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Transcript of the Meeting of the  
CHARTER REVISION COMMITTEE  
held on Thursday, August 9, 2001  
at Fordham University, McGinley Hall,  
Borough of Bronx

AR-TI REPORTING COMPANY, INC.	
305 Madison Avenue	142 Willis Avenue
Suite 405	P.O. BOX 347
New York, N.Y. 10038	Mineola, N.Y. 11501
(212) 349-9692	(516) 741-5235

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1 Meeting convened at 7:15 p.m.

2 P R E S E N T

3 RANDY M. MASTRO  
Chairman

4 COMMISSIONERS:

5 HOWARD WILSON

6 JONATHAN BALLAN

7 VINCENT ROBERTS

8 YVONNE LIU

9 IMAM IZAK-EL M. PASHA

10 TOSANO SIMONETTI

11 HERBERT RUBIN

12 CLAUDE MILLMAN

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1                   CHAIRMAN MASTRO: Good evening, ladies  
2                   and gentlemen, we'll get started. This is the  
3                   public hearing portion of the evening. This is our  
4                   second public hearing. Last night we were on Staten  
5                   Island. Tonight we're most pleased to be here in  
6                   the Bronx, and we're extremely grateful to Fordham  
7                   University for permitting us this venue. First,  
8                   before we begin tonight's public hearing and  
9                   entertaining statements from members of the public,  
10                  Anthony Crowell, the General Counsel to the  
11                  Charterer Revision Commission will briefly summarize  
12                  those proposals which the staff has recommended to  
13                  the Commission receive most serious consideration  
14                  during this process. We as a Commission are  
15                  reviewing the entire City Charter and considering  
16                  all issues and members of the public are invited to  
17                  comment on any issue that they wish, but we wanted  
18                  the members of the public to be aware of the staff's  
19                  preliminary recommendations. Mr. Crowell?

20                  MR. CROWELL: Again, my name is Anthony  
21                  Crowell and I serve as General Counsel to the  
22                  Commission.

23                  The Commission staff recommendations fall  
24                  into nine separate categories, and the staff  
25                  recommends that each category be proposed as a

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1 separate ballot proposition. It should be noted  
2 that expert testimony is being given for each of the  
3 categories at expert briefings prior to the public  
4 hearings in each borough.

5 This evening at 6:00, expert testimony  
6 was given on the staff's recommendations on  
7 requiring that public school teachers and other  
8 Board of Education employees report information to  
9 the Police Department related to suspected sex  
10 offenses or other violent crimes committed against a  
11 public school student and on empowering the Fire  
12 Department to oversee Buildings inspections.

13 Other staff recommendations under  
14 consideration include:

15 Making the Administration for Children's  
16 Services, known as ACS, a Charter agency;.

17 Make the Office of Emergency Management,  
18 also known as OEM, a Charter agency;.

19 Creating an Organized Crime Control  
20 Commission to combat organized crime in the Fulton  
21 Fish Market, the commercial waste carting industry  
22 and in the shipboard gaming industry;.

23 Establishing a new office to combat  
24 domestic violence to enhance the coordination of the  
25 various City services to combat domestic violence

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1 and assist victims of domestic violence;.

2 Creating gun-free school safety zones and  
3 making it a crime for most persons to possess a gun  
4 within 1,000 feet of any school in the city except  
5 police officers;.

6 Banning the sale and possession of any  
7 type of gun to any person under the age of 21;.

8 Making the Human Rights Commission a  
9 Charter agency and providing for enforcement of the  
10 City's Human Rights Law through the Charter;

11 Making the Office of Immigrant Affairs a  
12 Charter agency and providing for a mechanism so that  
13 City agencies will keep confidential any information  
14 they may have regarding a person's immigration  
15 status;.

16 Creating a new Department of Public  
17 Health by merging the Departments of Health and the  
18 Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and  
19 Alcoholism Services;.

20 Expanding the Board of Health from five  
21 to eleven members, including the Commissioner, to  
22 insure diversity of practice areas on the Board;

23 Insuring the integrity and improving the  
24 process concerning the City's purchasing procedures,  
25 to guarantee more effective delivery of goods and

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1 services to citizens;.

2 And finally, reforming the City's  
3 conflicts of interest rules to improve the Conflict  
4 of Interest Board's investigative functions and  
5 provide that any elected official holding an office  
6 when a Local Law is passed that would increase the  
7 salary of that office to receive such salary  
8 increase upon reelection to office. Thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN MASTRO: Thank you. Briefly,  
10 before we begin, I wanted to go over some of the  
11 public hearing rules that we're following for  
12 speakers. Any person who wishes to testify should  
13 sign in at the speaker's registration list at the  
14 door. Hopefully, all those who want to speak have  
15 already done that.

16 The Commission will hear from all who  
17 have signed up to speak. We'll also at the end of  
18 that session open it up to anyone else who has not  
19 signed up.

20 The order of speakers will be as follows:  
21 Citywide elected officials, State elected officials,  
22 Federal elected officials, other City elected  
23 officials, staff of elected officials and members of  
24 the public.

25 You'll be given the opportunity to

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1       testify in order of the signup. Each speaker will  
2       have three minutes to give his or her testimony and  
3       the testimony will be timed. You'll be heard only  
4       once at any given public hearing session. You'll be  
5       advised when you have one minute left and when your  
6       time has expired. We ask that when your time is  
7       expired that you conclude your remarks as quickly as  
8       possible at that point, so that everyone may have a  
9       chance to speak.

10                If you choose to ask a question of the  
11       Commission during your time, that will count as part  
12       of your time. But please understand that we're here  
13       to hear your comments and to get your input.

14                Written testimony can also be submitted  
15       and the members of the Commission, the Commission  
16       staff will review any written submissions. They can  
17       either be submitted here tonight or sent to the  
18       Commission offices at 2 Lafayette Street, 14th  
19       floor, New York, New York 10007. We have sign  
20       language interpreters present who will be signing  
21       throughout the proceedings tonight. Tonight's sign  
22       language interpreter is to my right, and transcripts  
23       of tonight's proceedings will also be available to  
24       members of the public.

25                Why don't we begin with our first

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1 speaker, Nicole Neal, from Senator Guy Valella's  
2 office.

3 MS. NEAL: Good evening. My name is  
4 Nicole Neal. I am here tonight representing Senator  
5 Guy J. Valella. The Senator is seriously interested  
6 in the testimony being presented this evening on the  
7 subject of Charter revision. Unfortunately, due to  
8 a scheduling conflict, the Senator was unable to  
9 prepare a timely statement for tonight's Charter  
10 revision hearing. With your approval he will submit  
11 a statement as soon as possible after reviewing the  
12 preliminary recommendations for Charter revision.

13 Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN MASTRO: Thank you. Our next  
15 speaker is Anne Shollar.

