



Testimony of Assistant Commissioner Samara Karasyk  
New York City Council Hearing on Introduction Number 295  
June 30, 2014

Good morning Chairman Rodriguez and members of the Committee on Transportation. I am Samara Karasyk, Assistant Commissioner of External Affairs at the New York City Department of Finance. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on Introduction Number 295 regarding pre-tax transit benefits for New Yorkers.

We share the Council's goal of increasing access to mass transit for workers in New York City and look forward to discussing how to best to provide such access. However, we have concerns about the implementation of the bill based on the scope of what we do at the Department of Finance, and do not believe this program should fall under our jurisdiction.

As it stands, Introduction Number 295 requires employers with at least twenty employees to offer pre-tax transit benefits, which give employees the option to use part of their pre-tax earnings to purchase transportation (such as a mass transit card). Employers that do not comply would be subject to penalties of fifty dollars per day per employee. This bill requires the Department of Finance to issue warnings and notices to violators and assess and collect civil penalties.

The scope of the tasks set out in this legislation is outside of the functions of the Department of Finance as stated in the New York City Charter. Those functions are assessing

real property, collecting taxes, managing the City's Treasury, and operating the Parking Violations Bureau, as well as the City Register and the Sheriff's Office. We do not issue this type of notice of violation. Our in-house adjudication forum hears only parking violations, which are mostly issued by the New York City Police Department. We do not manage New York City employee benefits on any level outside of our own agency and do not have general data on how New York businesses are staffed or the types of benefits offered to their employees.

Although the Department of Finance is not the appropriate agency to enforce a transit benefit program for New York employees, we look forward to having further discussions with the Council regarding this important issue.

At this time, I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.