I am Roland Lewis, President and CEO of the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance. The Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance (MWA) is a coalition of over 640 businesses, community and recreational groups, educational institutions, and other stakeholders committed to transforming the New York and New Jersey Harbor and its waterways to make them cleaner and more accessible, a vibrant place to play, learn and work with great parks, great jobs and great transportation for all.

We are just over the one year anniversary of the release of Vision 2020, the Comprehensive Waterfront Plan, a heralded milestone that calls for greater re-engagement of New Yorkers with the water that surrounds them. The CWP recognizes that if we are to use our “Blue Network,” infrastructure needs to be established to once again make our harbor boat friendly. The recent multi-berth RFP issued by the NYEDC is a step in this direction. The creation of 3 new important docking facilities with the rehabilitation of piers 17, 26, A, and 42 (which is a part of the aforementioned multi-berth RFP) has the potential to greatly expand the amount of docking space for historic
boats, inter-harbor cruises and other maritime businesses active in the water surrounding downtown.

These capital improvements are to be applauded but there are still many serious challenges that need to be addressed as we create piers for boats once again. Simple infrastructure such as gangways and other pier-side connections must be created, insurance requirements must be reasonable and fees must be affordable especially for not-for profit, historic boats. For historic boats we believe there should be no berthing fees at all.

The capital investment in this type of infrastructure as well as the lower fee structure will have great economic benefit for downtown businesses as tourists and New Yorkers are drawn to the water’s edge to see and, often, board an increasingly wider variety of vessels that will, once again, call the New York port home. This hearing not only coincides with the establishment of these new facilities but immediately follows the Metropolitan waterfront Alliance conference where over 650 participants discussed policies that would enliven the waterfront, improve the environment and create economic development and jobs for our harbor.

It is also coming right before the arrival of many of the Tall Ships to our harbor as a part of Fleet Week. With the infrastructure being developed at 17, 26, A, 42 and other berths that could be developed around the city, the Tall Ships, once again, will be able to make regular visits to our harbor generating interest, excitement and awe at our water’s edge.
We are witnessing important initial maritime steps throughout the harbor with the development of the water trail, eco docks and the facilities discussed at his hearing. Together, these initiatives are re-engaging New Yorkers with our harbor with profound affect for our City both environmentally, and economically. We look forward to working with the city to ensure these benefits are spread to each borough to make the magnificent harbor an asset to the city and country.