16 MS. SHOLLAR: Good evening. I am  
17 representing Arnold Merriam, M.D., who is Chairman  
18 of Psychiatry for the North Bronx Health Care  
19 Network, which includes Jacobi and North Central  
20 Bronx Hospitals, both of which are acute care  
21 facilities of the New York City Health and Hospitals  
22 Corporation.

23 Dr. Merriam speaks from the perspective  
24 of a physician and health care administrator who has  
25 devoted his career to addressing the needs of the

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1       psychiatrically ill citizens of his borough,  
2       especially including those of the urban poor.  
3       Dr. Merriam is pleased to offer his support for the  
4       revisions in the City Charter mandating the merger  
5       of the New York City Department of Mental Health,  
6       Mental Retardation and Alcoholism Services and the  
7       Department of Health to create a new and  
8       comprehensive Department of Public Health.

9                 Dr. Merriam thinks that in order to  
10       explain his position, he needs to review some  
11       aspects of the history of his profession and the  
12       evolution and thinking that has led psychiatry to  
13       make so many recent advances in diagnosis and  
14       treatment. We have in recent decades come to  
15       recognize that most of the major psychiatric  
16       disorders are in fact brain disorders which prevent  
17       behavioral symptoms and which require careful  
18       medical diagnosis and treatment. The diagnosis and  
19       treatment of one's psychiatric condition is hugely  
20       affected by the simultaneous presence of other  
21       medical disorders from which the patient might be  
22       suffering. For example, he selects a common medical  
23       condition, Parkinson's disease.

24                 When a patient afflicted with this  
25       disorder visits a psychiatrist for symptoms of

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1 depression, both the medical and the psychiatric  
2 practitioner must ask themselves, is the patient's  
3 medical condition affected by her state of  
4 depression? Is the patient's depression the product  
5 of underlying medical condition? Will the  
6 psychiatric treatments we prescribe have an adverse  
7 effect on her medical condition? Will the medical  
8 treatments we prescribe have an adverse effect on  
9 her psychiatric condition?

10 The answers to each of these critical  
11 questions may be yes or no in any given case. The  
12 psychiatric symptoms may in fact be--

13 STAFF: One minute remaining.

14 MS. SHOLLAR: -- symptoms of the medical  
15 condition or its treatment, while the medical  
16 symptoms may be in fact the symptoms of the  
17 psychiatric conditions or its treatment.

18 These complex enactors have led the  
19 psychiatric profession to recognize that the strict  
20 division of human diseases into physical and mental  
21 varieties is unscientific and that the psychiatric  
22 and medical services work most efficiently when they  
23 are richly integrated. Fragmented care systems in  
24 which physical and mental health services each exist  
25 within their own narrow venues impede the

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1 collaboration among caregivers that is so critical  
2 to good patient care.

3 I'm just going to skip to the end, since  
4 I'm--therefore, Dr. Merriam wants to go on record in  
5 support of the provisions in the Charter revision  
6 which insure the integrity of the City's mental  
7 health budget and require a review of the merger in  
8 the second and fourth years after its adoption.

9 The appointee to the post of Commissioner  
10 of the new Department of Public Health should be  
11 someone who is highly knowledgeable about and  
12 sympathetic to not only the general health needs of  
13 our communities, but their behavioral health needs  
14 as well.

15 In closing, Dr. Merriam thinks that the  
16 proposed changes to the City Charter will enhance  
17 the physical and mental health status of the  
18 citizens of New York, and he urges the Commission to  
19 accept the proposal for inclusion on the November  
20 ballot.

21 Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN MASTRO: Thank you very much,  
23 ma'am.

24 We're fortunate tonight to be joined by  
25 Councilwoman Provenzano.

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1                   COUNCILMEMBER PROVENZANO: Thank you. I  
2 apologize for my casual attire, but the Mayor did  
3 tell us to wear as little clothing as possible.  
4 Tell him I obeyed and I think it's great that  
5 everybody came out on this evening, particularly  
6 since it's not air conditioned here at Fordham, and  
7 I'd like to congratulate the Commission for all of  
8 the work that they've done and I can just imagine  
9 how many hours were put into it.

10                   And although many people's eyes glaze  
11 over when Charter comes up, it's a very significant  
12 document. It's a work in progress, it serves as the  
13 foundation for laws, policies and the day-to-day  
14 functioning of our City Government. The  
15 participation of all of us tonight I think is  
16 commendable, and I thank all of you.

17                   I am Councilwoman Madeline Provenzano of  
18 the 13th Council District in the East Bronx. There  
19 are just a few issues that I would like to speak to,  
20 the first being the recommendation to make the  
21 Administration for Children's Services a Charter  
22 agency. The ACS is an agency on the right track.  
23 Created by Executive Order in 1996, it is New York  
24 City's first agency dedicated solely to serving  
25 children and their families. The years since 1996

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1 with Nicholas Scopetta at the helm have seen  
2 impressive reforms and improvements in services.  
3 More children are being served, being served closer  
4 to home, by better trained, better paid case  
5 workers. A computerized management system helps  
6 protect children by providing case workers with up  
7 to the minute records. I am particularly pleased by  
8 the agency's successful implementation of the policy  
9 to move foster care children into adoptive homes and  
10 I've personally worked with many people who have  
11 been in that position of trying to adopt some of  
12 these children.

13 The statistics are remarkable. Foster  
14 care population is down from 42,000 to 31,000.

15 I am also delighted with the news that  
16 the average case worker load is down from 27 to 12.  
17 The ACS today is strong, well managed and highly  
18 focused on its mission to protect children. As it  
19 stands now, as a Mayoral agency, it can be  
20 dismantled at the whim of this or any Mayor. This  
21 agency has come too far to allow it to be vulnerable  
22 to the winds of time. Making it a Charter agency  
23 would strengthen it, allow for efficient, long term  
24 planning and at the same time insure that it is  
25 accountable to the public and to City Council

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1 oversight.

2 For much the same reasons, I also  
3 advocate protecting human rights by making both the  
4 Human Rights Commission and the Office of Immigrant  
5 Affairs Charter agencies. The Human Rights  
6 Commission has proven itself to be a potent defender  
7 of the City's most vulnerable, by enforcing the  
8 City's human rights laws that prohibit  
9 discrimination. The Commission has made impressive  
10 gains, particularly in expanding the use of  
11 mediation as an alternative to litigation.

12 The Office of Immigrant Affairs needs to  
13 be strengthened and given additional abilities to  
14 implement policy and provide services to an  
15 expanding, ever diverse population of immigrants.  
16 We are a city of immigrants. Indeed, New York's  
17 success story is the story of every immigrant's  
18 successful integration into the City's rich and  
19 wonderful tapestry, welcoming new immigrants into  
20 the fabric of New York and administering the  
21 services that can help them become productive  
22 neighbors is a priority that benefits all of us.

