Good morning 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 (MWA) is a coalition of over 570 organizations working together to transform the New York Harbor and its waterways into a world class resource for work, play, transit and education.

MWA welcomes the opportunity to testify regarding the future of South Street Seaport as MWA believes it to be one of the most important waterfront areas in the regional. South Street Seaport is deserving of coordinated attention by the City Council and numerous City agencies to ensure opportunities to preserve and develop it embrace its historic significance while unlocking its potential. The right decisions made now will ensure this exceptionally unique part of New York City’s landscape and heritage remains vibrant and true to its nature as a former seaport and modern historic district.

MWA appreciate the recent reemergence of the South Street Seaport Museum and believe its survival should continue to be a high priority for the City of New York. It can once again be one of the crown jewels of our waterfront and a fun and educational destination for those in the New York Metropolitan Region and visitors. Special
attention and resources must be paid to the unique fleet of boats and docking facilities that are integral parts of the museum. We recognize that some of the ships may have to go for understandable economic reasons, but those that remain need to be restored. These iconic parts of the downtown skyline can no longer be “floating paper weights.” They can be revitalized to be fun, active and beautiful attractions.

The museum’s future is closely intertwined with that of the South Street Seaport district. The City must not repeat the mistake of rushing to rapidly generate revenues by allowing national or local chain store development or major development at the Seaport. Time and patience will reap the greatest rewards. We look to inspiration from Granville Island, Seattle, Washington where we see a vibrant mix of maritime, local retail, and tourist attractions that serve as an economic engine.

We must foster the growth and survival of undertakings such as the New Amsterdam Market with a long term goal of creating a district that reflects our maritime and commercial heritage, with businesses and civic institutions that are local and relate to the water that surround us.

Specifically MWA calls for continued civic support of the museum, particularly its unique and irreplaceable fleet of ships, strengthening of the historic district, support of the New Amsterdam Market and other small businesses, and a commitment from the City to long term thinking and planning that forgoes the rush to generate quickly realized revenues at the expense of development and preservation that over time will reap far
greater fiscal, public, civic, and cultural rewards. All these great dividends for our city and region form the South Seaport begin with a concerted, private, civic and government effort to support the revitalization of the South Street Seaport Museum.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have.