Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony. I am Roland Lewis, President and CEO of the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance (MWA). The MWA is a coalition of over 700 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.

The cruise industry has been a vital part of New York’s waterfront revival in the last decade by attracting international tourism to our waterways. Since 2004, New York City has invested over $250 million to develop state-of-the-art cruise terminals in Brooklyn and Manhattan. The result has been a highly robust and celebrated cruise industry with an annual economic impact of $200 million and over 250 ship calls in New York City. Last year, the Manhattan Cruise Terminal became the port of call for several cruise lines including Norwegian Cruise Line, Carnival Miracle and Disney Cruise Lines. Next month, the Norwegian Breakaway, the largest ship to ever home port in New York City, will begin departures from the Manhattan Cruise Terminal, bringing an additional 140,000 passengers and $35 million in direct spending to New York City. However, more can be done to maximize the benefits of New York’s Cruise industry.
New York’s cruise ports sustained extensive damage from Hurricane Sandy; the storm surge flooded the lower levels, inundating electrical systems and parking lots. However, the impact was most significant at the Brooklyn Cruise Terminal in Red Hook. While the Manhattan Cruise Terminal reopened immediately after the storm, the Brooklyn Cruise Terminal was closed for nearly two months, resulting in lost tourism dollars for New York and the Red Hook community. If NYCEDC had not made the upgrades to Pier 88 that provided some safeguards against flooding, New York’s cruise industry would have been halted indefinitely. Given the industry’s role as a local economic engine, and the increasing frequency of coastal storms, the city needs to implement resiliency measures at both terminals to ensure that they remain operational after events like Hurricane Sandy.

I’d like to make another point about the Brooklyn Cruise Terminal, which opened in 2006 and accommodates larger ships in the Atlantic Basin. Brooklyn currently receives only 20% of New York’s cruise traffic, yet much of Brooklyn’s tourism industry in the last few years has been spurred by the Brooklyn Cruise Terminal. For instance, the neighborhoods around the terminal are now home to numerous hotels and restaurants that seek to attract cruise passengers. More can be done to direct passenger spending to local businesses through neighborhood promotion programs like the Department of Small Business Services’ Avenue NYC.

When cruise passengers dock in New York, they typically spend most of their time and money in Manhattan. This is a missed opportunity: with new waterfront parks in Brooklyn, Queens and Staten Island, New York’s shoreline is brimming with cultural and recreational destinations, easily accessible by ferry. New York City can encourage inter-harbor tourism by creating better
links between cruise and inter-harbor ferry travel, for example by offering special packages to cruise passengers for boat tours around the harbor, which is among our best tourist attractions.

Finally, while NYCruise has been a boon to New York’s tourism economy, it is well known that the cruise industry can also impart significant environmental impacts, such as the burning of bunker fuel and the discharge of bilge water and untreated sewage into major waterways. However, experts have identified a number of best practices that can minimize these harmful effects. For instance, cruise operators can implement shore power at both of New York’s cruise terminals, and ships can be required to hold treated sewage onboard and away from sensitive marine areas. As one of the world’s finest cruise ports, New York can be a leader in attracting environmentally compliant cruise lines that minimize their impacts on our air and water quality.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.