23 The issues of human rights and immigrant  
24 affairs are not just global or national, but very  
25 much local. Our City's commitment to human rights

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1 and to the principled treatment of immigrants needs  
2 to be affirmed and codified permanently into the  
3 Charter by establishing Charter agencies.

4           There are two revisions designed to  
5 promote safety, especially for young people. The  
6 first is our City's response to the outrage of  
7 in-school sex and violence offenses and would  
8 require that these crimes be immediately reported to  
9 the Police Department. We have the finest Police  
10 Department in the world. Let's let them do what  
11 they do best and bring them into the forefront of  
12 in-school investigations. School administrators  
13 need to put the welfare of the child before any  
14 bureaucratic considerations.

15           The second revision would ban any person  
16 under the age of 21 from purchasing a weapon. I am  
17 strongly in favor of this measure. No young person  
18 under the age of 21 in New York City needs a gun for  
19 recreation or any other purpose. I reject gun  
20 culture, as I know New Yorkers reject the  
21 infiltration of guns and violence into our culture.  
22 I thank you for this opportunity to speak to you,  
23 and I know that citizens of this City will do what  
24 they deem best on election day.

25           And again, I thank all of you for your

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1 good work.

2 CHAIRMAN MASTRO: Thank you Councilwoman.  
3 Thank you for being here.

4 Next speaker will be Edwin Lemanski.  
5 Edwin Lemanski?

6 MR. LEMANSKI: Good evening, ladies and  
7 gentlemen. My name is Edwin J. Lemanski, I'm a  
8 licensed professional engineer and a member of the  
9 Bronx County Chapter of the New York State Society  
10 for Professional Engineers. As a professional  
11 engineer dedicated to making public safety a top  
12 priority, I take issue with the broad statement that  
13 the Fire Department of New York has better  
14 technology, oversight of personnel and  
15 anticorruption training than the Department of  
16 Buildings, with the result being a more efficient  
17 and effective scheduling of inspections. Corruption  
18 occurs at all levels and in all professions. There  
19 is no one barrel that does not contain a bad apple.  
20 Change of the label, the badge, the new hat or the  
21 new uniform will not alter this. Morality, learned  
22 at an early age is the key. Proper training can  
23 help. It is naive to assume that any group, Fire  
24 Department, religious or otherwise, is immune.

25 I don't know if I'm going to insult

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1 anybody with this particular one? Did any of you  
2 read the newspaper accounts of African priests  
3 raping the nuns because they needed a partner who  
4 was free of AIDS and were afraid to trust the nearby  
5 villagers, that these villagers were clean? I was  
6 appalled and very distressed.

7 I've had firsthand experience with both  
8 the Fire Department and Department of Buildings  
9 personnel. I've been in the business for thirty  
10 years as a private consultant. And not all of these  
11 people are clean. Power is what breeds corruption.  
12 The person in power knows that if you need something  
13 badly enough, you're willing to pay for it.  
14 Sometimes it is the gentle hint and sometimes it's  
15 extraneous demands for irrelevant information.

16 STAFF: One minute remaining.

17 MR. LEMANSKI: I'm sorry?

18 STAFF: One minute remaining.

19 MR. LEMANSKI: I didn't realize it was  
20 going to take so long.

21 -- accompanied by a great deal of foot  
22 dragging. It appears to me the Department of  
23 Buildings is being squeezed for funds and therefore  
24 cannot hire the proper personnel and pay the  
25 competitive range. Why is this? DOB is more than

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1 self sustaining, but its budget does not reflect its  
2 revenue. Money is apparently being siphoned off,  
3 thereby assuring that proper hiring and training  
4 cannot occur.

5 But let's address another aspect of  
6 inspections, namely, competence. Is the Fire  
7 Department person more qualified than the DOB  
8 inspector? Has he had formal training in building  
9 construction? Does he have a degree in civil  
10 engineering from an accredited college so he  
11 understands the basics, or did he take a quickie  
12 course of no real substance? I know the Fire  
13 Department has professional engineers in their  
14 employ, but are they in the right discipline and if  
15 so, will they be assigned to inspections?

16 Secondly, where did the Fire Department  
17 pick up expertise in zoning resolution, multiple  
18 dwelling laws, labor laws and others?

19 STAFF: Your time has expired.

20 MR. LEMANSKI: Okay. I'm opposed to the  
21 recommendation of the Fire Department that should be  
22 given jurisdiction over inspection and enforcement  
23 functions currently performed by the Department of  
24 Buildings.

25 CHAIRMAN MASTRO: Thank you, sir.

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1 Fred Feibusch, please.

2 MR. FEIBUSCH: My name is Fred Feibusch.  
3 I'm the President of the Bronx Mental Retardation  
4 and Developmental Disabilities Council. We are a  
5 voluntary group of family members, professionals and  
6 advocates who serve in an official advisory capacity  
7 to the New York City Department of Mental Health,  
8 Mental Retardation and Alcoholism Services as well  
9 as the New York State Office of Mental Retardation  
10 and Developmental Disabilities. One of the  
11 proposals under consideration by the Charter  
12 Revision Commission is to merge the New York City  
13 Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and  
14 Alcoholism Services with the Department of Health, a  
15 proposal that we have opposed for approximately four  
16 years, and which has generated a great deal of  
17 concern and controversy in the health, mental health  
18 and mental retardation communities.

19 As a result of these concerns, the New  
20 York City Council has not acted on the proposed  
21 merger, when it was first presented to them four  
22 years ago. When the merger was included in the last  
23 Charter revision proposal of two years ago, many  
24 advocates spoke out against it, which contributed to  
25 the resounding defeat of the Charter revision

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1       proposal.

2                   The basis for our objection to the merger  
3       is our belief that the needs of people in New York  
4       City with developmental disabilities and their  
5       families will be lost if the relatively small  
6       Department of Mental Health is merged with the  
7       Department of Health.  Furthermore, the whole basis  
8       for including mental retardation in the Department  
9       of Health really shows a misunderstanding of the  
10      nature of mental retardation.  Mental retardation is  
11      not a health issue, it's a lifetime disability that  
12      requires habilitation, job, vocational training and  
13      family support.  It's not a matter of mental  
14      hygiene.  In fact, it was, in the dark ages of our  
15      field, during the ages of Willowbrook, it was  
16      formerly a small part of the New York State  
17      Department of Mental hygiene.

18                   Those are the years of outrageous abuse  
19      of our population.  It's only emerged out of the  
20      dark ages when it was given its own identity.  It's  
21      certainly not an issue or threat to public health,  
22      and by including it in the Department of Public  
23      Health is the exact wrong message we've been working  
24      on for the past 25 years.

25                   (Applause.)

