accomplished either of those worthy goals, and should not put forward any proposals at this time. We should not accept the Mayor's attempt to block the Speaker's legislation to expand advice and consent powers of the City Council. The right decision for this Charter Revision Commission is to recognize that due to inadequate public engagement the appropriate decision is to recommend no ballot questions for this election cycle.

Thank you,

Lincoln Restler
Council Member, District 33