Public Testimony  
April 17, 2019  
New York City Council Hearing  
Re: Office of the Waterfront legislation (Intro-0982) & Ferry Operations legislation (Intro-1512)

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Waterfront Alliance

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. Our mission is to inspire and enable resilient, revitalized and accessible coastlines for all communities.

Intro-0982, the bill to establish an Office of the Waterfront has long been championed by the Waterfront Alliance. The establishment of a coordinating body in the Mayor’s Office to create and manage an overall vision for our 520 miles of waterfront is more important today than ever.

A 21st century waterfront with increased mixed use and climate change challenges demands a 21st century coordinating body: one centralized project team with leadership from the Mayor’s Office that can take a holistic approach by integrating capital projects, resiliency plans and waterfront management under one roof, instead of through a siloed approach. The policy, equity and economic issues linked to our waterfronts and waterways are countless and demand greater harmonization and long-term planning.

A coordinating Office is important on a number of levels:

- **A centralized place for policy-making among City agencies**, many of which are making decisions about our waterfronts without a collective voice or master plan.

- **Establishing a City voice on regional issues.** With New Jersey, Connecticut, Long Island and Westchester County all sharing our local waterways, we have interrelated interests in water quality, transportation and resiliency initiatives. This Office can serve a liaison to different levels of government including Albany and Washington, DC.
• New York is home to a great deal of institutional knowledge on climate and resiliency issues through the work of universities, think tanks and advocacy organizations. This Office will tap into these resources to inform decision-making.

The challenges of climate and coastal resiliency underpin every aspect of our waterfront from parks to transportation to buildings. Consider the Administration’s recent resiliency proposal to extend the South Street Seaport/Financial District into East River through an infill project. The level of coordination needed to build consensus around maritime uses, transportation, resiliency infrastructure, waterfront access and open space for New Yorkers – just in this one project alone – will be enormous. Not to mention how this project would affect surrounding communities.

The Waterfront Management Advisory Board was an important step in coordination for creating the Comprehensive Waterfront Plan, a process which is currently underway for the next 10-year plan. Many recommendations across different sectors will be put forth. The implementation of these recommendations and how they are handled among many different agencies is an important question. There is no one coordinating body ensuring that competing considerations are discussed under one tent and that can ensure recommendations can move forward efficiently.

Consider the increased mixed use of our harbor ranging from recreation to transportation. With the growth of NYC Ferry serving millions of New Yorkers, we are also seeing the number of individual human powered boat trips increasingly annually, as is the number of operating boathouses. In 2017, more than 100,000 individuals participated in human powered boating in the NYC area – more than double the number five years ago.

The activity happening on our waterways – not just our waterfronts – is important to local communities. Monitoring water quality, wave attenuation, and safety among the many actors using the harbor is an important area of coordination for this Office.

While we are reclaiming our waterways for ferries and kayakers, not to mention tugs and barges moving freight, we are faced with:
• New regulatory and permitting challenges,
• A need for additional docks spaces to tie up to,
• Call for more waterfront access for recreation
• And a renewed focus on crumbling piers and terminals that should be brought to a state of good repair.
Regarding Intro-1512, Waterfront Alliance has been a vocal supporter of NYC Ferry since its start. We are not only a supporter, Waterfront Alliance was the prime civic organization that organized and advocated for years to help create the system we have in place today. Let’s take a moment to underscore the remarkable, rapid growth and popularity of NYC Ferry. We have collaborated closely EDC to support the system which currently boasts:

- **Six routes, currently in four boroughs - with Staten Island coming online next year,**
- **Routes servicing transit deserts from Soundview to the Rockaways, and a new Coney Island/Bay Ridge route coming in 2021,**
- **Growing ridership - NYC Ferry beat ridership projections in 2018 by over 200,000 riders,**
- **An astounding 94.6% on time performance rate – unparalleled in local mass transit.**

As the system grows, let’s address the issues that need to be fixed and continue to encourage transparency in the decision-making process, but let’s not lose sight of the extraordinary transportation access and resiliency that NYC Ferry is bringing to New Yorkers in all five boroughs.

Thank you.