![NYC Information Technology & Telecommunications]

TESTIMONY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS
BEFORE THE CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY
SEPTEMBER 20, 2017

Thank you, James, and good afternoon, Chair Vacca and members of the City Council Committee on Technology. My name is Albert Webber, and I am the Director of Open Data for the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications, also known as DoITT. On behalf of the Administration, I'd like to extend gratitude to this committee, under the leadership of Chair Vacca, for the attention and care shown to Open Data over the past several years, and for the opportunity to testify today.

We all share a steadfast commitment to Open Data as an instrument of transparency and a bridge to connect New Yorkers with their city. That is why DoITT works closely with MODA to make Open Data as accessible as possible. This year's annual Open Data report was issued on July 14, 2017, and details some of the extraordinary steps we have taken to connect New Yorkers with the data we publish, and support them as they use it to tackle issues in their neighborhoods. In fact, one of our important user groups is the City Council, which is why we've collaborated with you to offer several Open Data trainings for Council Members and their staff over the next few weeks.

I'm happy to report that these sustained efforts have yielded real results. As you heard, we are experiencing unprecedented engagement with our datasets, which now number over 1700-- including 170 added in the last year. We have also worked with agencies to automate 38 datasets, ensuring that they are as up-to-date as possible, with some automatically updating as frequently as every 5 minutes, such as DOT's Real-Time Traffic dataset.

The Open Data team continues to make great progress every year, but the expiration of the Open Data Law (Local Law 11 of 2012) at the end of next year gives all of us the opportunity to codify some helpful technical changes. **Introduction 1707** addresses many of these useful fixes, as the result of a productive and collaborative effort between Chair Vacca, Borough President Brewer, BetaNYC, Reinvent Albany, MODA, and DoITT. This proposed bill would:

1. **Codify a bi-annual review of the Technical Standards Manual (TSM)**. The TSM is the guiding document on how agencies manage and present their data. These standards are designed

1

to make Open Data more usable to the maximum number of users. We see the TSM as a living document, meant to keep up with advances in technology, data availability, and the passage of local laws that impact data disclosure. An official periodic review of this document would ensure that Open Data disclosure stays up-to-date, relevant, and true to the most current practices.

2. **Extend the Open Data Law another three years.** Current law requires agencies to publish and prioritize for release their datasets by December 31, 2018. We want to ensure that agencies continue to schedule new releases beyond that date. While simply extending the sunset is helpful, we would like to discuss how to improve the language to ensure that submissions meant to be disclosed by December 31, 2018 will still be held to that deadline.

3. **Change the deadline for the annual compliance plan from July to September.** The Open Data team has learned a lot about the process of collecting information from Open Data coordinators as the July 15 deadline approaches. We have found that this timing bumps up against budget season, and request that it be changed to provide sufficient time in each new fiscal year to gather and report information. Additionally, the annual Mayor's Management Report (MMR) is published in September. Shifting the deadline to September will allow us to align these two reporting exercises and efficiently deliver a unified report representing our progress.

4. **Codify the requirement for each agency to designate an Open Data coordinator.** While Open Data coordinators are currently required under the Technical Standards Manual, codifying this requirement would underscore agencies' commitment to Open Data in perpetuity.

5. **Require web portal site analytics in perpetuity.** Since we already publish web analytics, we support the idea of ensuring that future administrations do the same.

In addition to these improvements, we suggest amending the license provision of Local Law 11 of 2012 to best serve the goals of Open Data for All. Currently, § 23-502 (d) states that "all public data sets on the portal shall be made available without any license requirement or restriction on their use other than attribution and description of the modifications made to the data set." We have interpreted this to mean that DoITT cannot make the data available under *any* license, including permissive licenses. However, our mission to encourage public engagement with open data in the long term makes the ability to license very important. Structured properly, licenses could allow us to formally make the City's datasets free and open for public use in perpetuity, codifying our existing practice and ensuring that New Yorkers have access to open data for the long haul. We look forward to a productive dialogue about this provision.

Introduction 1528 would amend Local Law 7 of 2016, which currently requires agencies to review Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) requests containing data to determine whether they contained new public datasets that could be published on Open Data. Local Law 7 requires agencies to disclose *metrics* on FOIL responses. Introduction 1528 would require agencies to take the extra step in *naming* the datasets relating to FOIL responses. This legislation furthers the administration's transparency objectives.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. Open Data remains a priority of this administration, shining a bright light on our government and our city for all New Yorkers to see, and providing the tools to solve thorny civic problems in creative ways. We thank our partners in the City Council and in the civic technology community for their continued advocacy. This concludes our prepared testimony, and we look forward to answering your questions.

###