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1                   MR. FEIBUSCH: We are once again  
2                   astounded that the merger is being considered for  
3                   Charter revision when the people spoke against this  
4                   on election day in 1999. The attempt to write this  
5                   in the Charter when the mental retardation advocacy  
6                   community has spoken clearly on their opposition  
7                   only confirms our fear that our voices will not be  
8                   heard in the proposed super Department of Health.

9                   The administration has not made its case  
10                  that the merger will benefit people with mental  
11                  retardation and their families. Since both  
12                  departments have been operating under one  
13                  Commissioner over the last several years, what some  
14                  refer to as a de facto merger, shouldn't the impact  
15                  of this consolidation be studied before we seek to  
16                  write it into the Charter?

17                  I urge you on the Commission to drop the  
18                  proposed merger from the Charter revision provisions  
19                  and allow this proposal more time for study by the  
20                  New York City Council where consideration of this  
21                  proposal rightly belongs.

22                  I thank you for consideration of this  
23                  testimony and I'll be happy to submit a detailed  
24                  position paper which has existed for four years on  
25                  the basis for our position.

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1 CHAIRMAN MASTRO: Thank you, sir.

2 (Applause.)

3 CHAIRMAN MASTRO: Joseph Garber.

4 MR. GARBER: Good evening, Chair Mastro,  
5 members of the commission. My name is Joseph  
6 Garber, I am the corresponding secretary of the  
7 Civil Service Merit Council and in my third year of  
8 employ.

9 I'd like to comment on some issues  
10 relative to the recommendations and the Charter  
11 itself and whatever I cannot finish I'll continue at  
12 a subsequent hearing.

13 Since the Mayor's Office of Immigrant  
14 Affairs is currently part of the Mayor's office, I  
15 question at this time making it a Charter agency.  
16 For instance, in looking at the duly negotiated  
17 functions in this office, especially in the area of  
18 language interpretation of which I'm an official  
19 interpreter translator in Yiddish and Hebrew, I find  
20 it has unfortunately fallen by the wayside, so we  
21 have to try to strengthen that component of the  
22 office because they used to publish a directory of  
23 all City officers who were affluent and we used to  
24 be called even at cross agencies, but I believe it's  
25 fallen down.

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1                   Relative to page 84 on the integrity  
2                   assessment issue. My reading of the issue leads me  
3                   to believe that perhaps it's already in the Vendex  
4                   program of the Department of Investigation. I may  
5                   be wrong, but I think you might be stepping on some  
6                   duplicative functions.

7                   On page 100, I'm very glad that the  
8                   Commission mentioned a fostering of a more open  
9                   Government. With that in mind, I have gone through  
10                  the provision of the City Charter that deals with  
11                  the mandate that the Department of Information and  
12                  records management, DORIS, more specifically, the  
13                  Municipal Reference and Research Center, collect one  
14                  copy each of all City Agency documents. This  
15                  unfortunately has fallen by the wayside, okay? I'd  
16                  like to suggest perhaps that you can have Mayor  
17                  Guiliani issue another Executive Order to all  
18                  Mayoral and non-Mayoral agencies, but more so, the  
19                  Commission should visit the space itself at 31  
20                  Centre Street. Unfortunately--

21                  STAFF: One minute remaining.

22                  MR. GARBBER: It has very small space,  
23                  okay? The hours are only from ten to four, and a  
24                  lot of stuff that does come in is not catalogued  
25                  timely. If you could get Commissioner Rios of DORIS

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1 and Commissioner Diamond of DCAS to try to find a  
2 new home, which would be very helpful.

3 In addition, for future meetings, I'd  
4 like to suggest that you get the three lights that  
5 the Housing Authority uses to announce when your  
6 time has expired. You can get them, it's a red  
7 light, green light and yellow light and I think it  
8 would more facilitate the problem.

9 Thank you very much and I'll continue in  
10 the future.

11 (Applause).

12 CHAIRMAN MASTRO: Thank you, Mr. Garber,  
13 thank you very much.

14 Mary K. St. Mark.

15 MS. ST. MARK: Good evening. My name is  
16 Mary St. Mark, and I'm the mother of Michael, who is  
17 a 41 year old developmentally disabled man. Once  
18 again, we come before you to make a plea for your  
19 consideration about the merger of New York City  
20 Public Health and New York City Department of Mental  
21 Health and Mental Retardation, Alcohol and Drug  
22 Abuse. We as advocates are confused as why is this  
23 element is again on the proposed Charter again. In  
24 1998, this proposal was first considered by New York  
25 City Council and the Health Committee and it died.

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1 Also, it was listed as part of the 1999 Charter  
2 revision and was defeated. Therefore, my question  
3 to you, why are the reasons for the merger of these  
4 two departments?

5 Our experience as an advocate for my son  
6 and other persons who are mentally retarded has been  
7 that these departments are of different service. We  
8 have worked too hard over the years to provide an  
9 independent service for our children and the people  
10 with mental retardation. We would like very much to  
11 keep this Department the way that it is. We also  
12 wish to point out that the service that has been  
13 given to our children is because of the leadership  
14 that it has been under. But come January, 2002, we  
15 will have a new Mayor. We do not know who will be  
16 the leader of this Department. We also do not want  
17 to become a small pie in the big, huge department,  
18 who has not shown that they are a very effective  
19 department.

20 We fear that no matter what is promised  
21 to us here or in the future, we and our children  
22 will not be a part of the mega department, because  
23 of the fact these are people who are very  
24 vulnerable. We are very concerned about losing all  
25 of the good programs that has been developed--

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1                   STAFF: One minute remaining.

2                   MS. ST. MARK: Through the cooperative  
3 efforts of the legislators, professional advocacy  
4 and parents. If this merger takes place, the most  
5 in need of our protection like my son and thousands  
6 of persons who are mentally retarded and  
7 developmentally disabled will ultimately hurt.  
8 Advocates for the mentally retarded disability  
9 strongly oppose this plan because the need of the  
10 people with mental retardation and developmental  
11 disability will become lost in the mega department.

12                   Mental retardation is not an illness or a  
13 threat to public health. It will not be a priority  
14 in the Department of Public Health. If this merger  
15 becomes part of New York City Charter, it will  
16 almost be impossible to undo.

17                   The current Department of Mental Health  
18 work very well and meet the needs of our people, and  
19 my son, who is included. If it is not broken,  
20 please do not merge it. Thank you.

21                   (Applause.)

22                   CHAIRMAN MASTRO: Anna May Venner,  
23 please.

24                   MS. VENNER: Hi. I don't know if you  
25 remember us, I remember all of you, and I may sound

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1 a little repetitious. I reiterate everything that  
2 Fred said and Mary said, and I have a few words of  
3 my own. I'm a little angry, so if I sound a little  
4 angry, it's because I am.

5 The City Council has refused to legislate  
6 a merger of the Department of Health and the  
7 Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and  
8 Alcoholism Services for more than tree years. The  
9 Council as representatives of the people have spoken  
10 for the people.

