



The City of New York

## **Manhattan Community Board 1**

Catherine McVay Hughes CHAIRPERSON | Noah Pfefferblit DISTRICT MANAGER

**New York City Council  
Committee on Consumer Affairs  
Hearing in relation to licensing ticket vendors  
Testimony by Diana Switaj, Director of Planning & Land Use  
250 Broadway, 14<sup>th</sup> Fl Committee Room  
Tuesday, April 12, 2016, 1:00 pm**

Good afternoon. I am Diana Switaj, Director of Planning and Land Use at Manhattan Community Board 1 (CB1). Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed legislation to license ticket vendors.

CB1 thanks the City for initiating legislation to better control ticket vending, including sanctions for violations and aggressive behavior. We have had a long history in dealing with quality of life issues derived from ticket vendors in our district. Vendors congregate around the ferry terminals at the southern tip of Manhattan, the World Trade Center, The Battery, subway exits and tourist bus drop-offs throughout the district (e.g. Park Row at City Hall Park, Battery Place, Route 9A/West Street, Broadway just north of Vesey Street), targeting tourists for sale of tickets to bus, helicopter and ferry tours. The issues with ticket vendors in our district have been escalating in the recent past.

Many ticket vendors take advantage of tourists who are unfamiliar with the area by telling people that you can't actually go to Liberty Island in order to sell tickets to ferry trips going around the Island, or by selling tickets to ride the Staten Island Ferry which is free. In February 2016, a tourist suffered a fractured skull after he refused to buy a ticket to the Statue of Liberty and was punched, causing him to fall backward and hit his head on the pavement. The vendors can create a chaotic and menacing atmosphere, often physically blocking and harassing visitors. Ticket vendors turn busy sidewalks into congested sidewalks and potentially dangerous areas since pedestrians walk into the street to avoid the clusters of people. There have even been cases of fighting and violence among the vendors themselves as they compete over prime locations and sales.

CB1 applauds and welcomes such initiatives to better control ticket vending, and believe the proposed legislation can be improved in the following ways:

- 1) In addition to streets and bodies of water, "though the air" should be added to the definition of "mode of transportation" -- or Helicopter tours could be included in the definition of "sightseeing tour" whether or not a person is acting as a guide
- 2) Include language to put fines on employers and companies to avoid a loophole in which companies may simply fire vendors who have incurred violations and hire new vendors
- 3) Adequate resources for enforcement must be dedicated

- 4) Adjust language to better define what constitutes a ticket vendor, to include vendors who distribute pamphlets or information on how and where to purchase tickets
- 5) Require licensed vendors to wear vests that easily and clearly identify their employer and license information, similar to those worn by commercial cyclists
- 6) Consideration of adding areas of construction and scaffolding to restricted areas, as these impede pedestrian flow and safety

Finally, a “no vending” zone currently exists around the World Trade Center. However, the zone does not apply to ticket vendors who cluster around the PATH exit and nearby intersections. The no vending zone was established under careful consideration for the unique circumstances surrounding the World Trade Center. Allowing ticket vendors to operate at the World Trade Center is contrary to the intent of the no vending zone, and we believe the no vending zone should be expanded to include ticket vendors.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

