

**DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS TESTIMONY
BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY
RE: INTRO. 029-10 – OPEN DATA STANDARDS FOR CITY AGENCIES
MONDAY, JUNE 21, 2010**

Good morning Chair Garodnick and members of the Council Committee on Technology. My name is Carole Post, the Commissioner of the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications, or DoITT. Joining me is James Perazzo, Assistant Commissioner for Web and New Media Operations at DoITT. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on Intro. 029-2010. I would like to take a moment to brief you on the City's advancements with respect to open government and open data.

For the past eight and a half years, the Bloomberg Administration has been making New York City government more open and transparent than it has ever been. The City provides a wealth of information and data, which every day is being made more accessible and interactive. A few examples include the Citywide Performance Reporting tool, the My Neighborhood Statistics feature, NYCityMap, the Stimulus Tracker, NYC*SCOUT, and 311Online. All this information and more has been made available at a portal called NYCStat. NYCStat is one example of how the City has proactively aggregated disparate data and information to make it more accessible and user-friendly, eliminating the need for visitors to have to hunt and peck to find what they are looking for. The amount of City information made available via *NYC.gov* today far exceeds anything previously available in the City's long history – and meets or exceeds that of any other city in the world.

In the past year, the City entered the next phase of the open government movement – that of “open data.” As the flood of social networking technologies transforms government in a fundamental sense, the City must remain at the vanguard of that movement. The City will continue its efforts to develop innovative applications, and to make the raw data behind these applications open and available. This is the public's information, and we want to continue making it available in as many ways as we can.

Accordingly, last summer we worked with the City's Economic Development Corporation on the NYC BigApps program. NYC BigApps is a program whereby hundreds of data sets were made available to the public to create and develop new and unique applications and tools for public use. The program resulted in 80 new applications developed by the public, for the public, at essentially no cost to the City. These applications are now widely in use across the City and across the globe by New Yorkers, businesses and visitors.

The 200 datasets that were made available as part of NYC BigApps remain available at the NYC DataMine, which is accessible at *NYC.gov*. The DataMine represents data sets from nearly 30 City agencies and is searchable, sortable and free to the public. DoITT is now working with these agencies to add datasets to and improve the usability of the DataMine for the second round of NYC BigApps later this year.

As transformative as these initiatives have been – and we expect them to continue – we fundamentally agree with the City Council that we can do even more. And institutionalizing the unprecedented gains made by the Bloomberg Administration will ensure for future generations of New Yorkers a City government that is transparent and accountable.

That said, today's proposed legislation presents a number of fiscal, operational, and technical considerations that may be problematic for the City. Chief among these are concerns about establishing reasonable limits on the use of data to preserve the integrity and capacity of a universal warehousing system.

While we agree with the Council that ideally, every dataset that does not pose a security threat, compromise public safety, or contain personally identifiable information would be publicly available, that is neither fiscally nor operationally feasible in the short term. To really get open data right, we would propose an approach that would seek to classify data in terms of established criteria such as technical availability, timing and frequency of updates, cost to implement, and, ultimately, value to the public. We would support a clear set of standards around what types of data agencies need to publish and when, with certain minimum citywide guidelines. While as currently drafted Intro. 29 speaks to these ideas in part, we believe much of it remains somewhat loosely defined to move forward without revision. The Administration will seek the opportunity to better survey and qualify the criteria by which agencies are required to categorize and disseminate their data.

Therefore, we are now meeting with City agencies to assess in more detail the challenges and impacts posed by this legislation, during which we will reach consensus on the legal and operational considerations necessary to build the broad support open data legislation deserves. It was just such a collaborative approach that enabled the Mayor's Office of Operations to develop the Citywide Performance Reporting tool. As we continue these discussions, we would like to work closely with the Council to find common ground on comprehensive open data legislation that can have substantial and lasting impact on the way City government develops and shares information.

This approach will take time, but what we hope to establish as a result is an achievable and realistic path by which the City can make more public data centrally accessible online. And we hope that non-Mayoral City agencies like the City Council, Comptroller, Public Advocate, and community board offices would also classify and contribute their data as part of these efforts.

The Bloomberg Administration has consistently worked at creating a new City government paradigm regarding data, believing that it should be open by default *unless* there is a compelling reason – usually privacy or security-related – to keep it closed. We look forward to working with the Council on crafting meaningful legislation to that end.

This concludes my prepared testimony, and we will now be pleased to address any questions.

Thank you.