11 In 1999, this merger was included in the  
12 proposed Charter revision. The people again spoke.  
13 This time directly, and voted by a very large margin  
14 against the revision and against the merger.

15 Now we find it in the proposed Charter  
16 revision. I think this is an insult to the citizens  
17 of New York and it should be removed. By including  
18 it, the administration seems to be trying to subvert  
19 the will of the City and its people.

20 The book cites eleven states, two cities  
21 and three counties in New York State that have  
22 combined their services. That sounds almost silly  
23 to cite, because there are 39 other states that have  
24 not combined and thousands of other cities and  
25 counties that have chosen not to combine. The

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1 proposal also cites five organizations that  
2 testified for the merger in 1999, and some  
3 professionals.

4           Unfortunately, no mention is made of  
5 those many, many, many professionals, and I don't  
6 know how many parents and consumers and advocates,  
7 and when I speak of consumers that means people who  
8 are actually getting the service, not us parents,  
9 who spoke against the merger, and we are totally  
10 left out. It's as if we didn't exist.

11           And this is almost directly from my last  
12 testimony. We parents, advocates, legislators and  
13 professionals for people who are mentally retarded  
14 and/or developmentally disabled, fought for about  
15 thirty years to reach the point at which we are now,  
16 with a separate first rate DMH which functions  
17 efficiently, whose staff members are accessible and  
18 helpful. We want to keep it that way. We do not  
19 want to become a small part of the huge and not very  
20 efficient DOH, because we fear that no matter what  
21 promises are made now, no matter what you promise  
22 us, our children and their services will somehow get  
23 lost in the shuffle, and all you have to do is go  
24 back before things were separate do a little  
25 research to how they were treated or ignored or

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1       should I say not treated and you'll know that we're  
2       afraid of getting lost in the shuffle.

3                 We are fearful of losing all the good  
4       programs that have developed through cooperative  
5       efforts of legislators, professionals, consumer  
6       advocates and parents.

7                 If this merger takes place, those most in  
8       need of our protection, our citizens who are  
9       mentally retarded, including my son, will be  
10      irreparably hurt. I ask you to protect my son and  
11      all the other disabled citizens of New York by  
12      removing this merger from the proposed Charter.

13                I more than ask. I almost beg you,  
14      because to go back to where we were is frightening  
15      and perhaps sinful and that's what I have to say.

16                I also have a message for you from  
17      Jeffrey Dinowitz, who is my Assembly person who  
18      wanted to come tonight but could not, because by the  
19      time he found out of this meeting he had other  
20      commitments, he's co-chairperson of a party. But he  
21      said to tell you please that he will be sending you  
22      written testimony and that he too is against this  
23      merger and I know there were parents who wanted to  
24      come tonight, parents whose children live at home  
25      and they could not because of the weather, so

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1       since my son is not able to speak, I have been his  
2       voice for the past 36 years. I have advocated and  
3       tried to protect the rights for children with  
4       disabilities who are unable to speak for themselves.  
5       During those 36 years, it's been my experience that  
6       whenever a large agency administers services to our  
7       children, in other words, they have other groups  
8       that they provide services, we are always last on  
9       the totem pole. We are always the last  
10      consideration and I think that's evident in the last  
11      New York City budget cuts when we were the only  
12      agency, we're the only service that was cut a  
13      hundred percent. It was restored when we fought for  
14      it, we were the only ones that were cut a hundred  
15      percent.

16                    I haven't had much time to review the  
17      whole revision, but I think this reflects, again,  
18      how we are not part of the group. If I may make a  
19      few points and show you and you can correct me if  
20      I'm wrong.

21                    STAFF: One minute remaining.

22                    MS. BONSIGNORE: Okay. When you use the  
23      term "mentally disabled" you join our people with  
24      people with mental illness with alcoholism, with  
25      substance dependence and chemical dependence. I'm

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1 all for those people being served, but I think their  
2 needs are very different than our children. My son  
3 did not choose to be born mentally retarded. Okay?  
4 It's not his fault I had rubella, so that's the  
5 first thing, that's in your revision, I think you  
6 should look at that again.

7           Secondly, you talk about expanding the  
8 Board of Health membership. There is not one thing  
9 that I see here that requires anyone with experience  
10 in mental retardation or developmental disabilities  
11 and you very clearly state the criteria. Maybe I  
12 didn't state it, but it's not here. So this again,  
13 now, the third issue I want to bring up, when we  
14 talk about budget cuts and we talk about across the  
15 board budget cuts will be equal. For those with  
16 developmental disabilities it would not be equal,  
17 because every time you cut us, we get matching funds  
18 from the State, so it's a double cut.

19           STAFF: Time expired.

20           MS. BONSIGNORE: If you cut any other  
21 agency it's 10 percent, we lose 20. You can correct  
22 me, but that's what happened the last time. The  
23 Mayor was ill informed, let's put it, about the  
24 issue and he thought the State would pick it up and  
25 that's why we got a hundred percent cut.

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1                   CHAIRMAN MASTRO: Ma'am, please conclude.  
2                   We have a number of other speakers.

3                   MS. BONSIGNORE: Okay. In conclusion,  
4                   I'm a little confused, as are some of the other  
5                   advocates as to why we are here testifying on this  
6                   issue. Thousands of us came out on election day.  
7                   We made our position very clear and I think it's an  
8                   insult to those of us that took the time to go and  
9                   vote. We made it very clear, no merger. I will  
10                  fight this until the day I die, because it's my  
11                  son's life and the life of all children with  
12                  disabilities.

13                  They can't come and explain to you what  
14                  their needs are, but we can. I hope you really,  
15                  seriously consider this and take it out of the  
16                  revision. Please.

17                  Thank you.

18                  (Applause.)

19                  CHAIRMAN MASTRO: Judith Kramer, from  
20                  Councilwoman June Eisland's office.

21                  MS. KRAMER: Chairman Mastro, and  
22                  members, other members on the Charter Revision  
23                  Commission, I am representing Councilwoman June M.  
24                  Eisland. However, two of her constituents just  
25                  spoke before me, and I think they were most eloquent

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1 and expressed some of the Councilwoman's feelings,  
2 but I will briefly, quickly, read her testimony.

3 The proposed Charter revisions are  
4 serious matters which cannot be given the careful  
5 consideration they deserve during the summer. Many  
6 interested people are not available and given the  
7 heat tonight, I'm quite sure others who might have  
8 come to this auditorium have been deterred.

9 In addition, I believe that most of the  
10 proposals contained in the preliminary report could  
11 be done legislatively by the City Council. That  
12 process is more deliberative and consensus building,  
13 a format that embraces a democratic, and that's  
14 small d, process, which any revision of the Charter  
15 fully deserves.

