



Shahana Hanif

CITY COUNCIL MEMBER, DISTRICT 39

Testimony of Council Member Shahana Hanif to the Charter Revision Commission July 12, 2024

From the cynical timing of its launch,¹ its biased staffing model,² to its preliminary report that misrepresents the City’s legislative process,³ this Charter Revision Commission has consistently shown itself to be nothing more than a political vehicle for Mayor Eric Adams. I regret legitimizing proceedings that Speaker Adrienne Adams has correctly described as, “wholly unserious”, by submitting testimony.⁴ However, I feel compelled to register my opposition to two particularly harmful proposals.

First, efforts to undermine the City Council’s ability to legislate on public safety matters must be rejected.

In the previous legislative term, the Council passed laws to ban the use of solitary confinement in City jails and require reporting on the NYPD’s use of stops. These bills went through a robust public input process including lengthy hearings that featured oral and written testimony from the Mayor’s designated representatives and members of the public. Over seventeen months after these bills were introduced, they were amended and passed by the Council. The Mayor then vetoed the bills and ran a targeted campaign that sought to persuade Council Members to uphold his vetoes. This campaign failed and the Council overturned his vetoes by a 42 to 9 margin. While the Mayor can be dissatisfied with the outcome on these items, any misgivings he has around the legislative timeline are undue.

Additionally, the thorough processes for these bills are reflective of the processes other public safety bills have gone through. The Citizen Union analyzed all of the more than 1,700 laws passed by the Council in the last decade and came to the following conclusion: “public safety legislation receives similar input opportunities as other issues, suggesting that there is no need for separate rules.”⁵ It is clear that the staff recommendation in the Commission’s preliminary report to, “enhance the deliberative process for legislation pertaining to public safety”,⁶ is rooted solely in the desire to prohibit the Council from passing bills that run counter to the Mayor’s personal agenda, not in any principles of good governance.

¹ Coltin, Jeff. “Eric Adams’ Latest Plan to Keep New York’s Strong Mayor System.” Politico, 21 May 2024, www.politico.com/news/2024/05/21/eric-adams-charter-revision-committee-00159306.

² Rubinstein, Dana, and Emma Fitzsimmons. “Mayor Adams Fills a Key Commission with Allies and Donors.” *The New York Times*, 22 May 2024, www.nytimes.com/2024/05/22/nyregion/eric-adams-nyc-charter-commission.html.

³ Charter Revision Commission Preliminary Report, New York City Charter Revision Commission, 25 June 2024. https://www.nyc.gov/assets/charter/downloads/pdf/reports-ballot-issues/20242406_CRC_PrelimReport.pdf

⁴ “Statement from Speaker Adams on Charter Revision Commission’s Preliminary Staff Report.” New York City Council, 24 May 2024, council.nyc.gov/press/2024/06/24/2636/.

⁵ “Do Public Safety Bills Receive Fewer Opportunities for Public Input in the New York City Council?” Citizens Union, 8 July 2024, citizensunion.org/portfolio-item/do-public-safety-bills-receive-fewer-opportunities-for-public-input-in-the-new-york-city-council/.

⁶ See supra note 3.



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Second, proposals made by the Council's most conservative members to repeal or weaken what are colloquially known as the City's "sanctuary laws" should also be rejected.⁷

These laws broadly prohibit City agencies from being used as federal immigration enforcement resources. As I have previously outlined in a joint article with Council Member Alexa Avilés, sanctuary policies have enabled immigrant New Yorkers to perform critical functions without the fear of deportation.⁸ These functions include accessing life-saving domestic violence services, reporting unsafe jobsite or housing conditions, and notifying first responders about dangerous situations in their neighborhoods. During former President Donald Trump's term in the White House, sanctuary policies also prevented New York City agencies from being used as tools of his cruel mass deportation machine that broke up families nationwide.

As we confront the possibility of a second Trump presidency, our City should be looking at how to continue our legacy as a bastion for immigrant rights, not how to assist candidate Trump's xenophobic agenda. Any rolling back of sanctuary policies, especially those protecting due process in the justice system, would seriously endanger the immigrant communities that make New York City the vibrant economic and cultural hub that it is.

I urge the Commission not to include proposals amending the Council's ability to legislate public safety or laws the Council has passed to protect immigrant families. The Commission should instead follow the recommendations outlined by Speaker Adrienne Adams in her testimony, including permitting the public to vote on Intro. 908-2024, which would expand the Council's advice and consent powers.⁹ I also encourage this Commission to review the final report of the previous Charter Revision Commission, which reflects a more deliberative and democratic process and includes potential proposals that could advance racial and economic justice in New York City.¹⁰

⁷ Paladino, Vickie. "Suspend NYC's Sanctuary City Law." X, 21 June 2024, x.com/CMvpaladino/status/180431114290728988.

⁸ Avilés, Alexa, and Shahana Hanif. "Op-Ed: NYC's Sanctuary Policies Make Our City Safer." amNewYork, 29 Feb. 2024, www.amny.com/opinion/nycs-sanctuary-policies-make-our-city-safer/.

⁹ Adams, Adrienne. "NYC Council Speaker Adrienne E. Adams' Testimony to the Charter Revision Commission." NYC Council, 20 June 2024, council.nyc.gov/press/wp-content/uploads/sites/56/2024/06/NYC-Council-Speaker-Adrienne-E.-Adams-Testimony-to-Charter-Revision-Commission.pdf.

¹⁰ "Final Report of the NYC Racial Justice Commission." NYC Racial Justice Commission, 27 Dec. 2024, racialjustice.cityofnewyork.us/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Final-Report-of-the-NYC-Racial-Justice-Commission.pdf.