Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony. I am Roland Lewis, president of the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance. The Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance is a coalition of over 400 organizations working together to transform the New York and New Jersey Harbor and its waterways into a world-class resource for work, play, transit, and education.

The Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance is pleased that in March of 2010 the City of New York took over the control of Brooklyn Bridge Park and Pier 1 was reclaimed for public use. The effect it will have on New York is immeasurable. Brooklyn Bridge Park already offers great amenities for visitors, including the eighty-five acres of waterfront park, a huge recreational space at Pier 1, gentle-sloped hills, and a currently rare opportunity to directly access the water, something we strongly support.

With that in mind, we enthusiastically support the current financing plan for Brooklyn Bridge Park and urge the Committee on Alternatives to Housing to retain this plan going forward to ensure a delay-free construction of the park. Waterfront parks by nature are expensive to maintain. We must budget for maritime infrastructure and capital reserve to adequately sustain the park. Brooklyn Bridge Park’s annual maintenance for the park’s full build out is expected to be $16 million, including the 12,000 pilings on Piers 2, 3, 5, and 6. Neglect of these pier structures would lead to rapid deterioration. Housing and limited hotel use is the most appropriate and compatible solution. The current financing plan calls for the park operator to control development sites, limits the development footprint to 8% of the total project area. This plan is already in action, with maintenance funds coming from 1 Brooklyn Bridge Park, a pre-existing building within the project boundaries that has been adaptively re-used for residential use since 2008. In addition to revenue, these developments bring meeting space, restaurants, restrooms, and collective “eyes on the park.”

The construction of Brooklyn Bridge Park will be an enormous achievement. And assuming that the other harbor parks go forward, the project as a whole will radically alter the character of the city, not only by making the waterfront more accessible but also by reorienting it toward the life of the harbor. We urge the Committee to support the current financing plan so that the park’s construction can continue without delay.