16 For example, one of the proposals which I  
17 oppose is the proposed consolidation of the  
18 Department of Health and the Department of Mental  
19 Health, Mental Retardation and Alcoholism Services  
20 to create an enlarged DOH. If the City Council had  
21 thought this was worthwhile, it could have been done  
22 legislatively, but the City Council chose not to do  
23 that, because we felt it was poor public policy.

24 This issue was proposed by the Charter  
25 Commission two years ago. I didn't think it was a

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1 good idea then and I still think it's not a good  
2 idea.

3 Thank you for the opportunity to speak.  
4 However, as I said at the onset, revising the  
5 Charter is serious business. I believe this  
6 particular format, plus doing anything so important  
7 during the summer months is disenfranchising the  
8 public. Thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN MASTRO: Ma'am, before you sit,  
10 I'd be interested in the Councilwoman's views on  
11 these subjects. Does she think it's poor public  
12 policy to make the Administration for Children's  
13 Services a Charter agency? That's been pending in  
14 the City Council for five years?

15 Does she think it's poor public policy to  
16 have gun-free school safety zones within a thousand  
17 feet of every school, preschool and day care center?  
18 That's been pending in the City Council for two  
19 years.

20 I hope the Councilwoman will consider  
21 those proposals on the merits and submit her  
22 comments on those, because the Council has had an  
23 opportunity, and I think the public overwhelmingly  
24 supports those proposals and I would hope the  
25 Councilwoman would and would do what she could to

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1 see that they pass one way or the other.

2 So thank you very much and thank you and  
3 please thank the Councilwoman for her comments.

4 Regina Martucci, please.

5 MS. MARTUCCI: Hello. My name is Gina  
6 Martucci. Members of the Commission, ladies and  
7 gentlemen, I'm going to echo what a lot of other  
8 people have echoed here tonight. I'm an advocate  
9 professional, and I want to know why we have to  
10 fight again the merger of the Department of MR, MH  
11 and Alcohol Services. We fought this before, we are  
12 doing it again, a second time on a hot summer August  
13 night.

14 I also am very concerned about the  
15 democratic process and it seems that we're sneaking  
16 this through by doing this during the summer.  
17 History again, as you heard before, has never been  
18 kind to the MRDD population. We have an agency that  
19 works. Very few people can say that about a lot of  
20 the agencies in New York City. We have an agency  
21 that works, that listens to our needs, we don't want  
22 to merge with the large department.

23 If this has to be on the ballot, I do  
24 urge you that it be a separate proposal, that  
25 everything be a separate proposal, because we're not

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1       against all, as Mr. Mastro said, we're not against  
2       everything on the Commission revision. However, it  
3       would not be fair if we do not have a separate  
4       ballot so that the voters of the City can vote  
5       separately for different Charter revision. Thank  
6       you.

7                       CHAIRMAN MASTRO: Thank you, ma'am. And  
8       I just wanted to assure you that I said publicly and  
9       I'll say it again here, that it's our intention  
10      whatever we put on the ballot to put the proposals  
11      by individual topic or related subject matter on the  
12      ballot separately. So that's why you see in the  
13      recommendations that the staff has made, that  
14      proposals relating to the current Health Department  
15      and Board of Health are a recommendation that will  
16      be put on the ballot, if it is put on the ballot, so  
17      the voters can vote that up or down.

18                      We're not, on my recommendation if the  
19      Commission were to follow me in this regard, going  
20      to put all of the proposals together as one ballot  
21      proposition up or down, which was what was done the  
22      last time, and I think there were many influences as  
23      to why the vote came out as to the way it did.

24                      We appreciate the comments that you all  
25      are making. We appreciated them back in 1999 when I

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1       chaired that Charter Revision Commission. We made  
2       many changes in the proposal as a result of the  
3       comments that good people like you and others made  
4       to try to improve that proposal.

5               We have made no final decision one way or  
6       the other on any of the ballot proposals for  
7       consideration on the ballot, but just as we've heard  
8       your voices, we've also heard from many others in  
9       the health and mental health community who think the  
10      merger has worked well and there has been a de facto  
11      merger for a number of years.

12             This Commission is going to take into  
13      account all the testimony we hear. We care very  
14      much about your views and we will not make any final  
15      decisions about whether to put that proposal on the  
16      ballot as an individual proposal as it's set forth  
17      in the recommendations by individual subject matter,  
18      we'll make that decision at the end of all the  
19      public hearings where we've heard from all members  
20      of the public and we really appreciate your  
21      comments.

22             COMMISSIONER WILSON: Is there a detailed  
23      statement of the issues and reasons why even under  
24      the present system it's not working? I take it  
25      you're telling us it's de facto, that's what we've

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1 done in the last two years, and I also gather that  
2 you're saying that Commissioner Cohen is doing a  
3 good job in running the combined agency, is that  
4 correct?

5 VOICE: No.

6 COMMISSIONER WILSON: I'd like to see  
7 this in writing laid out in great detail, as opposed  
8 to whatever is laid out in the short public comments  
9 here.

10 VOICE: Commissioner Cohen was doing a  
11 good job. He could not when he had to fight  
12 mosquitos last year also be interested in what's  
13 going on in MR. You need a separate Commissioner.

14 VOICE: And a separate department.

15 VOICE: The gentleman himself, we have no  
16 quarrel with. We have a quarrel with the merger.

17 CHAIRMAN MASTRO: Robert Rivera?

18 MR. RIVERS: My name is Robert Rivers.

19 My name is Robert Rivers, Jr., it is not Rivera.

20 It's nice, this little meeting that  
21 you're having. It's nice to see the people coming  
22 out to speak their mind. I had no intention of  
23 speaking here tonight. I came to gather information  
24 on the Charter changes. When I sat here, I heard  
25 Mr. Lemanski made a parable about the African

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1 priests raping the nuns, because they need a mate,  
2 and he's using that to equate the engineers in the  
3 Fire Department and the City engineers, and that  
4 made me very angry that you sat there and allowed  
5 that man to say that, and you made no comment, and  
6 you happen to be the Chairman.

7 This is not the place for that racist  
8 behavior from anybody, and that's why I'm up here  
9 speaking, not that I have anything to say, but my  
10 voice, yes, I was insulted, because he would dare  
11 not say that about a Catholic priest or an Irish  
12 priest or a Jewish rabbi, and he sat there, and said  
13 it about an African priest and you allowed him to  
14 get away with it, with no comment.

15 And I want it on the record that I was  
16 personally insulted, because he said he hoped no one  
17 would get insulted and then he said what he had said  
18 and you allowed that to happen, and I was personally  
19 insulted, because this is not the place for that  
20 type of behavior from him or anyone else. This is  
21 about the City, the Charter revisions that people  
22 want and don't want, and that's what this is  
23 supposed to be about, and you can't let anybody walk  
24 up here and say anything that they choose to say out  
25 of their face.

