



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brad Hoylman-Sigal

Testimony of State Senator Brad Hoylman Before the New York City Council Committee on Governmental Operations Regarding Introduction 1867, Municipal Voting Rights

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TESTIMONY OF STATE SENATOR BRAD HOYLMAN BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS REGARDING INTRODUCTION 1867, MUNICIPAL VOTING RIGHTS

SEPTEMBER 20, 2021

Good morning, Chair Cabrera and members of the committee. I am Senator Brad Hoylman representing State Senate District 27 in Manhattan and chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of Introduction 1867, to expand voting rights in New York City elections to nearly one million noncitizen New Yorkers.

Throughout our nation, we are witnessing a mass-scale, coordinated attack on voting rights. In fact, over the last few years, more than 400 anti-voter bills have been introduced in 48 states. This deluge of legislation has made it harder for millions of Americans to have their voice heard. Here in New York, we can chart a different course. We can set an example for the rest of the nation and make clear that in a democracy, voting should be accessible. Let's expand the electorate and bring more people into our democracy.

New York has always been a city of immigrants. We owe our legacy of success and growth in large part to the many who left their homes and moved here in search of a better life. History has shown us that when

immigrants thrive, our entire city thrives. 2020 reinforced this point, when thousands of immigrants served as essential workers at the height of the pandemic and ensured that our city would survive one of our darkest moments. In fact, over half of essential workers are foreign born. As we work our way out of this pandemic, it is important to acknowledge that not only did our immigrant neighbors serve our city bravely, but they also faced the brunt of the health and economic displacement caused by the pandemic.

Clearly these New Yorkers are already a part of our community, they are our neighbors, and yet they do not have a say in our local elections. These New Yorkers have played a central role in our city's recovery, yet they are largely cut out of civic life and the everyday decisions that shape our communities. We should expand democracy and the electorate by allowing foreign born New Yorkers the right to vote in municipal elections.

New York has led the way before and we can lead again. Expanding the franchise is of crucial importance. This is why I carry S.366 in the State Senate, to allow New Yorkers 16 and older the ability to vote. I am also proud to have supported recent voting rights reforms at the state level, like early voting and expanded mail in voting, to boost turnout and ensure that everyone has the ability to vote on their terms.

While over the course of our Nation's history we have pushed to expand our democracy and create a more fair and inclusive society, today there are anti-democratic forces turning back the clock. It is up to us to preserve that legacy and continue fighting for a more perfect union.

I urge the council to pass this legislation and set an example for the nation.