Public Testimony
New York City Council, Committee on Waterfronts
Re: Oversight - Investing in the City's Maritime Industry Workforce

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The Waterfront Alliance is a non-profit civic organization and coalition of more than 1,000 community and recreational groups, educational institutions, businesses, and other stakeholders committed to restoring and revitalizing New York Harbor and the surrounding waterways. Our waterways have been revitalized with active recreation, education, and transportation, and the harbor has for centuries been a vital conduit for commerce. New York’s preeminence as a business capital is a direct consequence of its position as a hub for maritime trade.

The Port of New York and New Jersey is the largest port on the eastern seaboard, supporting 400,000 jobs and more than $64 billion in business activity, according to a 2017 report by the New York Shipping Association. This is larger than more prominent sectors such as broadcasting and entertainment, and represents an increase over the 336,600 supported in 2014 and 296,000 jobs supported in 2012. While the industry has expanded over the past generation to bring much of the region’s container and terminal operations to New Jersey, many of the maritime support services, including tugs, barges, and ship repair services, which make our ports run smoothly, are located here.

The maritime sector offers good jobs that provide economic opportunity for those without higher education. According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community survey, the median annual wage in the waterborne transportation sector is approximately $72,000, with more than three-fourths of those jobs accessible to New Yorkers without a bachelor’s degree. Many of these jobs are open to those with high school diplomas but require apprenticeships or specialized training. Those with a postsecondary degree command even higher wages: according to PayScale, graduates of SUNY Maritime College rank first in the nation in earning power, with early career salaries over $70,000 and mid-career salaries of $147,000.

Employers and educators alike have noted a need for workforce development strategies to ensure the viability of New York’s harbor careers. Changes in technology and industry have often led businesses to look outside the region for workers with the necessary skills. Without a qualified workforce, jobs across our waterfront will be filled by people from outside the region. The de Blasio Administration’s New York Works plan outlines several strategies for job growth, including a “Cradle to Career” initiative linking New Yorkers to jobs in transportation, distribution, and logistics.

Several models are available, both from within the industry and from other industries, to improve mechanisms for preparing people for maritime careers. Waterfront Alliance was proud to co-organize, along with the Office of Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams, a series of focused meetings with and feedback from educators, industry professionals, community and civic leaders, elected officials, labor leaders, and government staff, which identified several issues and produced corresponding recommendations to strengthen links between educators, government, and industry. The purpose was to develop actionable policy recommendations to build a strong pipeline so that more people—including youths, mid-career professionals, and
diverse populations—know they can have access to these good jobs, and align industry needs with education and training programs. The following is a brief summary of the issues raise and the proposed recommendations.

**Improve public awareness.** Careers in the maritime sector are often perceived as hidden or inaccessible to New Yorkers. There is a widespread lack of visibility for maritime careers, and educational opportunities, among both students and parents. The industry and New Yorkers would benefit greatly from more defined career placement and training pathways, including a more visible presence for educators and employers so that young people know the viability of jobs on our waterfront. This year, NYCEDC hosted industry representatives, advocates, and local high schools at the first maritime career exploration fair at the Brooklyn Cruise Terminal, connect students with businesses and maritime operators. The City should build upon this successful program as well as existing initiatives, such as Workforce1 partnerships between industry and NYCSBS, and the Port Authority’s Council on Port Performance, to develop targeted campaigns to improve awareness of maritime career opportunities.

**Understand existing opportunities and growth opportunities.** The City should conduct a thorough, all-of-the-above review of the economic value of the entire harbor. From the work of the the New York Shipping Association, we have an excellent foundational understanding of the economic impact of the region’s port industry. However, we do not have a wider, more comprehensive understanding of how the harbor contributes to jobs and economic growth in other ways. The harbor does not just support captains and welders and longshore workers, but also divers, marina managers, ship repair facilities, back-office and insurance jobs, and marine scientists. Offshore wind poses an opportunity to meet critical clean energy goals. Although power generation is not expected to begin until the end of the next decade, we must position New York as the hub for significant maritime support services this growth industry will require. We should also incorporate strategies to capitalize on geopolitical trends, and capture international businesses that plan to relocate from Great Britain as it exits the European Union.

**Understand skills and training needs.** Employers are increasingly noting challenges associated with an aging workforce and identifying new workers with the skills to match evolving technologies in the industry. The City should conduct a thorough assessment that includes an inventory of the assets and deficits in New York’s harbor-wide education and workforce ecosystem. This would include existing jobs, as referenced above, but also skills necessary for career placement and advancement, and a review of secondary and postsecondary education/training programs. That study should survey maritime and logistics employers, considering future needs and trends in addition to current needs, and consider case studies of European-model apprenticeship programs.

**Provide administrative support for integrated education and training.** The New York Harbor School is an incredible asset, but we need more. We should expand feeder programs, vocational training, and curriculum development across New York City high schools to produce more graduates with an interest in the field and in seeking specialized technical training. The Urban Assembly New York Harbor School has Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs in maritime fields. Programs like this should be expanded, and schools should partner with apprenticeship and internship programs to prepare their students for careers on the waterfront. Additional recommendations include:

- Develop resources for paid internships or apprenticeship programs, possibly through a cost-sharing model between educational institutions, government, and employers
- Develop resources and curriculum development for teachers to introduce
youths and middle-school students to maritime experiences and careers

- Explore the need for and utility of aggregated career and technical training and office facility similar to BOCES model schools
- Utilize industry facilities for real-world exposure to young workforce to enrich classroom learning

**Improve diversity in participation.** Educational programs and workforce training initiatives must be representative of New York City’s population, including those from historically disadvantaged communities. Programs must be designed to serve students and workers across a wide range of career trajectories, from those looking for near-term employment to those seeking further education, while allowing those who wish to work to continue to build technical skills in training programs. Additional recommendations include:

- Identify feeder school opportunities with middle schools to help make students aware of opportunities in maritime careers earlier
- Provide resources to support outreach by maritime educational institutions to ensure students represent all communities
- Provide administrative support for cross-sector cost-sharing for internships to allow those who wish to work to continue to build technical skills
- Identify tax credits or other financial incentives for local hiring initiatives

**Support maritime industrial land use.** We must protect land zoned for industrial waterfront and maritime uses on both private and public land as well as prevent speculation, which results in rising rents and displacement of people and jobs. The designation of six Significant Maritime and Industrial Areas (SMIAs) in 2002 reflects the City’s commitment to sustaining its working waterfront. The Red Hook Container Terminal (RHCT), operating at a modest annual deficit subsidized by the Port Authority, is targeted for conversion from industrial to residential and commercial use. The City and its partners at the Port Authority must develop a plan for the future of the terminal, as well as other private maritime facilities facing pressures from land speculation, to prioritize industrial and job-intensive uses. Other examples include South Brooklyn Marine Terminal (SBMT), where the City has invested more than $100 million in infrastructure improvements to reactivate the facility with maritime-dependent uses, and Miller’s Launch on Staten Island’s north shore, a multi-faceted maritime operator that must remain protected from other, non-water-dependent uses.

**New York City must continue to be a world leader as a productive maritime gateway** for international and regional commerce, good jobs, and environmental benefits. The City should support a multi-sector partnership to expand awareness and visibility for maritime careers among students and parents, and toward training and placement programs that build a workforce that is representative of New York’s diverse population. We thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony, and welcome any questions you may have.