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1                   STAFF: One minute remaining.

2                   MR. RIVERS: It's insulting. I'm  
3                   insulted.

4                   I'm through. I'm really very pissed that  
5                   you sat there and allowed him to say that, insult me  
6                   and allowed other people to insult them, and the  
7                   people sat on their hands to say that, but they're  
8                   applauding the people who are speaking about the  
9                   merger of the mental retardation and lumping them in  
10                  with other people and that's great and that's what  
11                  this forum is supposed to be about, not to insult me  
12                  and I took it as a personal insult and I hold you  
13                  responsible because you said nothing about it.

14                  (Applause.)

15                  CHAIRMAN MASTRO: Agnes Hentschel,  
16                  please? Agnes Hentschel.

17                  MS. HENTSCHEL: Thank you for giving me  
18                  your time. I would like you to know, although I'm  
19                  not a resident of the Bronx, I am a taxpayer of New  
20                  York City. I felt it important to come here today  
21                  after having been a Community Board member, and this  
22                  will be my fifth community Charter revision meeting  
23                  which happens every ten years. I felt it was very  
24                  important for me to come, because the Charter  
25                  revisions have always been happening at the last

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1 moment and before election times.

2 Many of the meetings that were taking  
3 place on Charter revision were being held eventually  
4 every ten years behind closed doors. I have found  
5 this a big detriment, as a homeowner, taxpayer, who  
6 is subjected to all of the inconveniences of not  
7 only the traffic, which I have been finding coming  
8 up here from Queens, that have affected all the  
9 taxpayers, and with City Council, I have found they  
10 are being manipulated by the City Planning  
11 Commission, which eventually has had the last say  
12 over properties, whether they are home or free  
13 properties, we should have gone for schools, and the  
14 children, City Council seems to be operating in its  
15 own interests, because much of this property has  
16 gone to City malls that have been placed on the  
17 waterfront and in the 1950's and '60s, the Federal  
18 Government had mandated Community Board so that  
19 people would have a say-so in what's going to be  
20 happening in their community, and they expected the  
21 waterfront to be available to the public because in  
22 the '70s, we also had a big gasoline strike, many  
23 people had no place to go and no gasoline, and the  
24 traffic was the problem.

25 STAFF: One minute remaining.

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1 MS. HENTSCHEL: I would appreciate it if  
2 the City Council make a recommendation that there be  
3 a complete review of the City Charter revisions and  
4 to extend it until the new administration, because  
5 with each new administration, and the public coming  
6 in, we have people who did not know and were not  
7 aware of what happened in the past.

8 As a homeowner and a resident, this needs  
9 to be done, because we've raised problems and the  
10 waterfront which was supposed to be for affordable  
11 housing, and Long Island City was supposed to have  
12 availability waterfront use like in Astoria, was all  
13 taken away, and City Planning, which has dominance  
14 over contracts on property transfers and ownership  
15 in my area, now has claimed that our Fire  
16 Department, just as an example, is not supposed to  
17 have the property that they asked for and we lost  
18 three firemen in a fire recently--

19 STAFF: Time's up.

20 MS. HENTSCHEL: Because City Planning  
21 claims that the people who have gotten the property  
22 over the years, and I always feel there was a lot of  
23 behind the scenes activity people didn't know about  
24 home owners and property being taken by big real  
25 estate interests, and this is affecting not only our

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1 labor, our traffic, our schools and you people, too.  
2 So please don't make changes, make a complete review  
3 and extend it to the new year, because we have so  
4 many new residents and I feel proud to have been  
5 able to come here for the first time in over ten  
6 years, because in the ten years, I had lost four  
7 brothers who served in the Services, and they were  
8 from the Second World War, Viet Nam war and I had a  
9 brother who served also under Colonel Patton in  
10 the '40's at a time when our schools had a nurse in  
11 every school, we had a truant officer in every  
12 school and we didn't have the school problems we  
13 have today, and they have been building schools all  
14 the time.

15 So please consider the whole revision  
16 Charter, not only for your sake, but the sake of our  
17 country, because I sometimes wonder who is running  
18 our country.

19 Thank you so much. And I'm sorry, I  
20 didn't mean to barge in on the Bronx.

21 CHAIRMAN MASTRO: Thank you.

22 MS. HENTSCHEL: But I just got back from  
23 San Diego and I had to limit my traveling because of  
24 the family obligations, but I still feel New York  
25 City is my home, but it's a crime what's happening

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1 to it. Thank you.

2 CHAIRMAN MASTRO: Thank you, ma'am.  
3 Delores Campbell, who is a representative for  
4 Borough President Ferrar.

5 MS. CAMPBELL: Good evening. My name is  
6 Delores Campbell. I will be reading testimony from  
7 Borough President Fernando Ferrar.

8 Good evening, I am Fernando Ferrar,  
9 President of the Borough of the Bronx. The Charter  
10 is the fundamental governing law of our City. It  
11 provides both in broad outline and in many cases  
12 specific detail on how our municipality operates and  
13 obligations of all of those involved in the process.  
14 It touches the lives of New Yorkers in many ways  
15 large and small.

16 Before amending a document so vital to  
17 all our communities and residents, an extraordinary  
18 effort must be made to give the widest possible  
19 opportunity for participation to all who would be  
20 affected. Unfortunately, the schedule provided by  
21 the current Charter Revision Commission for public  
22 hearing barely allows minimal participation,  
23 conducting only five public hearings all within a  
24 nine day period in the month of August is guaranteed  
25 method to insure that New Yorkers have almost no

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1 part in this process.

2 The 1988-1999 Charter revision process  
3 included 25 public hearings over two and a half  
4 years, in addition to hundreds of smaller forums  
5 within various communities and organizations,  
6 accompanied by extensive informal mailing outreach  
7 efforts. The current attempt to conduct a handful  
8 of meetings in the middle of summer on a preliminary  
9 report for a vote scheduled only a few months away  
10 is completely unacceptable. It can only be seen as  
11 a deliberate disenfranchisement of those who would  
12 normally participate, in a bid to perform an end-  
13 run around both the public and the normal  
14 legislative process of our City Government.

15 Among the issues that deeply concern me  
16 within the report is the proposal to merge the  
17 Department of Health with the Department of Mental  
18 Health, Mental Retardation and Alcoholism Services.  
19 This proposal fails to affirmatively answer the most  
20 fundamental question: Will this change bring about  
21 an improvement in the quality of services?

22 As the former Chair of the New York City  
23 Council Health Committee, it was my observation that  
24 when mental health services are combined with public  
25 health services, the need for the mentally ill are

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1 ignored. I remain unconvinced that the very minimum  
2 cost savings if any, that may possibly result from  
3 this step are worth the very real risk to the  
4 quality care New Yorkers need.

