



The City of New York

Manhattan Community Board 1

Catherine McVay Hughes CHAIRPERSON | Noah Pfefferblit DISTRICT MANAGER

New York City Council Committee on Government Operations

Public Hearing on

Int. No. 732-2015,

A Local Law to amend the New York City Charter in relation to making urban planning professionals available to community boards

Testimony by Michael Levine, Planning Consultant

Manhattan Community Board 1

**Thursday, April 30, 2015 at 1:00 p.m.
250 Broadway – Committee Rm., 14th Fl.**

Good Afternoon Chair Kallos and members of the Committee on Governmental Operations.

My Name is Michael Levine. I am a Planner Consultant to Manhattan Community Board 1 and the Director of the Community Planning Fellowship Program of the Fund for the City of New York. I am pleased to testify today in favor of the proposed local law making urban planning professionals available to community boards.

The New York City Community Planning Fellowship Program was created to improve the capacity of community boards to undertake planning activities. A secondary goal for the Program is to develop the next generation of urban planners. By participating in the program, community boards receive professional assistance in addressing planning concerns in their districts. Fellows get invaluable experience with real-world community planning issues from the perspective of community boards.

The Program provides Fellowship opportunities for selected second-year graduate students in urban planning programs in New York City. The Fellows bring with them skills in socio-economic analysis, database management and geographic information mapping that Community Boards usually lack. Projects are developed by the boards for the Fellows to complete over the course of an academic year. They are placed in offices based upon the skills they offer, the interests they have and the specific needs of each Community Board. Projects vary from land use regulation to historic preservation to delivery of social services.

The Program has been extremely successful in meeting the needs of both the community boards and the Fellows. The proposal to place urban planning professionals in community board offices will perfectly compliment the Community Planning Fellowship Program by providing additional

planning expertise. We have learned over the years that the most successful Fellowships are those that provide collaborative integration into the community board office, direct supervision and regular feedback for the Fellows. Not all community boards have been able to provide this level of support. A sustained urban planning professional presence in the community board offices will provide this vital ingredient to improve the urban planning capacity of Community Boards and build upon the experience of the Community Planning Fellowship Program.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.