5 Of course, we should review whether the  
6 Department of Health, Mental Health and Alcoholism  
7 Services as a separate entity has served the city  
8 well. By most objective criteria it has. Indeed,  
9 both advocates and those served by the Department of  
10 Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Alcoholism  
11 Services have been satisfied by the care they  
12 receive. We must also examine whether the agency has  
13 received adequate resources for this activity.  
14 Currently, since the Community Reinvestment Act in  
15 1993, funds have been made available to deliver  
16 emergency and crisis services, needed care for  
17 children, adolescents, community support programs  
18 and other vital mental health services. The  
19 Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and  
20 Alcoholism Services have served the people of New  
21 York well.

22 While the two agencies in the proposed  
23 merger both provide health services to the public,  
24 they have very different needs, medically and  
25 administratively, and both function and need to

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1 function in very distinctive ways.

2 Let us not forget the horrors that  
3 occurred in sites such as Willowbrook. The  
4 Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and  
5 Alcoholism Services, devoted to providing services  
6 for the mentally retarded, is a vital safeguard  
7 insuring that the needs of those who are vulnerable  
8 and others that require its assistance will be  
9 treated fairly and completely competently. Only an  
10 independent Department of Mental Health, Mental  
11 Retardation and Alcoholism Services can be relied  
12 upon to be the most effective advocate for the  
13 resources and policies required to provide the level  
14 of care New Yorkers truly need.

15 This issue, so important to the health of  
16 our city, should not be discussed in short time  
17 frames provided by the Charter revision discussion,  
18 nor should the issues be brought to the forefront in  
19 the very middle of summer when much of the public's  
20 attention is diverted. I urge the Commission to  
21 delete this proposal from its recommendation.

22 (Applause.)

23 MS. CAMPBELL: For the most part, the  
24 various issues discussed within the Charter revision  
25 staff report, preliminary recommendations for

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1 Charter revision do not require Charter revisions to  
2 be addressed. They can be resolved by the executive  
3 branch alone.

4 STAFF: Time is expired.

5 MS. CAMPBELL: Or as part of a joint  
6 effort by the City and the Mayor. Conversely, the  
7 report fails to consider issues that should be  
8 topics of Charter revision. This includes creating  
9 an independent CCRB by baselining its funding as a  
10 percent of the NYPD budget and establish a mechanism  
11 to make the appointed CCRB members reflective of the  
12 City and controlled less by the administration.

13 As Charter revision process that raises  
14 appropriate issues in a manner that allows for full  
15 and vigorous participation would be welcome.  
16 However, this current process minimizes and almost  
17 eliminates the role of New Yorkers in the governance  
18 of their own city.

19 Thank you.

20 (Applause.)

21 CHAIRMAN MASTRO: Thank you, ma'am. Is  
22 there anyone else who would like to be heard this  
23 evening? I want to thank Fordham again for hosting  
24 us this evening.

25 VOICE: Another speaker.

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1                   CHAIRMAN MASTRO: Sure. We have one  
2 more.

3                   MS. HAHN: My name is Rita Hahn. I am a  
4 member of the Bronx Mental Retardation Council. I  
5 let my president speak, I'm only the secretary. You  
6 look at me, you don't know how old I am. I started  
7 in 1949 fighting for the retarded. I have been a  
8 public health nurse and I know the difference  
9 between the Department of Health and the Health  
10 Department and the Board of Health. There is a  
11 difference. The Board of Health is appointed. The  
12 Department of Health consists of the doctors and  
13 nurses that work to save the lives the people of the  
14 City. I didn't come here to talking talk about  
15 that, although I am a lifetime member of the  
16 American Public Health Association. But today is my  
17 mother's 100th birthday, if she were living, and she  
18 fought for my sister. She died and left me, and I  
19 am fighting for my sister and for everybody else  
20 that is, as we say, quotes, now, consumers. Some  
21 day they'll become persons again.

22                   My sister is 65 years old. She just got  
23 out of Montefiore Hospital last week. Because I  
24 fought. And I will continue to fight until the day  
25 I die, although I have cancer now and I was here at

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1       your last hearing, and I was told about it at 6:00  
2       at night, and it wasn't a very effective place and  
3       this isn't, either, but I have lived through the  
4       Department of Mental Hygiene, I have lived through  
5       the Department of Health, I have lived through the  
6       Department of Hospitals, I have lived through the  
7       Department of Health and Hospitals, H&H  
8       Corporation--

9                       STAFF: One minute remaining.

10                      MS. HAHN: And I have fought against this  
11       Charter revision before and I will continue to  
12       fight, because you must realize that there is a big  
13       difference between the mentally retarded and those  
14       who have mental health problems and I hope that  
15       those who are here now to consider that revision  
16       will remember that.

17                      My little sister that's 65 now was two  
18       years old when she had the measles and it ate up her  
19       brain cells, but it didn't eat up mine and I hope it  
20       didn't eat up yours.

21                      I did not put this in writing, but I will  
22       put this in writing, and I left my home in the  
23       Belmont area, I took a taxi to come over here  
24       tonight in this sweltering heat and my neighbors  
25       told me, go ahead, Rita, and we are behind you. So

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1 I do have supporters, even in the general community,  
2 the general people.

3 STAFF: Your time has expired.

4 MS. HAHN: Thank you.

5 CHAIRMAN MASTRO: Thank you. Andrew  
6 Cohen from Councilmember Pedro Espada.

7 MR. COHEN: Good evening. My name is  
8 Andrew Cohen, I'm chief of staff to Councilmember  
9 Pedro Espada. Several days ago he asked me to  
10 prepare a statement for this hearing, which I  
11 haven't done yet, so I will supplement my comments  
12 tonight with a formal written statement.

13 The Councilman has concerns about the  
14 work of this commission and as a member of the  
15 health community he's consistently opposed the  
16 merger of the Department of Health and Department of  
17 Public Health.

18 He does feel that there are several  
19 positive proposals also contained in this Charter  
20 revision and he hopes they don't get lost in this  
21 process, including obviously, limiting anything they  
22 can do to limit handguns away from people is a good  
23 thing and the Councilman strongly supports that.  
24 The Office of Emergency Management should be  
25 elevated to a Charter agency, the Department of

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1 Immigrant Affairs also should be elevated to a  
2 Mayoral agency and also as a member of the Contracts  
3 Committee, he could not more strongly support a  
4 streamlining of the Government purchasing process.

5 So thank you.

6 CHAIRMAN MASTRO: Thank you very much.

7 (Applause.)

8 CHAIRMAN MASTRO: That concludes our  
9 hearing for this evening. And I appreciate all of  
10 you being here. Thank you.

11 (Time noted: 8:40 p.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T I O N

I, LINDA FISHER, a Certified Shorthand Reporter and Notary Public, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate transcription of my stenographic notes.

I further certify that I am not employed by nor related to any party to this action.

LINDA FISHER, CSR

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